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**IN ALL THINGS,
THE WILL OF GOD**

**Saint John Eudes
Through His Letters**

Translated by Louis Levesque, C.J.M..

1994

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	13
His Early Years	17
1. Sympathy in Mourning	20
2. John Eudes, A Contested Missionary	23
3. Advice to A Sick Religious	25
4. First Echoes of Our Lady of Charity	28
5. First Message to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary	33
6. Suppliant Appeal to A Postulant of Our Lady of Charity	37
7. Incorporations into the Congregation of Jesus and Mary	41
8. Mission at Autun: Towards the Feast of the Heart of Mary	43
9. Problems in Rome	46
10. Tedious Representations in Paris	49
11. Threats against the Seminary at Caen	53
12. Episcopal Approval of Our Lady of Charity	55
13. Our Lady of Charity: Taking the Habit	59
14. Joy at the Caen Seminary	62
15. Pressing Exhortation to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity	65
16. Unshakable Attachment to Our Lady of Charity	69
17. How to Handle a Touchy Situation	73
18. Sublimity of the Eudist Vocation	77
19. A Stem Call to Obedience	82

10- IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

20. Trust in Times of Destitution	86
21. Successful Missions	89
22. Disquieting Bereavement at Our Lady of Charity	92
23. Reasons for Sending an Envoy to Rome	96
24. A Courageous Sermon	102
25. Laborious Explanations to Rome	106
26. Illness of a Friend	109
27. Communion in Trials	113
28. Bereavement in the Congregation of Jesus and Mary	120
29. Meticulous Accounting of Expenses	122
30. Mother Patin's Obstinacy	125
31. Government of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary	130
32. Presentation of a Superior to His Community	135
33. Papal Approval of Our Lady of Charity	138
34. Generous Settlement of a Financial Litigation	142
35. Our Lady of Charity Election	144
36. Delays in a Foundation of Our Lady of Charity	149

37. Missionary Zeal	154
38. Institution of the Feast of the Heart of Jesus	158
39. Anxiety in View of the Possibility of Becoming a Bishop	165
40. Advice for Exercising the Office of Superior	168
41. The Queen's Satisfaction Over the Saint-Germain Mission	171
42. New Attempt in Rome	174
43. Unjustly Rejected by the King	178
44. Ingratitude and Treason	183
45. Publication of a Slandorous Libel	185
46. Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus	188
47. Love for One's Enemies	190
48. Recovery from a Serious Illness	193

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 1 1 -

49. Appeal to the King's Conscience	198
50. End of a Very Painful Trial	202
Toward His Meeting with His God	207
Brief Portrait of Saint John Eudes	211
Recipients of the Selected Letters	214

INTRODUCTION

Saint John Eudes (1601-1680) belongs to what Daniel-Rops called "the grand century of the souls". At the time of his birth, France is just coming out of the Religion Wars. The country is exhausted but an extraordinary renewal of Christian life is about to take place and it will be strongly influenced by Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622), Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-1660). Each of these spiritual masters has his own personality and distinctive charism, but all three have one common lofty goal: to call people to total and unrestricted gift of self to God, and they do not hesitate to propose this high ideal to all their contemporaries, from no matter what state of life. The sanctity they preach and live is an intimate union of a person's entire being with God, but it originates and develops at the very heart of everyday life. For them there can be no divorce between faith and daily life, between the Gospel and earthly realities, nor can there be any risk of love of God being dissociated from love of neighbor.

John Eudes' formation took place in the spiritual climate which Francis de Sales, Bérulle and Vincent de Paul helped create, and he benefited greatly from their influence. He is fired by the same desire to lead men and women to sanctity, the same conviction that the Gospel must be woven into the fabric of everyday life, that every instant of one's life, every action, every thought must be referred to the Lord. He is, however, more especially a disciple of

14- IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Bérulle whose teaching and advice he received while preparing for the priesthood at the Oratory in Paris (1623-1625). He deeply assimilated his doctrine, totally centered on Christ, and he will preach it during fifty years, giving it a personal touch, expressing it no less radically but more simply and more concretely. He will invite his audiences and his readers ceaselessly to renounce self, their own mindsets and their own will, every instant of their lives, but especially when beginning their most important actions, in order to give themselves to Jesus and act "in his dispositions and with his intentions".(1)

Not only does John Eudes preach this doctrine, he puts it into practice every day of a long and full life as a preacher of parish missions and founder. He repeatedly gives himself to Jesus and Mary to fulfill the Will of the Father, in union with them. His human and his spiritual journeys are what I am attempting to retrace in this book written in the tricentennial year of his death. It is the result of numerous sessions and retreats given to his spiritual sons and daughters (Eudists, Sisters of Our Lady of Charity and of the Good Shepherd, Little Sisters of the Poor, Sisters of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary of Paramé).(2) I selected fifty letters' which practically cover his entire life as a priest. I have inserted them into a continuous biographical narrative in the course

(1). The most complete study of the spiritual doctrine of Saint John Eudes is contained in Eudist Father Charles Lebrun's *La Spiritualité de saint Jean Eudes*, Paris, Lethielleux, 1933. It is also well summarized in Eudist Father Paul Milcent's article titled *Jean Eudes (saint)*, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. VIII, col. 488-501.

(2). The text of a little more than two hundred and fifty of Saint John Eudes' letters exists today, either in their entirety or in passages quoted by his early biographers. That is a very small number when compared to the two thousand written by Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Vincent de Paul's three thousand known to exist today. Nevertheless, they constitute an extremely rich treasure for us. The fifty letters presented here cover a period of a half century, from 1629 to 1679.

of which an entire letter may be quoted or just its significant passages. Each letter constitutes a distinct chapter introduced not only by a representative title but also by a short quote from the letter itself which highlights its contents. Each chapter begins with mention of the events which preceded and prepared its composition. Then follows a brief presentation which underlines the essential points of the letter and finally the letter itself. A relatively large number of footnotes explain the circumstances and people involved.

Thus placed in their historical context, these fifty letters recover their significance and become living documents. Through them we enter into direct contact with John Eudes and are able to discover, beyond the diversity of the events, what gives coherence to his life, namely: seeking the Will of God in all things and at all times, in communion of mind and heart with Jesus and Mary. These letters are very diverse: some are addressed to members of the communities the missionary founded or to a variety of persons, among them King Louis XIV; some deal with spiritual direction or relate current events; some are written with great care while others are penned in haste. They are to be read sympathetically since they are loaded with the hopes and concerns of a flesh and blood human being who is both loving and suffering. On occasion, they need to be looked at with circumspection: the person who is at the heart of an event cannot easily look at it with total objectivity. One must also arm oneself with patience: often bright and alert, Father Eudes' style gets bogged down when he yields to the temptation of

16-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

delivering a sermon, which does not satisfy him unless it is thorough. Never, however, is he obscure: a serious effort to understand his meaning is always rewarded.

The text of the letters is the one found in the Complete Works of John Eudes (*les Oeuvres Complètes de saint Jean Eudes*)(1) with a few corrections made by Father Charles Berthelot du Chesnay in a more recent but only partial edition.(2) When relating the events, I followed, except for a few details, the excellent chronology set up by the same Charles Berthelot du Chesnay in his book *Les Missions de saint Jean Eudes*.(3) I also gathered a great deal of information, with due verification, from Denis Boulay's voluminous *Vie du Vénérable Jean Eudes*.(4) My research involved a large quantity of material used by Eudist confreres now deceased to which I am greatly indebted. I also wish to thank the present day Eudists who encouraged and helped me, particularly Fathers Paul Milcent and Jacques Venard.

Rome, September, 1980

(1). Jean Eudes, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Vannes,, Lafolye, 1905-1911, vol. X, p. 345-581 and vol. XI, p. 5-132. The same text exists in a single volume, vol. V of *Oeuvres Choies de saint Jean Eudes*, Paris, Lethielleux, 1933.

(2). Charles Berthelot du Chesnay, *Eudiste, Saint Jean Eudes, Lettres choisies, lettres inédites*, collection "Les Ecrits des Saints" Namur, Ed. du Soleil Levant, 1958.

(3). Charles Berthelot du Chesnay, *Les Missions de saint Jean Eudes*, Paris, Procure des Eudistes, 1967.

(4). Denis Boulay, *Eudiste, Vie du Vénérable Jean Eudes* (4 volumes), Paris, René Haton, 1905-1908.

HIS EARLY YEARS

John Eudes was born on Nov. 14, 1601 in the little village of Ri, in Normandy, close to Argentan. His parents, Isaac Eudes and Marthe Corbin were desolate at not having children three years after their marriage. So, they made a vow to Our Lady promising to go on a pilgrimage to a chapel where she was honored under the title of Notre Dame de Recouvrance, at a place called Les Tourailles, twenty-five kilometers from Ri. They fulfilled this promise when Marthe became pregnant and offered the child to the Lord and his Mother.(1)

Baptized two days after his birth, John Eudes grew up in his hometown. He will write later on in his Memorial des bienfaits de Dieu (Record of God's Blessings, a sort of spiritual diary written towards the end of his life in order not to lose sight of the graces he received): "there was very little instruction for salvation there and few people ever received communion except during the Easter season." In spite of such an unfavorable context, he "began to know God when about twelve years old through a special grace of his goodness, and to receive communion monthly after having made a general confession". "Shortly afterwards," he continues,

(1). After John, the Eudes had six more children: four girls and two boys. François, known under the name of Mézeray, will become a renowned historian and secretary of the Académie Française; Charles, called d'Houay, will become a surgeon and alderman of Argentan.

18-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

«he also gave me the grace to consecrate my body to him by a vow of chastity for which may he be blessed forevermore».

He receives his first instruction in catechism and grammar in a local village "from a priest named Jacques Blavette, from whose example and spiritual instruction I profited a great deal". Then, on Oct. 9, 1615, his father sends him to the Jesuit College du Mont, in the city of Caen, about fifty kilometers from Ri. The adolescent finds there educators of high human and spiritual caliber, notably "Father Robin... a virtuous and pious Regent who frequently spoke to us of God with extraordinary fervor, which helped me in matters of salvation much more than I can express". In 1618, he is received into the Sodality of Our Lady, "wherein Our Lord granted me extraordinary graces through the intercession of his most holy Mother".

In 1619, he begins philosophy at the same College. On Sept. 19, 1620, at Séez, the see of his home diocese, he receives tonsure and the four minor orders. He is therefore thinking of the priesthood, but needs more time to consider the options: the often mediocre diocesan clergy does not appeal to him nor does religious life.

He learns about a newly founded institute, the Oratory of Jesus which opened a house in Caen in 1622. Founded in Paris eleven years earlier by Pierre de Bérulle, the Oratory is not a religious order, but a society of priests living community life. It invites its members to live to the full the requirements of priestly life and wants thus to contribute to the spiritual and pastoral renewal of the clergy. John Eudes is seduced by this ideal and, on March 25, 1623, is admitted to the Oratory, in Paris. Formed by prestigious masters, among them Bérulle himself, he is ordained to the priest

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 19 -

hood on Dec. 20, 1625. His health is impaired by "a physical infirmity (1) which prevents him from working"; he spends two years "in retreat and prayer, reading pious books and other spiritual exercises: a very special grace for which I must eternally bless and thank the Lord's divine bounty".

No sooner recovered, he learns that pestilence is rampant in a whole region close to his hometown. He begs Bérulle to allow him to go there and spends more than two months caring for the sick and administering the sacraments, at great risk to his own life, from the end of August to the beginning of November, 1627.

Once the pestilence is over, he comes to live in the Oratory's Caen community and preaches, hears confessions and gives spiritual direction in the city. In 1630 pestilence strikes this city. John Eudes again comes to the rescue of the sick who have been abandoned. He lives in an abandoned wine vat which Madame de Budos, the Abbess of the Benedictines of the Trinity,⁽²⁾ placed at his disposal and had installed on the Abbey grounds. When he leaves this precarious shelter, in April, 1631, he assumes the care of his brother Oratorians, two of whom will die. He himself is taken seriously ill but soon recovers.

(1). In XVIIth century French, infirmity here means fatigue.

(2). Trinity Abbey or "l'Abbaye aux Dames", was founded in the XIth century by Queen Mathilde, wife of William the Conqueror who himself established the other Caen Abbey, "l'Abbaye aux Hommes". Laurence de Budos (1586-1650) was made Abbess at the age of thirteen, and reformed it successfully with the help of the Caen Oratorians, among whom was Father Eudes.

20-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

1. SYMPATHY IN MOURNING - 1629

"I want to weep with Jesus, that I may honor his tears."

Madame de Budos, John Eudes' benefactor during the pestilence in Caen, also received spiritual direction from him for many years. In 1629, her dear brother Antoine-Hercule, was killed at war. Father Eudes writes a long letter to her to help her at this time of trial. It is the oldest of the letters that have come down to us.

Only a few passages are given here. John Eudes drew it up with great care, even did a bit of research for it, "in anticipation", he writes in conclusion, "of speaking personally to you as soon as your time is less taken up with the many visits of condolence that you will receive". Much younger than she who is then forty-three years old, he does not hesitate to speak to her authoritatively. He urges her to see the hand of God in the painful event that has taken place. He shares her sorrow and invites her to live the moment in close union with Jesus.

Madam,

May the grace, peace and consolation of Our Lord Jesus Christ and his most holy Mother be with you forever.

I must and wish to adore with you the most holy and lovable will of God in the affliction it has pleased him to

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 21 -

send you. I must and wish to cherish and love his most just and lovable hand which has dealt your soul such a harsh blow and pierced your heart with so bloody a wound, since that divine hand does nothing save through love of self and its creatures that it seems to love even as itself.

Nevertheless, I must confess that my soul is filled with sadness and my heart with anguish at

the thought of your agony. I cannot think of you and the pitiful state in which I see you, without pain and tears and that, I believe, I am allowed. I see Jesus, the joy of heaven and earth, giving way to profound grief and sighs at the sight of the tears of Martha and Magdalen bemoaning the death of their brother. Why, then, may I not be allowed to weep on a similar occasion? I want to weep with Jesus, that I may honor his tears. I want to "weep with those who weep," in the words of St. Paul. (1) I wish to weep with the same emotions and sentiments as Jesus wept. I wish to offer him a sacrifice of tears in homage to his divine and adorable tears. Let us, Madam, offer him our tears in honor of his. Let us implore him to sanctify and bless them through his. Let us beseech him to unite them to his...

Madam, behold Jesus within your heart. He is there wishing to bear with you the harshness of your trial. But he neither can nor does he wish to bear it without you. Unite yourself, therefore, with him that you may bear your sorrow with him. Unite your spirit to his spirit, your heart to his Heart and your will to his. Bear it in holy fashion as he bore it holily and divinely. Bear it as he did strongly and courageously...

(1). 11 Romans 12:15.

22-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

So often you have protested to him that you want only to love and honor him. You will never be able to love him more perfectly and honor him in more holy fashion than at this moment. In this hour of affliction, you can offer him more glory and love in a single moment than in several days during a time of consolation. Do not deprive him, then, of something so tremendous which you can and ought to give him easily by submitting your will to his. It is true that this is not easy for human nature; but it becomes easy with the help of the grace which is offered you...

I am writing you these words in anticipation of speaking personally to you as soon as your time is less taken up with the many visits of condolence that you will receive.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 23 -

2. JOHN EUDES, A CONTESTED MISSIONARY - Summer, 1636

"Some said I was the antichrist."

A group of priests of the Caen Oratorian community has been assigned to preaching missions in the parishes of the Diocese of Bayeux (in which the city of Caen is located) and neighboring dioceses. In 1632, Father Eudes, whose remarkable talent for preaching has been noted is assigned to this group. From now on, and to the last years of his life, he will be a missionary.

A mission is a time of grace in a parish. It lasts a few weeks, sometimes several months. The missionaries try to induce the parishioners, the vast majority of them Catholic, to experience a renewal of Christian living. They preach, teach catechism to the adults as well as to the children, spend long hours in the confessional. Where there are protestants, they try to convert them, but are met with opposition in most cases.

This letter, written during the summer of 1636, at Plouir (Diocese of Saint-Malo) where John Eudes has just arrived to give a mission, is addressed once again to Madame de Budos. He speaks of his successes, but also of the difficulties he met with in the preceding mission, at Pleurtuit, in the

24-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

same diocese.(11) These problems came from a small but active group of protestants who were protected by the local Lord. They attacked this missionary with zeal!

Here I am in a borough to begin a mission. I do not know what will happen to me, but during the last mission I was attributed some very fine qualities. Some people called me the precursor of the antichrist; others, said that I was the antichrist himself. Some labelled me a seducer, a devil who is not to be believed; still others, a sorcerer enticing everyone in his wake. Some of them discussed chasing me away and would have carried out their plan if our Fathers had not arrived that same day. All that is just roses, but the thorns which prick my heart consist in seeing people following me around, sometimes for a week, without being able to go to confession although we are ten confessors here.

(11). Plouër now belongs to the Diocese of Saint-Brieuc; Pleurtuit belongs to the Diocese of Rennes.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 25 -

3 . ADVICE TO A SICK RELIGIOUS - around 1636

«Jesus is all yours and you are all his.»

A missionary who knows how to adapt to people who are very ordinary - often very ignorant - John Eudes is no less concerned about the Christians who are already aware of the riches and the requirements of their faith. It is for them that he published, in 1637, *La Vie et le Royaume de Jésus dans les âmes chrétiennes* (The Life and Kingdom of Jesus in Christian Souls), dedicated precisely to Madame de Budos. In it, he explains, in simple but insistent language, the doctrine of the Mystical Body which Bérulle has taught him to discover in St. Paul: Christ is our head and we are his members; our life is a "continuation and fulfilment" of his; we must, therefore, be "animated by the Spirit of Jesus, live of his life, walk in his footsteps, be clothed with his sentiments and inclinations, act with the dispositions and intentions with which he acted".(12)

(12). *La Vie et le Royaume de Jésus dans les âmes chrétiennes* was a great success: fifteen editions at least during John Eudes' lifetime. From one edition to the next, the author will correct or delete nothing, a sign that he is satisfied with the finished product. In 1662 though, he will add an "eighth section" made up of Meditations on Humility and Interior Colloquies of the Soul With Its God.

26-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Marie de Taillepied, a Lay Sister of Trinity Abbey, has recourse, like her Mother Abbess, to Father Eudes for spiritual direction. Offrill health, she suffers a great deal and tends to get discouraged and shut herself up on herself. The following text is an important segment of a letter whose date has not been recorded. In all probability it slightly predates the publication of *Vie et Royaume de Jésus*. John Eudes invites his spiritual daughter to come out of her preoccupation with herself and look only to Jesus and live in peace and confidence.

What can I say, my dear Sister, to comfort you? Shall I say what the world usually says to those who are ill - that this illness is nothing and you will soon be well again? But that is not what you are asking for. Shall I tell you that there is reason to hope that you will soon be free from the troubles of this earth and the exile you are suffering? But that is still not what you are seeking, since you want to avoid any consideration of your own self-interest. What shall I tell you, therefore, that will console you? I will not speak to you about yourself for we have to forget ourselves completely. I will speak only of Jesus who alone should be the subject of our speech, our thoughts and our consolation. And what shall I say to you about this estimable and infinitely lovable Jesus? I will tell you that Jesus is all yours and you are all his, my dear Sister. What a consolation! What more do you want? Live henceforth in peace then, and fear nothing since Jesus is all yours and all for you, and you belong totally to Jesus

who cherishes you infinitely and has no thoughts or designs on you that are not thoughts and designs of love and goodness.

Do not be in the least troubled if you cannot recite your Office, say the prayers and perform your other exercises as

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 27 -

you would want to. There are many persons who are doing these things for you. And what infinitely surpasses that : Jesus himself, your all, is unendingly absorbed in contemplation, praise and love of his eternal Father in your name. Finally, all things are yours in heaven and on earth. Remain at peace, therefore, and in complete and total surrender of yourself, of your health, your life, your soul and your salvation into the hands of your most lovable Father who is Jésus. (13)

(13) It is interesting to note that, two hundred and fifty years later, Blessed Maria Droste zu Vischering, a Good Shepherd Sister, during her novitiate, reflected on this letter which she discovered in a book by an old Eudist author, Father Pierre Hérambourg (1661-1720), edited by Father Ange Le Doré in 1869 and published in German in 1874, *Le Père Eudes, ses vertus*. Visibly, she found enlightenment and comfort in this letter when she was herself deeply tried. In her spiritual notes, she transcribed in German the two following passages whose themes, belonging to Jesus and abandoning oneself to his love, would become more and more familiar to her:

"Live henceforth in peace and fear nothing; since Jesus is all yours and all for you, and you belong totally to Jesus who cherishes you infinitely and has no thoughts or designs on you that are not thoughts and designs of love and goodness."

"Remain at peace, therefore, and in complete and total surrender of yourself, your health, your life, your soul and your salvation into the hands of your most lovable Father who is Jesus."

28-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

4 . FIRST ECHOES OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY - July 19,1642

"A single soul is worth more than a thousand worlds."

John Eudes is a person who lives deeply the message he proclaims. On March 25, 1637, he wrote and signed with his blood a Vow of Martyrdom or 'Elevation to Jesus, to offer myself to him as host and victim to be sacrificed to his glory and pure love". He expresses his will, lucid and firm, after some ten years of priestly ministry, to give himself more and more to the Lord and work for him alone.

Perhaps does he suspect he will have added responsibilities and will have to take bold and weighty initiatives. In 1640, he becomes superior of the Oratorian community of Caen and, two years later, head of the mission of Rouen, then head of all the missions in Normandy.

He sees with open eyes the needs - and often the distress - of the men and women he encounters. In March, 1640 he approaches Chancellor Séguier, and achieves the liberation of sixty to eighty prisoners who, in dire straits, have fraudulently sold salt or even openly revolted.

A number of people's revolts had occurred in Normandy since July, 1639. Commissioned by Richelieu to restore order, Chancellor Séguier displayed extreme rigor.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 29 -

He has been planning for a few years now to help the women and young girls given to prostitution who might want to change their lives but never do so for lack of proper assistance and favorable

environment. Varied attempts at harboring this type of person by people of goodwill have met with some success, but prove inadequate. What is needed is a house entrusted to a small team of women willing to live there and dedicate their whole life to God and to their sisters in peril.

John Eudes hesitates a long time and it is perhaps his meeting Marie des Vallées, at Coutances, in August, 1641 that brings him to make a definitive move. Marie des Vallées is a famous "case" in the whole region. She is thought to be possessed by the devil, and she believes so herself, but no exorcism will produce any visible change in her. Prey to terrible bouts of epilepsy, she also suffers some mysterious psychic ailment which causes her all sorts of suffering and, for years has kept her from receiving Holy Communion. At the bishop's request, Father Eudes meets "Sister Marie" as he often called her. He discovers a prayerful soul, humble and charitable, totally submissive to the will of God. He will help her and sustain her against her detractors, even long after her death. He will also ask her to pray for him and will often seek her advice.

Encouraged by Marie des Vallées, John Eudes knows he can count on the moral and material support of true

16

friends, such as Jean de Bernières, Mr. and Mrs. Blouet de

(14). Born at Saint-Sauveur-Lendelin (Manche), on Feb. 15, 1590, Marie des Vallées died in Coutances, Feb. 25, 1656, while Father Eudes was in town.

(15). Jean de Bernières (1602-1659), was Treasurer of France at Caen. A bachelor, he was a member of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, an active and influential secret society which tried to meet the most crying apostolic and charitable needs. John Eudes was himself a member. Bernières had founded a sort of retreat house in Caen, called l'Ermitage.

30-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Camilly. (16) On November 25, 1641, he opens a house for «penitent women» which he calls Our Lady of the Refuge. He entrusts it to a few charitable women grouped around Marguerite Morin, a converted protestant, of about 40. Blessed on the following December 8th, this house meets with initial success. At the beginning of 1642, during a mission he is preaching in Rouen, John Eudes talks about it to a group of women actively engaged in serving their neighbor, the "Ladies of Mercy" who support a Refuge similar to the one he has just created. A few months later, on July 19, 1642, he writes 18 to encourage them to persevere in their undertaking and give them news of the house in Caen.

We quote here a few excerpts of this long letter. Father Eudes expresses cordial and grateful sentiments towards some "Ladies of Mercy". He underlines the importance of "a hospital for ailing souls", and describes the good operation as well as the poverty of "Our Lady of the Refuge of Caen".

(16). Jacques Blouet de Camilly, he too a finance officer, wed Anne Le Haguais, in 1623. He was also probably a member of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament. He died in 1661 and his wife in 1680, a few months after Father Eudes. One of their four children, Jean-Jacques, entered the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and will later become Saint John Eudes' first successor as Superior General.

(17). At the time John Eudes is giving a mission at St-Malo. Begun at the beginning of June, it will end at the end of July. He was in Caen in May and that is when he visited the Refuge.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 31 -

Ladies, my dearest Sisters in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

May the grace, mercy and peace of this same Jesus Christ dwell in you forever.

The zeal and piety that I discerned in you while I was in Rouen so edified and consoled me that I cannot thank Our Lord enough. I implore him daily, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to shower the holiest blessings of his divine Mercy upon you and yours. May he preserve and enkindle in your hearts ever more and more the fire of his most ardent charity. I spent only three months in Rouen, but I assure you that I am and always will be there in mind and heart, accompanying you in the prisons, in hospitals and the homes of the sick, rejoicing with Our Lord, his most holy Mother and your good angels to see you thus persevering in performing God's work...

If building hospitals and sanitariums to provide relief and assistance to those who are physically ill is pleasing to God, think of how good it is to establish a home and a hospital for souls suffering from an infernal plague which condemns them and many others to death if it is not remedied! There are so many hospitals everywhere to care for bodies; shouldn't there be a few to care for souls who are more horribly and more dangerously sick than bodies? Shouldn't people who love God and know how precious souls are to him, have as much, even more love for souls than for bodies. A single soul is worth more than a thousand worlds. Therefore, whoever wins a soul to God does more than the person who conquers a thousand empires.

Giving alms to the poor is very commendable and highly recommended by God in Scripture, but cooperating

32-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

in the conversion of a soul, says Saint John Chrysostom, is greater than giving to the poor all the gold in the world, if you had it to give. Now, by assisting in this work, my dear Sisters, you are doing both. You are giving spiritual as well as corporal alms. Judge for yourselves how pleasing this is to God who is all charity and mercy and who loves mercy and charity so much that he judges mercilessly the person who is not merciful; whereas, on the other hand, he withholds judgment while showing mercy to the person who performs works of mercy...

All is going quite well, thanks to God, in the house of Our Lady of Refuge in Caen, and I assure you that it was a great comfort to me when, on returning to Caen, I called there to see how everything was progressing. I found that God was being greatly glorified by the good order that is maintained there and the care given to establish these poor penitents in the fear of God and piety, as well as having them spend their time working. Nevertheless, there are but three people at Caen (18) who are supporting the house and they are not the wealthiest in the city. Since you have more temporal means than those in Caen, I implore you, my dear Sisters, to also be more charitable.

(18). Jean de Bernières, Jacques Blouet de Camilly and probably Claude du Buisson, a renowned jurist.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

33 -

**5 . FIRST MESSAGE TO
THE CONGREGATION OF JESUS
AND MARY - Dec. 9, 1643**

"I keep you all very present in my heart."

At the very time when he writes to the "Ladies of Mercy", Father Eudes has another project in mind. He has noticed for a long time now that a good number of priests are lacking spiritual, theological and pastoral formation, sometimes totally. How could the missions bear lasting fruit if the priests who stay behind once the mission is over are unable to provide adequate follow-up? The root of the problem

is obvious: in spite of the decisions of the Council of Trent, eighty years earlier, France is short of well directed seminaries. Those that do exist, and they are few in number, function badly and give practically no results. Father Eudes believes it is necessary to establish one in the city of Caen, on clear and demanding bases.

His project provokes immediate interest in the highest places: Bishop Angennes of Bayeux, and no less a person than Richelieu, Louis XIII's minister, who is also concerned with restoration of the clergy (although his motives are political as well as religious) has Father Eudes come to Paris in November, 1642, but dies a few weeks later.

34-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Unfortunately, Father Bourgoing, Bérulle's second successor at the head of the Oratory, (19) for reasons it is difficult to discern clearly today, is categorically opposed to his confrere's project. Hence John Eudes' dilemma: on the one hand, for him obedience has lost none of its importance nor its value; on the other, the urgency of the task at hand is almost blinding...

For months, Father Eudes prays, reflects, consults. Finally, he decides to leave the Oratory. On March 25, 1643, he opens a "seminary" in Caen, that is to say, a house where candidates for the priesthood and already ordained priests may come to spend a few weeks or months to acquire some formation in prayer, reading and meditation of the Gospel, preaching, celebrating Mass and administering the sacraments. Seven companions joined him. All of them are priests he met earlier in the course of his missions and who showed interest in his project. Thus is born the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (later called the Eudists).

For the first two months, the first members of this Congregation learn to live community life, in a climate of a spiritual retreat. Then they begin to work at the two tasks assigned to them by the founder: first, working at forming candidates for the priesthood and priests they welcome into

(19). Father Charles de Condren who succeeded Bérulle in 1629 died in 1641. Father François Bourgoing was elected to replace him.

(20). John Eudes and his companions settled in a house he first rented and later purchased. This house, traditionally called "The Old Mission", still exists, at the corner of Jean Eudes and St. Laurent Streets, in Caen. Today, it belongs to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity who have erected an oratory on the spot where Father Eudes' room was and where he died on August 19, 1680.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

35 -

their house; then, spiritually renewing the people of God by preaching missions, since forming the clergy and exercising ministry must go hand in hand.

The first of Father Eudes' letters to the small Eudist community which has been preserved was written December 9, 1643, a little more than eight months after the creation of the community. He went to Paris with M. Manchon (21) who is somewhat of his assistant, to seek support to facilitate the approval of the Congregation by the Holy See. Leaving it up to his companion to give the news (but that letter was not preserved), he writes a very cordial spiritual exhortation recalling the essentials in a few words, namely: Jesus and Mary carry us in their heart and we must make them live and reign in ours.

My dearest brothers,

I am leaving it up to M. Manchon to write you the news. These few lines are only to assure you

that you are all very present in my heart which is full of unsurpassed affection and tenderness for you. But that is nothing; your real cause for rejoicing is that Our Lord and his most holy Mother carry you in their Heart. Let us bear them in our hearts and strive to make them live and reign there by means of true and profound humility, perfect and cordial charity, complete scorn for the world and self, and pure love for God. Those are

(21). From the very beginning, the members of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary are called "Mister", to be as close as possible to the diocesan clergy. John Eudes, however, continued to be called 'Father Eudes' which is what Oratorians were called. The Eudists adopted the title "Father" at their 1865 General Assembly.

36-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

what will bring peace to your souls and paradise on earth. I beseech Our Lord and his most holy Mother to mold us all according to their Heart, in whose love I embrace you all together and individually, and want to remain

Totally yours,

John Eudes

Priest of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

37 -

**6 . SUPPLIANT APPEAL TO
A POSTULANT OF OUR LADY
OF CHARITY - 1644**

«Be patient a little longer and do not yield to temptation.»

When the Eudists receive this letter from their superior, perhaps they already know that the situation of their sister community, Our Lady of Refuge, is deteriorating. Poverty is extreme, but what is still more serious, Marguerite Morin and her companions do not readily accept the postulants Father Eudes has discovered in the missions he has preached since the foundation. Already several have left or are on the point of leaving.

At a date which is not easy to determine exactly, probably in April, 1644, Father Eudes sends one of them, René de Taillefer, a pathetic letter. He had placed great hope in her and here she is ready to leave. He begs her to do nothing until he has had a chance to speak to her in person. Without naming her, he alludes to Marguerite Morin who, jealous of her authority, closes the door to the house even to him. He suspects that she herself is thinking of leaving, but he explains that he is not the one who is putting her out.

38-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

My dearest daughter,

I implore Our Lord and his most holy Mother to be your strength in this affliction and temptation of yours which grieves me deeply. And have I not good reason to be distressed? I see souls God entrusted to me, who are dearer to me than I am myself, in anguish and in great danger of losing their vocation and then of falling into the clutches of the infernal wolf, while I am not allowed to see them or speak to them to set them at peace.(22) She who so ordains has reason to fear the vengeance of God.(23) Nevertheless, I pray God with all my heart to have mercy on her. As for you, my dearest daughter, I beg you, in the name of God, to do nothing until I have spoken to you. Be patient a little longer and do not yield to temptation. Rest assured that in a few days you will be as happy and consoled

as you are now disheartened.

Consider, my dear daughter, that divine Providence has directed you to me, and that it has pleased him to use me to win you over to his service. That is why I beg you, in the name of Our Lord and his most holy Mother, to grant me what I am asking of you, which is not to leave the house until I have first talked to you. The person you listen to would have you believe that I am turning her out of the house; that is absolutely untrue. I have always said and say once again that if she wishes to remain obedient and not rebel against all the things I have said to her, but rather comply as she should, I will be very pleased to have her stay. If she leaves, therefore, it is not by my orders, but through her own dis

(21). It is difficult to ascertain whether John Eudes is speaking hereabout the postulants or about Marguerite Morin's companions.

(22). Marguerite Morin

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

39 -

obedience. Finally, my dear daughter, I beg you once more to have a little patience and you will see this storm blow over.

What I am saying to you is likewise intended for all our dear Sisters whom I love, in truth, with all my heart. Convey this to them, I beg you, and you will be doing something most pleasing to God.

Your most affectionate father, John Eudes,

Priest of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

P.S. Kneel for a moment at the feet of the most blessed Virgin and give yourself to her, asking for strength. She is your true Mother and will never forsake you.

Shortly thereafter, Marguerite Morin and her first companions leave the house established by Father Eudes. (23) Renée de Taillefer perseveres, practically alone with Marie Herson, the founder's niece, a daughter of his sister Marie. René de Taillefer is about 22 and Marie Herson is only 15!... It is imperative to find help. John Eudes goes looking for it at the Visitation Monastery which he knows well. Bishop Angennes hesitates. How can he allow contemplative nuns to direct a house for penitent women?... Finally, he gives in and, on August 16, 1644, three Visitation Sisters arrive at (23). A few years later, in 1652, Marguerite Morin will found the Congregation of Sisters of Charity of Bayeux. She died a holy death there on October 1st, 1657.

40-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Our Lady of the Refuge which people are beginning to call also Our Lady of Charity. They will stay on as long as required to establish solid foundations and form the novices who enter. The person in charge, Mother Françoise-Marguerite Patin, then forty-four years old, is a holy religious and highly qualified. The future seems to be in good hands.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

41 -

**7 . INCORPORATIONS INTO
THE CONGREGATION OF JESUS
AND MARY - Sept. 23, 1646**

"Come, that we may spend the rest of our lives

together in the service of our good Master."

In parallel action, Father Eudes is trying to consolidate the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. The first requirement is for the members of the new Institute to commit themselves definitively. Several did so from the first days of foundation through an "incorporation promise" composed by Father Eudes.(24)

Two others, Richard Le Mesle and Jacques Finel, at that time probably expressed the wish to wait a while. But months and years have gone by. The founder feels the need to invite them to make a clear choice. On September 23, 1646, while preaching a mission at Lion-sur-Mer (Calvados), he writes to Richard Le Mesle, at the same time as to another confrere entered later, Thomas Vigeon, to urge them to "consummate their sacrifice".

(24). As Bérulle did, John Eudes proposes to his confreres to live in common the demands of baptismal and priestly life and wants them to be as close as possible to the diocesan clergy. He, therefore, never thought of having them pronounce religious vows.

42-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

His letter, at once demanding and cordial, shows how he sees the Congregation he founded: a group of priests resolutely committed to serving the Church, which already has its distinctive life and cohesion, but wants to grow and welcome new members definitively. He already loves them; what he is proposing here is a simple but radical commitment: "So that we may spend the rest of our lives together in the service of our good Master, bringing to him the souls he redeemed by shedding his very blood."

I beg you to get here in a hurry to consummate your sacrifice and stay with your brothers who love you genuinely and want you with them *ad convivendum et ad commoriendum*, to live and die together. For you know that no one who looks back after putting his hand to the plow is fit for the kingdom of God. Come, my beloved brothers, in the name of Our Lord and his most holy Mother, be faithful to him who calls you. Come without delay that we may spend the rest of our lives together in the service of our good Master, bringing to him the souls he redeemed by shedding his very blood. Beware lest the tempter surprise you or the world seduce you. Close your ears to the serpent's voice and open them only to the voice of heaven. (25)

(25). The incorporation of Richard Le Mesle and Jacques Finel took place on the following October 20th, the day of the closing of the mission at Lion-sur-Mer. Thomas Vigeon's took place a little later, but the exact date is not known.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

43 -

8. MISSION AT AUTUN:

TOWARDS THE FEAST OF THE HEART OF MARY - Dec. 12,1647

"We were welcomed here with great demonstrations of affection."

Father Eudes is thinking more and more of seeking papal approval for the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. It would be the best response to the active and resolute opposition of the Oratorians who do not forgive him for having left them. For that purpose - as well as to gain approval for Our Lady of Charity - he sends one of his confreres, M. Simon Mannoury, to Rome at the end of 1646. But no concrete results are achieved. The death of Bishop d'Angennes, May 14, 1647, complicates things. John Eudes recalls his envoy and considers trying his luck in Rome in person.

But a serious illness, contracted at the end of September or early in October, at the mission in La Ferté-Vidame (Diocese of Chartres) hangs on for three weeks and forces him to change his plans, preferring to save his strength for several missions in Burgundy which he is insistently asked to preach. (26) M. Mannoury is the one who heads back to Rome (26). His friend, Gaston de Renty, who has ties to this region and has already financed two missions in the area in 1645 (at Arnay-le-Duc and Couches), urges him to return. Married and father of five children, a man of prayer and action, responsible for the Company of the Blessed

44-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

on November 7th. Thirteen days later, John Eudes leaves Paris for Autun, a distance of about three hundred kilometers, most of which he covers on foot. Arriving at his destination on November 30th, he immediately begins the planned mission.

A letter to Simon Mannoury, dated December 12, gives us brief but interesting details about the trip, the welcome in Autun, plans for the future, always in Burgundy: a follow-up mission at Arnay-le-Duc, to complete the one given in 1645, and a mission at Beaune.

We arrived on the feast of St. Andrew, in good health, thanks be to God, after having very palpably experienced the special help of Our Lord and his most holy Mother each day of our trip. We were welcomed here with great demonstrations of affection by the bishop, priests, magistrates and all the people. We are thirteen missionaries, and soon will be twenty (27) but even if there were a hundred of us that would still not be enough, for our good God is showering extraordinary blessings on this mission. I think we will be here about two months, that is to say, until the Purification. Then, we will spend twelve days or a fortnight at Arnay-le-Duc and, from there to Beaune for Lent.

Sacrament, Gaston de Renty had tremendous influence during his short but surprisingly busy life (1611-1649).

(27). A few diocesan priests already accustomed to working at the missions with the Eudists (who were still only about ten), must have come with them. Besides, Father Eudes planned to find other collaborators on the spot, which is indeed what happened.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

45 -

The end of the excerpt of this letter shows clearly that John Eudes does not foresee what is going to happen. He will only leave Autun for Arnay-le-Duc on February 15, rather than on the 2nd, for the most cordial welcome of Bishop de la Magdelaine de Ragny is overwhelming. On January 20, the bishop approves a little book written by the missionary: *La Dévotion au très-saint Coeur et au très-saint Nom de la Bienheureuse Vierge Marie*, which contains two offices composed by John Eudes, in honor of the Heart and the Name of Mary. The bishop also authorizes public celebration of the Feast of the Heart of Mary, on February 8th. John Eudes joyfully extends his stay at Autun, since it gives him the opportunity to live a unique event there: the first liturgical celebration, in the Church, of the Feast of the Heart of Our Lady.

He had dreamed about such a celebration for a long time. Accustomed as he was, since the days of his formation as an Oratorian, to contemplate Jesus "living in Mary", he had gradually discovered that it is at the very center of her being, in her most pure Heart, that Jesus is present. He understood more and more that the Heart of Mary is Jesus himself, that Jesus and Mary are so intimately united that they constitute but one Heart. With all his being, he wished to celebrate joyously this extraordinary communion of Jesus and Mary, in which he recognized the model and source of the communion of all the members of the Mystical Body among themselves and with their Head - a union which will reach

perfection only at the end of time. Such is the meaning of the prayer which he composed for the Mass and Office of the feast: "Grant that we may worthily celebrate the most holy life of Jesus and Mary in the one Heart, and have but one heart among us and with them."

46-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

9. PROBLEMS IN ROME - April 7, 1648

"Courage, my dear brother, our only goal is to see the will of God accomplished."

In the meantime, M. Mannoury has courageously resumed his representations in Rome. But the Oratorians are there and do all they can to stop him from getting approval of his Congregation which they view as a rival that could bring prejudice to their institute if it were allowed to develop.

On April 7th, Father Eudes who is preaching at Beaune and has just received a rather pessimistic report, tries to encourage his confrere. In this letter he expresses both total trust in the Lord who has already done so much for the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and "will not abandon his work", as well as his total availability: "The Lord will do it in the most appropriate way and at the proper time."

Courage, my dear brother, our only goal is to see the will of God accomplished. On our part, let us do all we can in the interest of our good Master and our dear Mistress, then abandon ourselves in all things to their most holy will. If the time is right, the whole world together will not be able to resist our efforts; if it is not yet the time, "Let us trust the Lord, be strong and take courage." (28) One thing should
(28). Ps. 27, 14.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

47 -

greatly encourage us: that it is impossible to doubt that this God's work, in view of the great and extraordinary blessings it has pleased him to bestow on our meager efforts. This clearly shows that they must come from him and so he will not abandon his work...

The Lord will do it in the most appropriate way and at the proper time, and much better than we might ever wish. It is up to us to be faithful and go our way always with humility, strength and trust.

Simon Mannoury will not obtain the approval of the Eudist Congregation, just special faculties granted to Father Eudes and his confreres by the Congregation of the Propaganda and the Holy Office, (29) which reinforced their position as missionaries in Normandy.

The efforts regarding approval of Our Lady of Charity are still more disappointing: the Pope's collaborators are not ready to accept that Nuns look after penitent women. "There is really nothing to look forward to right now," Mannoury writes to Father Eudes on June 8, 1648, a few days before returning to France.

(29). The Congregation of the Propaganda (in Latin *De Propaganda Fide*), today called the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, had been founded in 1622 to look after missionary territories in pagan countries, and also had jurisdiction over the missions among the protestants. This last area is how it became interested in Father Eudes. The Congregation of the Holy Office, founded in 1542 and now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, had jurisdiction - and still has - over all that concerns faith and morals.

Besides, the situation of Our Lady of Charity is, at this time, very different from what could have been expected. Mother Patin, who was not thoroughly convinced of the value of the work founded by John Eudes, has not really adapted to it and she was relieved to leave, on May 30, 1647, to return to her own Visitation community of which she has just been elected superior. The Sisters she leaves behind will get discouraged, especially when they hear that the new Bishop of Bayeux, Bishop Edouard Molé,(30) has been strongly prejudiced against Father Eudes and is resolved to bring down his undertakings. They will return to their Visitation convent at the end of 1649, and Our Lady of Charity will rest on the shoulders of Rende de Taillefer and Marie Herson alone. Renée took the habit on February 12, 1645 under the name of Sister Marie de l'Assomption, but has not yet made profession (who would think of authorizing her to do so in a community whose future is so uncertain?). Marie Herson, now twenty years old, is still a postulant.

Father Eudes is still not discouraged. Stimulated by his faith and tenacity, the two young girls stand tall and, a little later, in 1651, things will look up.

(30). Appointed Bishop of Bayeux on May 22, 1647, he was consecrated on February 14, 1649.

SAINTJOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

49 -

10. TEDIOUS REPRESENTATIONS IN PARIS - July 9, 1650

"This mortification is one of the hardest I have had to bear in a long time."

The year 1648 which John Eudes began in Burgundy, is a difficult one for France. On August 26th, riots erupt in Paris. They will last three days and are directed against Mazarin and the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria? (31) John Eudes, passing through the Capital city, witnesses the uprisings and the material and moral misery which accompany them. On September 2nd, he writes a respectful but firm letter to the queen calling her attention to her responsibilities and begging her to "give good bishops to the Church". A little later he completes this letter by a Memoir touching on several great disorders in France and the remedies for them. He deplores the profaning of Church feast days, the rigor of tax collectors who harass poor people even on Sunday, lewdness, blasphemy, duels, heresy. He suggests the queen take simple measures to improve matters.

One of Father Eudes' major concerns at the time is the future of the seminary in Caen and, by the very fact, of the Eudist community which directs it. He knows its existence

(31). When Louis XIII died, in 1643, his son Louis XIV was only five years old. The king's wife, Anne of Austria, became Regent and named Cardinal Mazarin as Minister.

is menaced by Bishop Edouard Moïse, the new bishop of Bayeux, who is influenced by the Oratorians. To protect himself from possible eviction, John Eudes, in January, 1649, had a layman, Thomas Quétissens, buy the house in which the seminary is located. A year later, the buyer, who acted as his agent, turns it over to him legally. In May, 1650, sensing the imminent danger, Father Eudes goes to Paris where Bishop Molé is at the time. He hopes to meet him there and enter his good graces, or at least find people to speak to the bishop in his favor. That means he has to drop the mission at Fierville (Diocese of Coutances), which his confreres give without him. But he hopes to join them at Gatteville (same diocese), where another mission is to begin on June 23rd. Unfortunately, his representations bog down...

A first letter to his confreres shows his profound disappointment at being detained in Paris. He overcomes it generously by keeping his eyes fixed on the will of God: "(God) grants me the favor of wanting nothing in this world save to do his most holy will... That is why Paris, which was once my purgatory, is now my paradise, because I see clearly that the will of God led me here and is keeping me here for a few days more..."

The 'few days' will turn into several more and, on July 9th, it becomes clear that John Eudes will not be able to participate in the Gatteville mission. He writes to his confreres again and we quote the most important passages of this very beautiful letter here. Aware that the warmth and cordiality of his words could appear exaggerated, Father Eudes states that he "speaks without exaggeration and in all sincerity". Next, he contemplates the will of God which he calls "our good mother". But he must add a little further that "this does not prevent the most blessed Virgin from also

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

51 -

being our Mother". What a beautiful opportunity to note that the will of God is like the Virgin Mary's "soul, mind, heart and life."

My dearest brothers,
whom I embrace with all my heart, in visceribus Christi. (32)

Here it is already July 9th, and I do not foresee being able to leave Paris for another fortnight. For that reason I am giving up hope of seeing you at the mission in Gatteville. I assure that this mortification is one of the hardest I have ever had to bear for a long time, for it seems to me that I am separated not only from my own heart and entrails, but from something still dearer to me, since in truth I love you more, collectively and individually, than my heart and my body. I believe that I speak without exaggeration and in all sincerity.

It is the most adorable will of God which is our good mother who ordained this separation; may it be blessed forever for having done so! I call it our good mother since from it we have received our being and life, both that of nature and of grace. It must govern us and we must obey it and abandon ourselves to it with great confidence since it has a truly maternal love for us. That is why I beg you, my beloved brothers, keep it in mind, honor and love it as our most lovable mother and make our principal devotion consist in a strong affection of mind and heart to it, conform faithfully to it in all things and everywhere, obeying all its dictates corde magno et animo volentil (33). Let us find all our (32). "In the entrails of Christ, St. Paul's expression in his Letter to the Philippians (1,8). (33) John Eudes found this beautiful expression which he translates himself by "with a great heart and a great love", in the Old Testament (2 Maccabees, 1,3). It became like a slogan for him as it expresses perfectly the way he wishes us to accomplish the will of God.

52-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

glory and happiness in doing this and see all else as pure folly (...)

Furthermore, when I call the will of God our mother, that does not prevent the most blessed Virgin from also being our Mother, because the will of God fills, possesses and animates her in such a way that it is like her soul, her mind, her heart and her life, to the point where she is one and the same,

so to speak, with the will of God. Thus, it is not two mothers we have, but one, to which I give and abandon myself wholeheartedly, with all my dearest brothers, that she might live and reign in us and accomplish all its designs, now and forever, in her own way not ours. Say amen, dearest brothers, but say it with all your heart, not only with your lips, but much more by your deeds.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

53 -

11. THREATS AGAINST THE SEMINARY AT CAEN - Nov. 1650

"Do not be astonished. This is but a passing storm."

In spite of his lengthy stay in Paris, Father Eudes did not succeed in dispelling Bishop Molé's distrust. In October, 1650, he is conducting the mission at Ravenoville (Diocese of Coutances). This is the ninth mission the Eudists give in this diocese in eighteen months. Its bishop, Bishop Auvry, is very favorable to Father Eudes and has him come to the episcopal city in November to discuss his project of opening a seminary.

This is just the time when John Eudes learns that the Bishop of Bayeux is about to close the chapel of the Caen Seminary. He writes to M. Manchon who has remained there.

Do not be astonished, my dearest Brother; this is but a passing storm. If you are contacted, do not reply but simply say that in my absence you have nothing to say until I return. However, if you are ordered to close the chapel, close it and say your Masses wherever you can. Give encouragement to our brothers and urge them to humble themselves before God, putting their hope in him and his most holy Mother, spending as much time as possible before the

54-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Blessed Sacrament. Send some of them to Notre Dame de la Délivrande.(34)

No revolt, no rancor in this letter. John Eudes awaits the trial with serenity, confident that it will contain an invitation to conversion, prayer, trust in God and in the Virgin Mary. He will not be disconcerted, therefore, when a decree from the Chancery Office of Caen will order the closing of the chapel of the "supposed community", on November 29th, thus making it impossible for the seminary to function normally.

Submission to the will of God does not equal passiveness. Without hesitation, Father Eudes takes advantage of the opportunity to go to Coutances. As early as December 8th, the seminary of that diocese is officially established by Bishop Auvry and entrusted to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. It operates first in a very modest house; then, a year later, a former large hostel, La Pomme d'Or, is acquired and its refurbishing is immediately undertaken as well as the construction of a chapel dedicated to the Heart of Mary. Less than four years later, on November 4, 1655 it will be open for public worship.

(34). Notre Dame de la Délivrande was - and still is - a place of pilgrimage to the Virgin Mary, about a dozen kilometers from Caen. John Eudes had been there many times, particularly on March 24, 1643, the eve of the founding of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, with his first companions.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

55 -

12. EPISCOPAL APPROVAL OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY - Feb. 11, 1651

"You are the daughters of the Heart of the Queen of heaven."

At Caen, Father Eudes does not despair. Since nothing can be done about the seminary, he concentrates his efforts on Our Lady of Charity. He has the support of a very influential person in the city, M. de Langrie, who offers him the considerable sum of ten thousand pounds, the interest of which will provide subsistence for the community. He goes to Paris with his wife and presses Bishop Mo16 to give his approval to the foundation of Our Lady of Charity. The bishop tries to sidestep the issue, requiring fourteen thousand pounds. Father Eudes, who is then in Paris, at St. Sulpice Parish where he is giving a mission at the request of the pastor, Jean-Jacques Olier, (35) discreetly adds the missing four thousand pounds. Bishop Mo16 finally gives his authorization on Wednesday, February 8, 1651.

Three days later, John Eudes announces this important news to the small group of Sisters, none of them professed (35). Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), without being a member of the Oratory, was a disciple of Condren. In 1642, he had founded the Company of Saint-Sulpice to work at forming candidates for the priesthood. He had the highest esteem for Father Eudes whom he called one day «the rarity of his century».

56-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

as yet. He invites them to honor and imitate the Heart of Mary since the approval was granted on the very day of her feast. He invites them to trust and gratitude, not only towards God, but towards all their benefactors, including Bishop Mo16. "Above all," does he repeat in concluding his letter, "I implore you to begin right now to live in earnest as true Daughters of the most holy Heart of the Mother of God."

My dearest daughters,

May Jesus, the most holy Heart of Mary be our life and our joy forever!

I have wonderful news for you. Get down on your knees, all of you, to receive it, not from me, but from our most adorable Jesus and his most holy Mother.

At last, after several years of patient waiting, last Wednesday, February 8th, feast day of the most holy Heart of the Blessed Virgin, the letters for your establishment were signed by the Bishop of Bayeux, and the foundation contract was also signed by him and M. and Mme. Langrie. So you are now the daughters of the Heart of the Queen of heaven. As such you are obliged to honor and love in a special way her most lovable Heart, celebrate its feast with particular devotion, to have but one heart with her and with each other, and engrave in your hearts a perfect likeness of the love, charity, obedience, humility, meekness, zeal for the salvation of souls and other virtues which reign in her heart, so that you may thus conform to the Heart of her Son.

You need no longer be afraid: your community and your institute are founded upon the most sacred Heart of the sovereign Empress of the universe. And that happened not by

SAINTJOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

57 -

human efforts but by a particular order of heaven. For, last Tuesday, the Bishop of Bayeux, after several previous delays and difficulties, had again postponed the matter to Friday; and later the same

day, he announced it would take place on Wednesday, which it did. Eternal thanks to the most holy Trinity, to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to his most precious Mother and to all the angels and saints who interceded in this matter. May all who cooperated in it in one way or another be forever blessed with heaven's holiest blessings.

By way of giving thanks, I suggest that every day, for a week, you should all together recite a Te Deum, the Ave Cor sanctissimum, (38) one of the litanies to the most holy Heart of the Blessed Virgin, with the prayers to Saint Joseph, Saint Gabriel, the holy Guardian Angels, and the one for All Saints Day. Besides that, I suggest that you receive holy communion thirty-four times, at your convenience, in thanksgiving to the most Holy Trinity, to Jesus, to the most holy Heart of his glorious Mother, to the angels and the saints, for the Bishop of Bayeux, for your founders and benefactors and for all those who contributed to the success of this affair.

In addition, it seems to me that you ought to write four thank you letters: one to the Bishop of Bayeux, one to President de Langrie (39), one to Madam President and one to Mme de la Porte to whom you are greatly indebted. (40) I am asking

(38). A beautiful prayer to the "Heart of Jesus and Mary," composed by Saint John Eudes and still prayed by his spiritual daughters and sons.

(39). M. de Langrie had been President of the Parliament of Normandy from 1647 to 1649.

(40). One of Saint John Eudes' benefactors for a previous mission, Mme de la Porte had accompanied M. and Mme de Langrie in their representations to Bishop Mo16.

58-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

our dear Sister Saint François-Xavier⁴¹ to write these four letters. Above all, I implore you to begin right now to live in earnest as true daughters of the most holy Heart of the Mother of God.

It is in the sacred love of this Heart that I am and will eternally remain, my dearest daughters, Entirely yours, John Eudes, missionary priest.

P.S. Wait until M. Mannoury (41) and M. de Langrie come to Caen to sing the solemn Te Deum. In the meantime, do not neglect to recite it, as I mentioned in this letter.

A postulant who must have served as secretary. Sister Saint François Xavier left the convent without ever making profession.

(41). Simon Mannoury is in Paris with Father Eudes. Among the first Eudists, he appears to be the one who helped Our Lady of Charity most.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

59 -

13. OUR LADY OF CHARITY: TAKING THE HABIT - Sept. 3, 1651

"May Our Lord and his most holy Mother clothe you with their spirit."

On June 14, 1651, Mother Patin returns to Our Lady of Charity with three other Visitation Sisters. Having matured thanks to the trials of a painful illness, she now understands that it is her vocation to take charge of the work founded by Saint John Eudes. This time she is determined to dedicate herself to it heart and soul. She even wants to make amends for the negligences and errors of her first stay at Our Lady of Charity, especially the fact of directing the best postulants to the Visitation in 1647.

With the Visitation Nuns back, it is possible to organize a novitiate. Marie Herson, Father Eudes' niece, who has been waiting for years, is the first to be admitted. She takes the habit on September 8,

1651 and is given the name of Sister Marie de la Nativité.

During her preparatory retreat she makes known her feelings at this time to her uncle who is then at the Cistercian Abbey of Val-Richer, about thirty kilometers from Caen. On September 3rd, he sends her a most affectionate letter expressing his regrets at being unable to attend the ceremony. No doubt does he judge that his presence might upset the bishop who would surely hear about it. But, as he usually

60-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

does, he immediately sees the spiritual benefit both he and his niece may derive from this disappointment. To help her discover and live the deep meaning of this habit taking, he offers eight recommendations, of which we quote only the first four here.

My dearest niece and daughter in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

With all my heart I bless our most lovable Savior for the good sentiments he gave you during your retreat and I beg him to grant you the grace to be faithful to him by using them well as he wishes you to do.

My being unable to attend the ceremony of your taking the habit is a mortification for you and for me. But it will be better this way and will result in greater blessings since it is most certain that the more crosses there are in the affairs of God, the more advantageous they are for us. That will not prevent my being present in mind and heart to implore Our Lord and his most holy Mother to use their own holy hands to divest you of yourself and of all earthly things, and clothe you instead with their spirit and virtue.

On your part, there are eight things you must do:

First, you must enter into an ardent desire of totally renouncing yourself and everything that is not God, and of giving yourself perfectly to Our Lord, that he may command you to do, without reservation, all that will please him.

Secondly, you must offer yourself to the Blessed Virgin, with a fervent desire to serve, honor and imitate her as your dearest Mother, and cultivate a special devotion to her most lovable Heart.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

61 -

Thirdly, you must consecrate yourself to the Son and the Mother, in order to occupy yourself according to their most holy will with saving lost souls who are so precious to them.

The fourth thing is to protest to Our Lord that you want to do all these things, particularly those you have to do on the feast of the Nativity of the most Blessed Virgin, not for the sake of heavenly rewards, nor for earthly merits and consolations, but purely for his love and glory and to fulfill his most adorable Will [...] (43)

Sister Marie de la Nativité Herson joins Sister Marie de l'Assomption de Taillefer who has been a novice for more than six years and will finally pronounce her vows on June 2, 1652. Henceforth, the Order of Our Lady of Charity really exists: there is one professed Nun and the hope of having others in the near future.

(43). The fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth recommendations respectively concern: union with all

religious women and men; praying to the saints and angels; praying to the Virgin Mary to ask for humility; trusting in Jesus and Mary rather than in oneself. Here, as on other occasions, John Eudes' preoccupation with making a complete instruction with no omissions is manifest... This, we must admit, makes his style somewhat heavy.

62-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

14. JOY AT THE CAEN SEMINARY - May 15, 1653

"Blessed be God who comforts us in all our tribulations".

For Father Eudes, 1652 is a very full year. His Congregation now has two houses and candidates are coming in. It is imperative to establish precise and solid structures. John Eudes sets up "probation" in Caen, a year of intensive spiritual formation somewhat like novitiates in religious orders. He writes the Constitutions,(44) of which he already made a first draft in 1645. He also prepares the Proper of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (45), which will be published in the following year.

The situation of the Caen seminary remains unsure. Bishop Edouard Mold died suddenly on April 6, 1652. What will his successor do? The successor, appointed at the beginning of 1653, happens to be his brother, François Molé(46).

(44). A little later he will make some additions, especially after accepting the college of Lisieux. About 1645, John Eudes had also composed, in Latin, the Rules of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, a sort of compendium of quotes from Holy Scripture which formed a marvelous spiritual introduction to the Constitutions.

(45). This liturgical Proper consisted in a certain number of "proper" or special feasts for the Congregation, the most important being the Feast of the Heart of Mary and the Feast of the Priesthood.

(46). He is also often called M. de Sainte-Croix. He will resign after only a few months and will never be consecrated.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

63 -

Fortunately, he does not share his brother's hostility towards Father Eudes and, on May 10, 1653, obtains the authorization to have the seminary chapel reopened.

It is an immense joy for John Eudes; one which he wants to share with his brothers of Coutances. On May 15, he sends them a letter overflowing with joy and thanksgiving. Here are its first paragraphs. My dearest and most beloved brothers,

Blessed be God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulations. (47) Alleluia! Alleluia!

Our chapel is open and we celebrate Mass in it. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

It was not opened until last Tuesday, but the matter was concluded and signed on Saturday, Feast of the apparition of Our Risen Lord to his most holy Mother.(48) Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

It is a stroke of the incomparable power and ineffable goodness of our most bountiful Mother who consented to defer the conclusion of this matter until the day of her greatest joy on earth, and did so

when we were no longer giving

(47). John Eudes quoted this passage of the second Letter to the Corinthians, 1, 3-4, in Latin.

(48). This feast, instituted by Saint John Eudes, and celebrated during the Easter season, belonged to the Proper of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

64-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

it much thought, after we and our friends had exerted all our efforts in vain. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

This Mother of mercy chose to avail herself of the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Mercy in Paris to grant us this favor, in order to show us that this was a result of her boundless mercy; that we are missionaries of divine mercy, sent by the Father of mercies to dispense the treasures of his mercy to the wretched, that is to say, to sinners, and to deal with them in a spirit of mercy, compassion and meekness. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

John Eudes then goes on to ask: "How shall we repay this lovable Mother? How shall we repay her beloved Son.

He indicates to his confreres several ways of expressing their gratitude: among others, celebrating Masses "for all those who were opposed to us.---for all our friends.... for ourselves and renewing their awareness of the importance of the Eucharistic presence of the Lord, of which the seminary was deprived during two and a half years.

1653 will close with the founding of a third Eudist community. On October 25th, during a mission at Lisieux, Father Eudes is commissioned by Bishop de Matignon to assume direction of that city's college and open a seminary there. The first responsibility, the missionary accepts without much enthusiasm, but the bishop makes it an express condition for entrusting him with the seminary. Father Eudes will often remark that this college must remain the exception and no others are to be accepted. He will also try to stimulate the apostolic spirit of the Fathers serving there, reminding them that "it is a mission of great consequence to which the Son of God, sovereign missionary, sends them."

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

65 -

15. PRESSING EXHORTATION TO THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY - before 1656

"Must a new Gospel be written for you?"

Saint John Eudes' two foundations (the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and the Order of Our Lady of Charity) are now on solid ground. His peace of mind will not last very long however. Indeed, Msgr. Servien, appointed Bishop of Bayeux, May 23, 1654, to replace M. de Sainte-Croix who resigned before taking possession of his See, is immediately won over by Father Eudes' adversaries. On the other hand, the community of Our Lady of Charity worries the founder. Perhaps is it tempted to indulge in a certain *laissez-faire* now that the major difficulties have been overcome? Perhaps it wishes to devote itself to a less stressful task than welcoming penitent women? We are unable to know for sure. What we do know is that Father Eudes, at a date we cannot determine exactly, sends a long letter to the Sisters to remind them vigorously of the demands of their vocation.(49)

In this letter, of which we quote only excerpts, John Eudes insists on purity of intention, obedience, fraternal charity, and especially apostolic zeal which is the distinct
(49). This letter was written for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, but it is not possible to tell in what year. The only thing that is certain is that it was written before 1656.

tive mark of the community and the object of the Sisters' fourth vow.(50) The founder is demanding, even almost ironic: "Must a new Gospel be written for you or do you want God to send another Messiah, one of honey and roses?" His patience is sorely tried by the little community's hesitations and delays.

My dearest Sisters and most beloved Daughters in the sacred love of the most holy Heart of Jesus and Mary,

May the grace peace and love of this same Jesus be yours forever.

Not having the pleasure of being able to address you in person at this time, I am writing you this letter to invite and urge you to prepare adequately to celebrate the solemnity of the glorious Assumption of our most admirable Mother. It is her greatest Feast, the day of her triumph and glories. It is the day which ends all her labor and suffering, and marks the beginning of her rest and her eternal happiness...

You must seek means to increase her joy and her glory. Here are four excellent ones:

The first is to implant deep within your hearts a firm resolution and fixed intention of seeking nothing in all your actions, mortifications and exercises save the glory of her Son and the accomplishment of his most adorable will.

(50). Like some other founders, John Eudes added to the three traditional vows (poverty, chastity and obedience), a fourth vow relating directly to the specific charism of the Order, namely: attention to women and young girls with moral difficulties.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

67 -

The second is to be strictly faithful to the obedience you owe to your good Mother Superior whom you should regard and honor as a representative of the most holy Virgin, your true Mother and first Superior. Be obedient also to your Rules and Constitutions.

The third is to love and cherish one another with a sincere, simple, tender and cordial love which banishes from your thoughts, words and actions all that is in the least contrary to it, and will impel you to make prompt and effective amends for the slightest offenses you might commit against mutual charity.

The fourth is to entertain a fervent desire to attain the goal for which your holy Order was founded, which is to labor by your prayers, example, instructions and in every way which holy obedience may prescribe, for the salvation of the lost souls divine Providence may send you...

Yes, my dearest daughters, you have, in a way, but one and the same vocation with the Mother of God. For, just as God chose to form his Son within her, and in the hearts of the faithful through her agency, so too he called you to the holy community in which you are now so that his Son might live in you, and through you restore him to life again in the souls in which he has died...

But, remember that the evil spirit will not fail to tempt you regarding your vocation, since this kind of work is singularly displeasing to him and there is no one he hates so much as those who labor for the salvation of souls.

He will remind you of the trouble and difficulties you must suffer. But remember, my dearest daughters, that there

68 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

is no state in life exempt from work and suffering. Remember, if you do not suffer with Jesus, you will not reign with him. Remember that all our happiness on earth consists in being crucified with him.

That is why there is nothing we should fear more than being without a cross. Cast your eyes on a crucifix and see what Christ suffered to save souls. Is it reasonable that you should be associated with him in the greatest work for which he came into the world, namely: to save sinners, a work which cost him so dearly, and yet that you should expect to be spared any trial?...

How can you be numbered among his members and spouses unless you conform to him? Must a new Gospel be written for you or do you want God to send another Messiah, one of honey and roses? Would you prefer to go to heaven by a different path from the one the Mother of God and all the saints traveled? Or is it your wish to go there alone, leaving your poor sisters on the road to hell because you are so frail that you are afraid to make the effort to lend them a helping hand?

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

69 -

16. UNSHAKABLE ATTACHMENT TO OUR LADY OF CHARITY -Aug. 12, 1656

"Nothing will ever be able to separate me from the love I must have for Our Lady of Charity."

A painful trial awaits Father Eudes, in 1656, concerning Our Lady of Charity. In February, the "spiritual Father" of the community, M. de Bernesq, who was also Vicar General of the diocese, dies. A successor must be found and the Constitutions⁽⁵¹⁾ foresee that the community proposes a candidate to the bishop. Unfortunately, the choice is not unanimous. The community as a whole greatly favors Father Eudes, but Mother Patin is reluctant. She has in mind a certain M. V6rel and proposes his name to the bishop while indicating the community's choice. In fact, Bishop Servien holds to his freedom of choice and selects a third party, M. Claude Le Grand. A disappointment for the Sisters, but a good choice as it turns out. M. Le Grand is a priest of valor and experience who will take to heart the community's interests and will become one of Father Eudes' friends.

" "Spiritual Father" was the common expression at the time, but it really meant what was later called the "ecclesiastical superior" or the bishop's representative for the community.

(51). Saint John Eudes had adopted the Visitation Constitutions which were already approved by the Holy See, and added an introduction and a few important chapters relating to the particular charism of Our Lady of Charity and the vow of apostolic zeal (fourth vow).

70-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Why Mother Patin's reluctance concerning the founder? Because, on some points, they do not totally agree. For instance, she does not feel it is necessary to immediately obtain the Holy See's approval of Our Lady of Charity, and when Father Eudes broaches the subject, she gives him the silent treatment. " I wrote to her again," says John Eudes to M. Mannoury in a letter dated July 29, 1656, "but she does not respond on the matter."

John Eudes can guess how Mother Patin feels about him: "For a long time now the good Mother has not wanted me around," he says in the same letter. It causes him a great deal of suffering. "If I

listened to my inclination, I would have ample reason to abandon this house". But he will not get discouraged. On the contrary, he will comfort the Sisters he suspects are worried.

On August 12, 1656, he sends a letter from Coutances to Sister Marie de l'Assomption de Taillefer, the first professed Sister, (52) who places great trust in him and has probably told him about her fears for the community. Paraphrasing a text of St. Paul, (53) he protests that nothing will ever be able to separate him from the house of Our Lady of Charity and that he will always wholeheartedly do all he can to help it.

(52). This is one of the rare letters in existence today. It is preserved at the community of Our Lady of Charity at La Rochelle.

(53). Romans, 8, 35-39.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 71 -

My dearest daughter,

May Jesus, the most holy Heart of Mary, be ours forever!

It is in the sacred love of this divine Heart, furnace of immortal love, that I love invariably and equally, without any preference, all my dearest Sisters, the beloved daughters of my most honored Mother.

What will separate my heart from the holy love I should feel for the most cherished house of such a good Mother? Tribulation or anguish, or persecution, or the sword, or any other thing? No, no, I am certain, with the grace of God who has chosen me to take care of it for him, that neither the angels, nor the Principalities, nor virtues, nor heights, nor depths, nor death, nor life, nor any other created being will be able to separate me from the love I must have for Our Lady of Charity. Indeed, I will always do all I can for this blessed house of my divine Mother, and will do so with all my heart. And, no matter what happens, neither heaven nor earth nor hell will keep me from doing, in this matter as in all others, the most adorable will of God, which alone is what I desire, aspire to and seek.

I should like with all my heart to do what our good Mother, (54) you and our dear Sisters wish, but I am suffering

(54). Although she entertained reservations regarding some of Father Eudes' projects, Mother Patin was not hostile to him. She probably invited him to visit the community of Our Lady of Charity as soon as possible. But the missionary is in poor health and M. Manchon's illness worries him a lot. However, his confrere will recover. Madame Blouet de Camilly, to whom John Eudes gave alarming news about his confrere stating that he was almost sure to die, will tease him on his gifts of prophesy. That the missionary does not really appreciate: "It is certain that without a miracle he was going to die; and that is so true that the doctors claim that it was impossible for him to survive the third day of his illness without a miracle, it was so violent and fatal. That is what I told you and my brothers in Caen as soon as I heard the news, but I added several times that only a miracle could save him, and I was not saying that lightly. I am telling you all this now, my dear daughter, not so that you will consider me a prophet, for you would be sorely mistaken, but so that I will not be considered a false prophet, and in order to bear witness to the truth since you gave me the opportunity to do so in your last letter when, in jest, you qualified me as such. That is how most calumnies begin..."

from a slight indisposition now that does not allow me to travel without risk of falling sick along the way, as happened to M. Manchon while coming here. I urgently need to take medicine, but must wait until the dog days are over. So I do not think I will be able to go to Caen before September. But, I assure you it will be as soon as possible, with the help of Our Lord.

In the meantime, I will recommend you and your affairs to him with all possible affection as I do every day. Offer him also and his most holy Mother the one who is in truth and forever in love with their most lovable Heart, my dearest daughter,

Entirely yours,
John Eudes, missionary priest

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

73 -

**17. HOW TO HANDLE A TOUCHY
SITUATION - March 7, 1657**

"Ask the friends of the house to meet and discuss how best to proceed."

The community of Our Lady of Charity is developing, as well as the work for which it is responsible. The house (55) has become too small. At the end of 1656, Mother Patin buys another one, very poor but bigger, with possibilities for expanding. The prospect of moving, however, worries the superior: might the city aldermen voice opposition? She consults Father Eudes by mail and he replies on March 7, 1657.

Mother Patin's letter was most cordial. She is probably aware of having hurt Father Eudes' feelings the previous year when the superior of the community was appointed, and now wants to dissipate the clouds that hang over their relationship. John Eudes immediately seizes upon this opportunity for reconciliation. His reply is full of affection: in Mother Patin's attitude he deliberately underlines only her zeal and charity toward the house of Our Lady of Charity and her kindness toward him. "Our Lord," he adds, "has given me sentiments in your regard which words cannot express." Father Eudes is happy the community is joining (55). This house was made available to the Sisters in 1649 by M. de Langrie. They had already moved twice.

74-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

well and encourages it to continue making progress. Further on, he tries to reassure Mother Patin about moving and offers advice on how to settle in the new house. But finally he prefers to leave it up to the 'friends of the house'.

My dearest Mother and, in truth, most beloved in him who is eternal Love.

I thank him with all my heart for having filled your own with such love and charity for his most holy Mother's house and such kindness to me who am so unworthy of it. I thank you a thousand times, my dearest Mother, for the many ways you have shown it to us in your most cordial letters. I can also assure you that Our Lord has given me sentiments in your regard which words cannot express.

What you write about our dear Sisters makes me very happy. I bless Our Lord and his most holy Mother with all my heart for all the graces they are bestowing on them. I urge them all to be faithful to these blessings and to compete with each other to imprint upon themselves a perfect likeness of their most adorable Father and most lovable Mother through careful and continuous imitation of their holy

virtues, especially their humility, obedience, charity and forbearance, and their overwhelming love for the cross.

Some time ago, I received letters from the King concerning our business in Rome.(56) God willing, I hope to bring them to you soon, for I am feeling much better, thank God, (56). While being most cordial with Mother Patin, John Eudes maintains his point of view. He is still convinced of the necessity of obtaining the Holy See's approval of Our Lady of Charity as soon as possible, and tells her so in this letter.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

75 -

and am only waiting until I feel strong enough for the journey. (58)

Fear nothing, my dear Mother, for God is with you and on your side. And if he is for you, who can oppose you? Time and again you have felt the effects of his protection of the little house of Our Lady of Charity. Why, then, are you afraid? Rest assured that he will finish what he has begun. It is true that we must always do all we can. Now, we can do one of three things:(59) the first, proceed with such secrecy that you will be housed before it becomes known; the second, have M. de Bernières write to Madame de Longueville asking her to write to the aldermen requesting that they not interfere; or if he thinks it is best, I can make the request for her on my way through Rouen, but I need to know how he feels about it. The third course of action would be to speak to the aldermen and the King's men asking them to consent to your moving in. Since this last approach is one of submission and humility, God would bless it and the outcome, could not fail to succeed. If they refused, we could then have recourse to Madame de Longueville.

Do not be satisfied with my thoughts on the matter but ask the friends of the house, M. de Bernières, M. and

(57). John Eudes took sick in Paris but is well on the way to recovery.

(58). John Eudes analyses the situation and comes up with three hypotheses: (1) occupy the new house without telling anyone; (2) call upon the influential Madame de Longueville, wife of the Governor of Normandy, who is at Rouen; (3) request authorization from the aldermen of Caen. He favors the third option, with the second as a possible recourse.

(59). John Eudes has just expressed his opinion very clearly. But he immediately draws back: he does not want to make the decision alone; as a matter of fact, he would prefer to have others make it. As is evident in other letters also, he is aware of his tendency to authoritarianism. He mistrusts his own way of thinking and his own will. He respects his collaborators and would not want them to become simple executants. Therefore, he requests that the usual benefactors of Our Lady of Charity get together and reflect on the matter "for Our Lord will inspire them with his holy will." John Eudes expresses here a very "modern" approach to discovering the will of God, namely: the attentive and loyal analysis of the situation by several persons to confront their views and discern what God wants.

The hypothesis which was finally adopted was the third. March 25, 1657, the community settled into the new lodgings, later renovated and extended, and called "le Vieux Berceau" (the old cradle). It was to survive nearly three centuries. On the night of June 6 to 7, 1944, the community was forced to leave, the house having been practically destroyed by the bombing that accompanied the allied troops' invasion of Normandy.

76-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Mme de Camilly, to get together and discuss the best way to proceed, for Our Lord will inspire them with his holy will.

In the sacred love of the most holy Heart of Jesus and Mary I greet our dearest Sisters, one and all. I remain, in truth, ever and unreservedly, my dearest Mother,

Entirely yours,
John Eudes, missionary priest.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

77 -

18. SUBLIMITY OF THE EUDIST VOCATION -Dec. 1657

«He wishes us to serve
as models and the norm for priests.»

At the seminary of Caen, the fears that Msgr. Servien's appointment as Bishop of Bayeux had raised have gradually disappeared. In March, 1656, he visits the parish of Lingèvres, near Bayeux, while John Eudes and his companions are giving a mission there. This gives him an opportunity to see and appreciate their work. At the same time, this constitutes a sort of public approval.(61)

At the end of July of the following year, having heard about the effects of another of Father Eudes'missions in his diocese, at Létanville, the bishop voices his satisfaction. That is when he decides to make the seminary at Caen a real diocesan seminary.(62) Without letting the opposition of the Oratorians stop him, he engages proceedings with the king

(61)In fact, John Eudes arranged for this episcopal visit and the mission to coincide. Bishop Servien's secretary informed John Eudes of the bishop's plan to visit Lingèvres on March 9 to be godfather to François du Fresne. John Eudes then accelerated the preparations for the mission in order to begin it a few days prior to that date.

(62). Up to then, the priests and the candidates for the priesthood who came to the seminary did so on their own. Henceforth, the bishop will ask all those who aspire to the priesthood in his diocese to spend some time at the seminary.

78-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

and the Parliament of Normandy. On Dec. 7, 1657, he appoints John Eudes superior of the seminary. A few days later, at his request, a solemn ceremony takes place.

In a letter addressed shortly after to the Eudists who are giving a mission at Honfleur (then in the Diocese of Lisieux), John Eudes relates the ceremony. He also recalls the goals of the Congregation, insisting a great deal on the service and formation of priests. He invites his confreres to dispose themselves as best they can to do the work God entrusts to them.

The Bishop drew up very authentic letters patent... Then he ordered the pastor of St. Julien of Caen(60) to proclaim it publicly and to send notices last Sunday to all parish priests and preachers, instructing them to announce to everyone the establishment of the seminary of Bayeux in our house and that the ceremony would take place in our chapel, that same day, with all possible solemnity. And that is what happened. We sang a high Mass in the morning and vespers in the afternoon, both with great solemnity. M. de Saint-Pierre, (61) Canon of Bayeux, came expressly to say the office after the Vicar General and I had invited him to do so...

Blessed be Our Lord and his most holy Mother who are the true and sole authors of this work. For we, on our part, did nothing, either by ourselves or through others, to petition the Bishop of Bayeux. On the contrary, he had been

(60). This pastor was none other than Claude Le Grand who, the previous year, had been appointed "ecclesiastical superior" of Our Lady of Charity (see Letter No. 16).

(61). He refers here to the pastor of Saint-Pierre, one of the most important parishes in the city.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

79 -

strongly importuned by the Congregation to which he was bound for many years by a very special friendship.(62) They made every effort to prevent it, as did several other persons who were offering singular advantages for his seminary and overlooked nothing that could possibly be done by themselves or their friends to persuade him to reject us and to ally himself with them. Nevertheless, he elected to ignore all these solicitations and, after having broken with all the others, chose poor nobodies like us to take charge of his seminary...

You must bear in mind that the Congregation has been established by God in his Church and that he has granted you the grace of calling you to serve in it for these three ends:'

First, to give you the means of arriving at the perfection and sanctity consonant with the priestly state.

Second, to work for the salvation of souls through missions and other priestly functions, which is the work of the Apostles and Our Lord himself. It is so great and divine a work that there would seem to be none greater or more divine.

Nevertheless, there is one which surpasses it, and this is to work for the salvation and sanctification of the clergy. It consists in saving the savors, directing the directors, teaching the doctors, feeding the shepherds, enlightening those

The Congregation of the Oratory.

(62) The goals of the Congregation are presented here in a different order than in the Constitutions, which had been composed a few years earlier. The phrasing is also somewhat different. But the insistence is the same: "to work at the salvation and sanctification of the clergy."

80-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

who are the light of the world, sanctifying those who are the sanctification of the Church, performing in the hierarchy of the Church what the Seraphim and Cherubim do in the heavenly realm. Such is the third end for which God willed to establish our little Congregation in the Church and for which he has summoned us to join it, through an incomprehensible mercy of which we are infinitely unworthy. He wants to place in our hands what he considers most precious, the most illustrious portion of his Church, dearer to him than the apple of his eye, which is the heart of his Mystical Body, that is to say, the clergy. It is the holy family whose care and guidance he wishes to entrust to us.

Judge from that, my dearest brothers, the extent of our obligations and what perfection he asks of us. He wants priests to be models and examples for the faithful, but he wishes us to serve as models and the norm for priests.

Let us humble ourselves at the sight of such weighty considerations, acknowledging our unworthiness and infinite inability to perform such a task. Let us cultivate a great mistrust of ourselves while preserving the utmost confidence in him who calls us, for he has very powerful graces to give us, proportionate to our vocation. With his grace there is nothing we cannot do. Let us, however, conceive an earnest desire to place no obstacle in its way, but rather to prepare ourselves to receive it. So, let us renew our resolve and offer ourselves to him to perform in a holy manner all the priestly functions, to faithfully carry out all our duties in the community, to execute all his orders promptly, to

obey our superiors to the letter, to love one another sincerely, and above all to humble ourselves constantly and in all things.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

8 1 -

Having become diocesan, the seminary at Caen is very short of space in the "Old Mission". At the end of 1658, Father Eudes, in agreement with Bishop Servien and with his help, purchases a part of La Place des Petits-Prés, to erect a building suited to the work and, first of all, erect a "church in honor of the most holy Heart of the most holy Mother of God." (63)

(63). La Place des Petits-Prés was very close to the Old Mission. In fact, the cornerstone of the new church will not be laid until May 20, 1664.

82-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

19. AETERNAL CALL TO OBEDIENCE

- Dec. 1658 or Jan. 1659

"Open your eyes, my dearest brothers,
and see the error of your ways."

At the seminary of Caen, 1658 closed on a note of great hope. At the same time, the opening of a seminary in Rouen, the Congregation of Jesus and Mary's fourth, is announced. As early as March 30, 1658, Archbishop Harley de Champvallon, who is acquainted with Father Eudes' work at Caen, Coutances and Lisieux, met him in Paris and entrusted him with the responsibility of running the seminary he wants to open. But there were complications due to the fact that the cathedral chapter was offended at not having been consulted before a decision was made. Its consent was eventually obtained on December 30 and the seminary opened on February 9, 1659, with Thomas Manchon as rector. John Eudes arrives in Rouen on the 12th and will remain there several months as he wants to observe first-hand this foundation in the ecclesiastical capital of all Normandy.

Besides, this foundation has just indirectly created a tempest within the Congregation. To appoint M. Manchon to Rouen, Father Eudes has had to terminate his mandate as superior of the Lisieux community. In his place he has designated M. Bernard who has the reputation - probably well deserved - of being authoritative. The Lisieux Eudists protest vehemently. The bursar even talks of resigning and adds

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

8 3 -

- no doubt attributing to his companions sentiments they do not all share - that "the others threaten to quit and leave the Congregation"...

John Eudes had taken the precaution of writing to his confreres that "this is only for a short time", which implies that he himself foresaw that this appointment would not be easily accepted. He had not expected such a violent reaction, however.

His letter to them - which we quote in its entirety - is a stern call to obedience. In it we detect the sadness of the founder who is disappointed by his confreres' attitude: "Where are the fruits of so many meditations, spiritual readings and Masses?... This fills me with a most lively sorrow to see so little virtue among you." Nevertheless, he does not lose confidence in them, and ends his letter on a very fraternal tone: "I am, with all my heart, my dearest brothers, entirely yours."

My very dear and very beloved brothers,

You are aware that all priests, especially missionaries, are obliged to practise all the virtues so perfectly that they be models of holiness for all the faithful. Consequently, you know that for them obeying all their superiors' orders must be without question.(64)

If you had practised it that way, you would have done something very pleasing to Our Lord and his most holy Mother, very profitable for your souls and very comforting (64). "Unquestioning obedience" does not mean passive acceptance. John Eudes, would have accepted, as he later states and as the Constitutions indicated explicitly, that his confreres express their feelings "in a spirit of humility and submission".

84-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

for me. But if you were not virtuous enough to do so, you should at least have been satisfied with exposing your feelings to me in a spirit of humility and submission.

Even if I had sent you the lowliest of our lay brothers to govern you, you should have submitted to it since, for your sakes, Our Lord submitted to Herod, to Pilate, to the executioners who crucified him, and to the forces of darkness. The man I sent you is one of the first to have entered our Congregation.(65) He is extremely wise, virtuous and charitable. Yet you scorn him and reject him, thereby condemning the superior of the congregation in the choice he has made, preferring your own judgment to his. But what is worse, one among you writes to me on behalf of the others that this is a provocation, that he is giving up his post as bursar and the others are threatening to quit and leave the Congregation. What kind of language is that? Is that any way for priests, missionary priests, to talk? What has happened to humility, submission, sacrifice of self, of one's own reasoning and will? Where are the fruits of so many meditations, spiritual readings and Masses?

Open your eyes, my dearest brothers, and see the error of your ways.

1. You have resisted the most holy will of God which was made known to you through the one who takes his place.

2. You have saddened and grieved your poor father who loves you more than anything.

(65). Antoine Bernard was in contact with the Congregation almost from its foundation. But he entered only in 1653 because he had not been able to relinquish his post as pastor sooner.

SAINTJOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

85 -

3. You have scorned your brother and hurt him immeasurably, for how will he be regarded in the Congregation from now on? If I did what you are asking, he would be completely discredited and ruined(66), and that would be enough to force him to leave the congregation.

4. You have done incalculable harm to the congregation itself through your very pernicious example, the aftermath of which is most dangerous. For whenever the superior of the congregation decides to send a superior to a house who is not acceptable to the bursar or to somebody else, they will only have to announce that they are leaving their function and threaten to leave, etc. Lastly, my dearest brothers, by acting and speaking this way you are holding a dagger at my throat to force me to do your will. It is like stabbing me in the heart, for it fills me with a most lively sorrow to see so little virtue among you, especially since I wrote you that it would be only for a short time.

I hope all these considerations will help you to recognize your errors, to humble yourselves and implore God's forgiveness, to resolve never to do such a thing again and submit with all your heart to the most adorable will of God made known to you by the person who takes his place among you. (67)

I am, with all my heart, my dearest brothers, entirely yours,

John Eudes, missionary priest.

(67). Father Eudes' letter convinced the Lisieux Eudists to accept M. Bernard. But the founder was wise enough not to ask too much of them: he withdrew M. Bernard at the end of the year and named M. Mannoury to replace him.

86-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

20. TRUST IN TIMES OF DESTITUTION

- 1 6 5 9

We have but one thing to fear, and that is to be too fearful and lack confidence."

At Rouen, serious problems await M. Manchon and his companions. The Jansenists are very active there.(68) First, they try to implicate with them the directors of the seminary. Then, failing to do so, they attack them violently. As early as February, 1659, Father Eudes recommends extreme caution to M. Manchon. The latter has another chronic and obsessing preoccupation: the seminary's very precarious financial situation. Several times John Eudes writes to comfort him and urge him to renew his trust in God.

These are excerpts from a letter which cannot be dated exactly but was almost certainly written in 1659. It contains the well-known words of advice: "We have but one thing to fear, and that is to be too fearful and lack confidence." Trust in God, however, is not synonymous with inertia: "As for me, I am sparing no effort or endeavor," the founder continues insisting on the faithful observance of the Constitu

(68) Condemned by the Pope in 1642, and again in 1653, Jansenism spread nevertheless in numerous regions of France. John Eudes, unshakable in his faith and fidelity to the Church, was always a staunch adversary of the "new doctrine". That gained for him tenacious and merciless hostility on the part of its proponents.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

87 -

tions so that "God be well served and honored." That, indeed, for him, is what is most important.

I have constantly before me the needs of your house: but I cannot doubt that our most bountiful Father and our admirable Mother will show their generosity in this urgent necessity. No, no, no, my dearest brother, they will not abandon their poor children, however unworthy and unfaithful they may be; heaven and earth would sooner come to an end.

Will he who lavishes his gifts on so many Turks (69) so many blasphemers, heathens and atheists, abandon his own true children? Impossible! It is utterly impossible! We have but one thing to fear and that is to be too fearful and lack confidence.

The need is urgent, but I trust that help is not far away. As for me, I am sparing no effort or endeavor to do all I reasonably can in this matter but, thank God, without haste or worry and without relying on what I am doing. (70) Do as much on your part.

But above all, I urge you to see to it that God is well served and honored through faithful and literal obedience to

(69). In the mentality of his day, John Eudes assimilates Turks, that is to say Muslims, with blasphemers, heathens and atheists. Experience and reflection brought the Church to recognize the values, incomplete but nonetheless real, of non-Christian religions, and distinguish between doctrinal error and its proponents. (cf. the Vatican II Decree on non-Christian religions).

(70). That is to say, without stress or anxiety, trusting in God more than in my own efforts.

88 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

all the orders and rules of the congregation and all that God has been pleased to inspire me to establish in it. Know, my dearest brother, that in observing them and having them observed as much as possible, you will be doing something very pleasing to Our Lord and his most holy Mother, thus bringing down their holy blessing on us and our community. "Unload your burden on the Lord and he will take care of you." (71).

(71). Ps. 55, 23.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

89 -

21. SUCCESSFUL MISSIONS - July 23, 1659

"On Sundays, we have over fifteen thousand people."

Although it is now responsible for four seminaries, the Congregation of Jesus and Mary maintains its parish mission work. In July, 1659, the community of Rouen, founded only a few months earlier, gives missions in two parishes in that diocese: Illeville and Quilleboetif. John Eudes, on the other hand, returns to the Diocese of Coutances. In June/July he gives a forty-five day mission in Vasteville, and at the beginning of the fall, another just as long at Villedieu. From both places he writes several times to Jean-Jacques Blouet de Camilly, who had shortly before entered the Congregation and is pursuing ecclesiastical studies in Paris.

One of these letters written from Vasteville, on July 23, 1659, gives a good idea of the work done during missions and the number of people in attendance, as well as certain obstacles confronting the missionaries.

My dearest brother,

I cannot tell you what blessings God is bestowing on this mission. It is surely prodigious.

For quite some time now I have not been preaching inside the church, for although very large, it has nevertheless proven to be too small on this occasion. I can truthfully

90-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

say that on Sundays we have over fifteen thousand people.

There are twelve confessors, but I can say without exaggeration that we could use fifty. People come from a distance of eight to ten leagues, (72) and their hearts are so touched that there is nothing to be seen but tears, nothing to be heard but the laments of the poor penitents. The results observed by the confessors are marvelous. But what grieves us is that we will be able to confess only a quarter of the people. Everyone is exhausted. The missionaries see some who have been waiting eight days without

having been able to get to confession, casting themselves on their knees everywhere, begging the priests with suppliant hands and tears in their eyes to hear them. Yet this is already our sixth week here.

What a great blessing the missions are! And how necessary! What a great evil it is to hinder them in any way! If those who have prevented us from giving several in this diocese knew the harm they have done!(73) Father Jorgive them, they did not know what they were doing.(74)

My dearest brother, let us pray the Lord of the harvest send laborers for it, and say frequently to him: "Lord of the harvest, send laborers into your harvest."(75) What are all those doctors and bachelors of arts doing in Paris while souls

(72). Thirty to forty kilometers.

(73). M. Bazaire, Vicar General at Coutances, whose functions had ceased in 1658, had disagreed profoundly with Father Eudes for many years over Marie des ValMes who had died in February, 1656. He had been opposed to Eudists giving missions in the diocese.

(74). Paraphrasing Luke 23, 34.

(75). Paraphrasing Luke 10, 2.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

9 1 -

are perishing by the thousands because there is no one to offer them a hand to withdraw them from perdition and preserve them from the everlasting fire? Surely, if I dared, I would go straight to Paris and cry out in the Sorbonne and the other colleges: Fire! Fire! The flames of hell are consuming the entire universe! Come, you doctors, come, you bachelors, come, you parish priests, come all you clergymen, and help put out that fire.(76)

(76) This is perhaps a recollection of a letter of St. Francis Xavier who, a century earlier, had expressed similar sentiments.

92-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

22. DISQUIETING BEREAVEMENT AT OUR LADY OF CHARITY - early Feb., 1660

"She has gone to take possession of heaven for all the Sisters.

In early December, 1659, Father Eudes returns to the Rouen seminary. He will stay there again several months: until early April, 1660. He soon is able to appreciate the fruits of his confreres' work. From Dec. 7 to 16, he preaches to the ordinands and, on the 15th he expresses his joy in a letter to Jean-Jacques Blouet de Camilly: "We are nearly one hundred people in this house, many preparing for ordination and several boarders or seminarians, with whom we are well pleased, thanks to God, for the majority of them are docile and modest." The Lenten ordination will also provide the founder with great comfort especially since the Archbishop "is so pleased that he does not stop telling everybody about it everywhere he goes, and expressing the joy his seminary is giving him."

This stay in Rouen, however, is not without its cloudy days. About the middle of December, John Eudes learns that he is being viciously calumniated in Caen, "which," he will write in his Memorial (diary), "caused me very little anguish thanks to God's very special goodness."

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

9 3 -

A few weeks later, he gets the news of the death of a Sister of Our Lady of Charity, Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus de Bois david. Here is the first death in the community and Father Eudes is deeply affected by it. Indeed, he had great hopes for this Sister, a woman of great value, a widowed mother of six, who had entered Our Lady of Charity at the age of thirty-seven after having placed her last child, Suzanne, there. (77) She fell on an icy staircase and died a few days later, January 30, 1660, after a great deal of suffering.

Father Eudes immediately writes to Mother Patin. Overcoming his grief as best he can, he merely states that he "was a bit surprised at first", and fixes his gaze on the will of God "which arranges all things in the best possible way." In the premature and disconcerting departure of Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus he sees the beginning, in heaven, "of an eternal establishment of the community of Our Lady of Charity there." He then tones his expression down since he would not want people to forget to pray for the deceased Sister: "When I say that she has gone to heaven, I do not mean that she has arrived there yet, for some take quite some time getting there." Then, John Eudes changes the subject completely, inquiring about the cold weather which might affect the Sisters' health: he urges Mother Patin to control their fervor and their desire for mortification. Wonderful example of human comprehension and balance: the self (77). Suzanne de Bois david arrived at Our Lady of Charity in October, 1654, at the age of eight. With her began the "Little Novitiate", made up of children and adolescent girls who might already be thinking of consecrating their lives to God. Suzanne actually became a Sister of Our Lady of Charity and was given the same name as her mother, Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus. She was several times superior of the community from 1678 on.

94-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

sacrifice the founder preaches does not consist in ruining one's health, but in waging war on one's pride and self-love.

My dearest and good Mother,

May the divine will be our guide in all things.

The death of our very dear Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus surprised me a little at first; but having immediately cast my eyes on the most adorable will of God, which arranges all things in the best way possible, my heart remained at peace and my lips were unable to say anything but: "My God, not my will, but yours be done." (78) And this is good, my dearest Mother, since such is the pleasure of the divine Child Jesus who chose to take this dear Sister consecrated to the divine Childhood at the very time of year dedicated to this great mystery. She has gone to take possession of heaven in the name of all the Sisters, and begin an eternal establishment of the community of Our Lady of Charity there. She has gone to paradise to adore, praise and love the most blessed Trinity continually and eternally, with Jesus and Mary and all the saints, in the name and on behalf of her dear Sisters. These are the firstfruits of your house which you have offered to divine majesty. It is your first sacrifice which must have been very pleasing before the throne of Almighty God.

But when I say that she has gone to heaven, I do not mean that she has arrived there yet; for some take quite some time getting there. That is why it is necessary to pray a great deal for this dear Sister. On my part, I will not fail to do so, with God's help.

(78). Luke 22, 42.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 95 -

I am afraid that the fervor of our good Sisters and their desire to mortify themselves may impel

them to endure excessive cold which could make them sick. I pray you, dearest Mother, to watch this carefully.

With respect to communion for the sick, you may make whatever arrangements you see fit. (79)
I thank Our Lord and his most holy Mother for having given you the Old Bank House. (80)

Sincere greetings to all our dear Sisters. I remain, with all my heart, my dearest and good Mother,

Entirely yours, John Eudes, missionary priest.

A few days later, Father Eudes will receive from Mother Patin details about the spiritual dispositions of Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jesus during the last days of her life. He will reply, February 15, 1660: "I was greatly pleased by the things you write to me about our dearest Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jesus. For that, I give infinite thanks to Our Lord and his most holy Mother!"

(79). The Constitutions of the Visitation Sisters, which Father Eudes adopted exactly on this point, foresaw that the sick Sisters receive communion every two weeks. It would appear that he is here encouraging Mother Patin to make it more frequent.

(80). This is probably M. de Langrie's house in which the Sisters had lived from 1649 to 1657. Given to the community, it constituted a little patrimony.

96-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

23. REASONS FOR SENDING AN ENVOY TO ROME - Sept. 21, 1660

"...for the same reasons I have written and told you about so many times."

From Rouen, Father Eudes went to Paris. "When I least expected it," he writes in his Mimorial (diary), he is asked to give a mission at the Quinze-Vingts Hospital. (81) It lasts from April 23 to June 13, and addresses not only the blind from the hospital but also a segment of Parisian society, to the point where, from the third week on, John Eudes is forced to preach in the courtyard. It is right after this mission that Saint Vincent de Paul writes to his confreres: "A few priests from Normandy, led by Father Eudes, of whom I believe you have heard, came to Paris to conduct a mission that was admirably blessed. The Quinze-Vingts courtyard is very large, but it was too small to accommodate all the people who came to the sermons. (82)

After that mission, Father Eudes does not take time to rest. From June 20 to 29, he conducts a mission at Mauregard

(81). The Quinze-Vingts Hospital had been founded in the 11th century by the saintly king Louis, to house "quinze vingts (i.e. three hundred) blind persons. It was then situated in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, close to the Louvre. In 1779, it was transferred to the Bastille and today is at rue de Charenton.

(82). Saint Vincent de Paul died three months later, Sept. 27, 1660.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

97 -

(Diocese of Meaux), then returns to Paris to begin another mission on July 4, this one requested by Saint-Sulpice Parish. It will be given in Saint-Germain des Près Abbey, situated in the territorial boundaries of the parish. When he left Caen at the beginning of December, 1659, Father Eudes did not foresee this succession of apostolic commitments but, as was his wont, he let divine Providence direct his life. "When I left Caen," he writes on July 20th to the community of Our Lady of Charity, "I expected my trip to last no more than two months, but my will was not in accord with my thoughts, since I wanted to spend more than eight months away, but I did not know that I wanted this to happen. I

wanted it to be so since God wanted it and his will is mine. I did not know I wanted it because I did not know God's will in this matter, just as I do not know what God has in store for me in the future." The Saint-Germain des Près mission which lasts until September 2nd, is also a success. As early as July 6, M. Manchon wrote to one of his confreres: "Here we are engaged in a mission, prodigious both in number and in approval. Indeed, everyone is coming to it with enthusiasm." The Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, will herself attend the closing ceremonies.

When the mission is over, John Eudes comes back to Normandy. He does not stay there long because he knows the time is ripe for obtaining letters of recommendation from King Louis XIV himself, (83) which, at least he hopes so, will facilitate obtaining papal approval of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and the Order of Our Lady of Charity. By Sept. 20th, he is once again in Paris. He never gave up on

(83). In fact, on Nov. 6, 1660, Louis XIV will write a letter to the pope in favor of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and, on Feb. 19, 1661, his mother, Anne of Austria, will do the same.

98-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

the idea of sending an emissary to Rome. Now he knows someone who would be the perfect ambassador: a Flemish priest named Louis Boniface (84), he had met several times during the Quinze-Vingts and St-Germain des Prés missions. He has already spoken about him to Mother Patin in a letter, and perhaps orally. On Sept. 21st, he writes to her again.

He begins by giving her some spiritual counselling. She is going through a period of spiritual dryness and he helps her as best he can to live this trial in union with Jesus.

Then, without transition, he discusses business matters. The terms he uses indicate how difficult Mother Patin is to convince!... We will not be able to do anything, he says, 91 unless we send a man purposely (to Rome) to advance our cause, for the same reasons I have written and told you about so often." She claims Mother de Maupeou, a Visitation Nun from Paris, who had once been Mother Patin's superior, agrees with her. John Eudes concludes that she is misinformed: "Once I have explained how things really are, she will agree with me."

True, sending an emissary to Rome will cost money. After inquiry, John Eudes comes up with global figures: six or seven hundred pounds. But, he immediately adds: "Do not be concerned about the cost, my dearest Mother, when faced with so pressing a necessity."

Mother Patin has found someone who is willing to make the trip and make all the contacts for only one hundred

(84). Louis Boniface came from Bapaume (today in the Pas-de-Calais), and was about thirty-five. He had, for a time, been a member of the Oratory.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 99 -

crowns. John Eudes does not trust him. His candidate, Louis Boniface, is surely better, "a very distinguished, knowledgeable, intelligent, courteous person, and he knows Italian."

In closing, Father Eudes becomes almost suppliant: "In the name of God put some trust in a person who loves the house of the good Virgin as I do, and who speaks to you so truthfully and so sincerely."

My dearest and good Mother,

May the divine will be our guide in all things.

If I were to speak according to the senses, I would indeed pity you a great deal for all you are having to suffer; but speaking according to the spirit, I find you more worthy of envy than pity. The greatest happiness that can befall you is to be in conformity with Jesus Christ Our Lord, who is our most adorable head. Now, your present state of privation, death and annihilation is highly in conformity with the one that most lovable Savior endured here on earth. Therefore, give yourself to him, my dearest Mother, that you may suffer with him in that condition and in that spirit, as much as he desires. Try to do three things: 1) Try not to become disheartened, guarding well against it. Surrender to divine virtue and strength that they may sustain you. 2) Accept this state of death and annihilation, saying with the Son of God: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." (85) 3) Abandon yourself entirely to the most holy will of God, repeating with Our Lord: "Not my will but yours be done." (86)

(85). Luke: 23,46.

(86). Luke: 22, 42

100-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

I come now to your undertaking, my dearest Mother. A short time ago I saw several persons who recently had been in Rome on business of the same nature as yours. They assured me that it will never receive attention unless we send a man purposely (to Rome) to advance it, for the same reasons I have written and told you about so often.

Remember also what the Bishop of Le Puy (87) told me, as I wrote to you. What you wrote me about what Mother de Maupeou said should not cause you to hesitate. I am quite sure that once I have explained how things really are, she will agree with me.

I inquired from several people who have recently been to Rome what the approximate cost would be. They all told me that a moderate expenditure will come to at least two hundred pounds for the journey there and as much for the trip back. While there, one cannot spend less than four hundred pounds a year; however, it will not take that long. Finally, while it is impossible to determine exactly what the entire cost will be, I think you can manage on about six or seven hundred pounds. That sum is nothing, of course, in a matter of such importance. Do not be concerned about the cost, my dearest Mother, when faced with so pressing a necessity, lest Our Lord say to you some day what he said to St. Teresa one day when she was having problems deciding something regarding her establishments because it would cost a lot of money. The Son of God then said to her: "Are you, therefore, still concerned about money?"

(87). Henri de Maupas, Bishop of le Puy, who was to become the following year Bishop of Evreux.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

101 -

The person who has offered to go to Rome to transact your business for one hundred crowns (88) either is a joker or is planning to go there to transact his own business and make the trip at your expense. But is he really qualified to handle this affair? If so, do as you please. But remember, my dearest Mother, what I have written you concerning the person who is here and who offers to go out of pure and disinterested charity. He is a very distinguished, knowledgeable, intelligent, courteous person, who knows Italian and has many friends and acquaintances in Rome.

Finally, the time to leave on this trip is urgently drawing near. Let me know your final decision as soon as possible and, in the name of God, put some trust in a person who loves the house of the good Virgin as I do, and who speaks to you so truthfully and so sincerely. It is he who remains with all his heart, my dearest Mother,

Entirely yours, John Eudes, missionary priest.

Mother Patin finally accepted to send Louis Boniface to Rome. Was she really convinced? That is not certain, but she finally gave in. On October 6, 1660, she signs a power of attorney and gives him one thousand pounds for the trip. In fact, M. Boniface will not get under way until the spring of 1661. (88). A crown was worth three pounds. One hundred crowns, therefore, amounted to far less than the "six or seven hundred pounds" Father Eudes mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

102-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

24. A COURAGEOUS SERMON

- Feb. 17, 1661

"I have learned since that the Queen took it very well."

John Eudes has not left Paris since the beginning of the fall, 1660. He will spend nearly all of 1661 there, obtaining approvals for his book *The Devotion to the most holy Heart and most sacred Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, which he intends to edit anew, as well as letters recommending the Congregation of Jesus and Mary to the Pope. He also recognizes the possibility of opening a house of the Congregation in Paris, and will try to lay a foundation for such an undertaking. (89)

On February 8, he preaches to the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament. (90) Anne of Austria comes to hear him preach. He speaks of the fire which, two days earlier, damaged part of the Louvre and draws from that incident several lessons for the Queen Mother and the court.

Father Eudes has put much into this sermon seeking, as always, to proclaim the Gospel without watering it down.

(89). Strong opposition will force Father Eudes to give up on this project. He will try again ten years later, but still without success.

(90). This community, then located on rue Cassette, had been founded in 1653 by Catherine de Bar, known in religion as Mother Mechtilde du Saint-Sacrement, with whom Father Eudes entertained cordial relations.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

103 -

He feels the need to talk about it and, on February 17, he writes a detailed account to his confreres in Caen. This letter is a precious witness to his apostolic courage. He spoke respectfully, but clearly, not fearing to denounce flatterers and letting the Queen and the important people there know that they are seldom told the truth. Later, he had the pleasure of learning that the Queen "took it very well" and she indeed "in due fashion, shut several flatterers up."

The Queen arrived toward the end of my sermon, and I told her many things with respect to the fire which burned a section of the Louvre. I began addressing her in this manner:

Madam, I have nothing to say to Your Majesty except to implore you most humbly, since Divine Majesty has brought you here, never to forget the powerful sermon God has preached to you and to the King through the fire which destroyed part of the Louvre. For Christians nothing happens by chance, but everything takes place through the providence and will of God. This fire is, therefore, an effect of his will and means several things.

1. People must not work on Sundays and holidays.

2. Kings are allowed to build Louvres, but God orders them to lighten the burden on their subjects, to take pity on so many widows, orphans and people overwhelmed by poverty.

3. Kings and princes are allowed to indulge in decent amusements, but to spend all their days, weeks, months, years and even a whole lifetime doing so is not the road to paradise.

104-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

4. Paris is full of atheists who put God under foot. They engage in actions which even the devil finds repulsive. If Your Majesties were aware of this and did not use their royal power to punish such horrible crimes, they would incur responsibility for them before God and would draw his vengeance and malediction on their heads.

5. If the temporal fire did not spare the royal household, the eternal fire will spare neither princes nor princesses, kings or queens, unless they live like Christians and take pity on their subjects. If the material fire did not respect the portraits and images of kings in the place where the fire burned, the eternal fire of God's wrath will not spare the originals unless they use their authority to destroy the tyranny of the devil and of sin and establish the kingdom of God in the souls of their subjects.

6. My sole interest in saying these things is the interest of my Master and my God, as well as the salvation of my King and Queen for whom I would lay down a thousand lives.

7. It is indeed a pity that the great personages of this world are besieged by hordes of flatterers who are so poisoning and destroying them that they are almost never told the truth; that preachers are very guilty in the sight of God when they suppress the truth unjustly, and that I would consider myself most guilty if I did not say all these things to Her Majesty.

Finally, I entreated her to accept them as coming not from a man but from God; that I was only a worthless creature and miserable sinner, but in the place where I was standing as a representative of God, I could say like St. Paul and

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

105 -

all those who have the honor of proclaiming the holy word of God (91): For Christ, I am an ambassador, to bring the words of the King of kings to a great Queen, and that I implored her to accept them as such (...)

That is what I said almost word for word. I am writing you this so that you and your friends may know the truth.

I have learned since, from several persons who were with the Queen and left with her, that she took it very well and when several flatterers approached her she had in due fashion shut them up.

The Bishop of Coutances, (92) who is at the Court and knows what is going on there, told me how pleased he was. Many other persons of high rank also came to say how pleased they were.

May God bless the whole thing, give us the grace never to seek anything other than to please him, do and say what he asks of us.

(91). 2 Cor. 5,20.

(92). Bishop Auvry had resigned from the See of Coutances in September of 1658 and since then attended at court. He had remained friends with Father Eudes and, himself, the year before, had requested and paid for the Quinze-Vingts mission.

**25. LABORIOUS EXPLANATIONS TO
ROME - Sept. 3, 1661**

"They are raising formidable objections over the danger they perceive of having Sisters govern Penitents."

On arriving in Rome May 17, 1661, M. Boniface immediately started making his contacts. Very soon, he informed Father Eudes asking him at the same time to obtain testimonies that will help Rome understand what the community of Our Lady of Charity is.

Alerted by Father Eudes, Mother Patin hastens to obtain testimonies from the Vicars General of Bayeux. On September 3, 1661, he acknowledges receiving them, adding that he obtained some himself in Paris.

He then gives her fresh news: just the night before, he had received a letter from M. Boniface who, according to him, is working "day and night". He took upon himself to explain that "the Penitents are separated from the Sisters by a wall", and to give all sorts of details on the way they live. It will, therefore, be necessary to go along with what M. Boniface says since the Nuncio in Paris might be consulted and he will inquire whether things are actually as M. Boniface has described them...

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

107 -

My dearest and good Mother,

May the divine will be our guide in all things.

Yesterday, I forwarded to M. Boniface, at his request, the affidavits you had sent me from the Vicars General, together with several from the Vicars General of Paris. These concern the Sisters of Hotel-Dieu, in Paris, who are constantly in the midst of the sick, convalescents, doctors, surgeons, apothecaries, hospital attendants and even fallen women who come there to give birth. They also concern your Visitation Sisters who are with the Madelonnettes.⁽⁹³⁾ Their purpose is to prove that both employments exist without creating any disorder (...)

I received letters from M. Boniface yesterday in which he wrote that they are raising formidable objections over the danger they perceive of having Sisters govern Penitents. Nevertheless, he says that some are giving him reason to hope, and that he is working day and night to promote this matter, doing nothing else. He also wrote that, in order to overcome their objection, he has disclosed that the Penitents are separated from the Sisters by a wall; that they have their own dormitory, dining room and chapel, that there is a door in the wall through which two older Sisters, chosen by the Superior, enter the Penitents' quarters and leave again in the evening; that during the night they are watched through a lattice; that there is always a lighted lamp in the center of their dormitory, before a statue of the Blessed Virgin; that

⁽⁹³⁾. The Madelonnettes were a group of Penitents for which Saint Jeanne de Chantal assumed responsibility, in Paris, in 1629. The Visitation Sisters will direct this work until 1677. The Sisters of Our Lady of Charity will take over in 1724 when they open a house in Paris.

those of the Penitents who are recognized as being well grounded in the fear of God are put in charge of

the others; that those who are capable of corrupting the others are placed under lock and key during the night; that none is forced to enter the house, but only those are accepted who, being moved by the grace of God, enter voluntarily to convert and do penance.

He wrote that he revealed these things in order to overcome their objection, believing that they exist as he described them and that I should inform you about it so that, if they are not exactly as he stated, you may put them into practice as soon as possible. For if it should happen - as it will if he meets with success - that they write from Rome to the Nuncio, as is customary in such circumstances, requesting confirmation of these things, they must be found to be true. See to it then, my dearest Mother, if you please.(94)

I wrote to him that the Penitents are not observed through a lattice, and that he should try to suppress this proposition,(95) but all the rest will be done.

(94). John Eudes, therefore, feels obliged to accept the minute rules imagined in Rome by someone who has never seen Our Lady of Charity in operation, although most likely these rules go far beyond what he himself would like to see. Shortly thereafter, following another letter from M. Boniface, he will have them set down properly by M. Mannoury. Eventually, they will become a chapter of the Rule for Penitent women and girls, to be annexed to the Constitutions.

(95). Here John Eudes finds that M. Boniface really goes too far!

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

109 -

26. ILLNESS OF A FRIEND

- Oct. 18. 1661

"My heart is sorely afflicted by the knowledge that M. de Camilly is in such a condition."

On October, 1661, M. Blouet de Camilly, one of Father Eudes' very close friends for over twenty-five years, is taken seriously ill. His wife is very worried and writes to the missionary who answers from Paris on the 18th of the same month.

Like Lazarus' sisters calling for Jesus' help, Madame de Camilly says to Father Eudes: "The one you love is ill."(96) He does not have the power himself to say: "This illness is not fatal," (97) so he begs the Lord to give that answer.

Uncertain about what will happen, John Eudes reminds her that "there is no death for true children of God." He admits, however, that "that does not prevent his heart from being sorely afflicted". He is suffering, and does not try to hide it. This deep human sympathy allows him to find the right words to speak to this person in distress and help her accept the will of God.

(96). John 11, 3.

(97). John 11,4.

110-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Please God, my dearest Daughter, that on this occasion of our beloved brother's illness I may give you the same answer Our Lord gave to St. Martha and St. Magdalen, who told him just what you wrote to me: The one you love is ill, meaning their good brother Lazarus. Please God that I may reply to you: This illness is not fatal. But because these divine words would be without effect coming from my mouth, and since it is to Our Lord that you address yourself saying to his representative, though an infinitely unworthy one: The one you love is ill, I implore this most kind Savior with all my heart, by the great goodness which prompted him to make that reply to Lazarus' sisters, to answer you in like manner with the words: This illness is not fatal.

No matter what happens, my dear Daughter, these words will always hold true of our dear patient, which is a wonderful cause for comfort, for there is no death for true children of God... I am the resurrection and the life, said the Son of God to St. Martha, whoever believes in me, even if he die, shall live: and everyone who lives and believes in me, shall not die forever.(98) Let us be comforted, my dearest Daughter, by these great truths and by the recollection of what our good Savior has said to us.

It is true, I must admit, that although these considerations alleviate my grief, my heart is nevertheless sorely afflicted by the knowledge that our poor bosom friend,(99) M. de Camilly, is in such a condition, and that you and your loved ones, my dear Daughter, are in your present anguish (98). John 11,25-26.

(99). "Bosom friend" is the expression full of affection John Eudes often used when speaking of his friend, M. de Camilly.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

111-

and in danger of falling ill yourselves from this perilous sickness. I beg my Jesus with all my heart to keep you from it. Not my will be done, however, but his.

It would appear from your letter that this kind Savior is implanting in your heart, my good Daughter, the dispositions which should be there at this time, and that comforts me no little. I thank him infinitely and beg him to maintain and increase them in you for his glory. For there is never a time when he is so glorified in a soul as during a period of affliction borne in a Christian spirit. Let us try to do so, my dearest Daughter, accepting from his hand the afflictions he sends us, suffering them with all possible humility, resignation and love.

If you perceive that our brother is in real danger, have recourse to the little book I wrote entitled Man's Contract With God.(100) Half way through the book you will find several ready-made acts which embody the dispositions necessary for a Christian death and, at the beginning of these acts, the method for using them when assisting a sick person, that the patient may use without being disturbed. I would like all who assist sick people to have this book. It would also be good for you to consult the final pages of the Exercise in Preparation for Death which is at the end of The Kingdom of Jesus.(101)

(100). Man's Contract With God Through Holy Baptism is a little book Father Eudes published in 1654. He compares baptism with a contract between Man and God, in which each party has commitments it is obliged to respect. He added in appendix, "Christian dispositions for dying."

(101). Abbreviated title of John Eudes' book The Life and Kingdom of Jesus in Christian Souls.

112-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Finally, my dearest Daughter, I implore Our Lord himself to be your strength and guide, and to accomplish his most adorable Will perfectly in you and all yours. I beg his most precious Mother to harbor and keep you in her maternal Heart, in whatever way is most pleasing to that divine Will.

It is in the sacred love of this most kind Heart that I embrace our dear patient a thousandfold, and pronounce over him and over you and your loved ones these holy words: May the Virgin Mary bless you with her Son Jesus!" (102)

John Eudes

(102). A blessing of the Church often used by Saint John Eudes. In Latin: Nos cum Prole pia benedicat

Virgo Maria!

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

113 -

27. COMMUNION IN TRIALS

- Oct. 25, 1661

"Your pain and anguish are mine as well.

M. de Camilly died the same day Father Eudes wrote to his wife the preceding letter. The missionary learns about it four days later, October 22, which is a Saturday. At the same time, he finds out that Mme de Camilly is also ill. He wants to write to her right away, but has to wait until the following Tuesday, October 25, since it is too late for the mail. (103)

John Eudes is deeply affected by this death. He suffers especially from not being able to be present to assist his friend who has just lost her husband. He delicately invites her to submit to the Will of God, to recognize that this most difficult trial is a grace of God and to welcome it with her eyes fixed on Jesus and Mary. He does not say: "you" but "we": he needs to hear for himself what he is saying to his correspondent. He speaks of giving thanks to God but adds realistically: "as much as we can." In closing his exhortation, he expresses a concern: has she understood him? He pauses briefly to make sure: "Do you not really want all these things, my dear Daughter? ... Yes, of course, you do. For this intention, therefore, say with all your heart: Amen, amen, fiat, fiat."

114-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

I will not insist, my dearest Daughter, on how distressed and grieved I am, for that is inexpressible. Certainly, I well know from experience that your pain and anguish are mine as well.

I received your letters on Saturday, after the mail had gone out, and that is why I could not write until today. To have had to go so long without giving you some small comfort added to my grief."

My God, my dear Daughter, how terrible is my grief and anguish that I cannot be near you now to weep with you and help you in your present affliction. But it is the most adorable will of God which arranges things so and does everything through infinite goodness toward us and for the best. Let it then be adored, blessed and praised through all eternity in all its decrees! Never before, my dearest Daughter, have we had and perhaps never again shall we have such an opportunity. Let us not allow it to pass, therefore, without making the holiest use of it.

To that end:

1. Let us acknowledge that of ourselves we are incapable of using it without a special grace from the goodness of God, and that we are infinitely unworthy of receiving (103). Created under Louis XI, in 1464, the postal service had been opened to private correspondence in the following century and, later, under Louis XIII, offices were opened in the major cities, with departures and arrivals on set days. In John Eudes' day the postal service functioned satisfactorily. "Mail never gets lost," he wrote in January, 1670. It seems that, between Paris and Caen, mail traveled twice a week in each direction, and took two days to cover the distance (more than two hundred kilometers).

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

115 -

this grace. Let us, nevertheless, ask for it with confidence and it will be given to us.

2. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, acknowledging that the least of our sins deserves all the afflictions in the world. Let us accept those he sends us now and will send us in the future, in honor of his divine justice and in reparation for our sins.

3. Let us adore the most holy will of God, submitting and abandoning ourselves totally and unreservedly to whatever it may please him to do with us and with all that belongs to us.

4. Because sorrows are a gift from God far more precious and greater in this world than consolations, let us thank him for them with all our hearts, as much as we can.

5. Let us offer our sorrows, griefs, sighs and tears to Our Lord Jesus and his most holy Mother, in thanksgiving for their sorrows and griefs which were infinitely greater than ours, and for all their sighs and tears.

6. Let us embrace our crosses for love of our most lovable Crucified who bore such heavy ones for love of us.

7. Let us unite ourselves with our most holy Mother at the foot of the Cross of her beloved Son. Alas, she is completely overwhelmed with sorrow, yet so imbued with obedience to God's holy will that she sacrifices to his divine Majesty a Son who is infinitely dear to her, who is her Son, her Father, her Brother, her spouse, her God, her All, because such is the desire of that most adorable will. Let us unite ourselves, my dearest Daughter, to these holy disposi

116-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

tions, that we may sacrifice with her and with Our Savior the lives of all our dear ones, our own lives, and a hundred thousand worlds if we possessed them.

8. Let us offer all our griefs and afflictions to Our Lord and his most holy Mother, praying them to unite them with theirs, bless and sanctify them by their own, and put them to the same use as they made of theirs, for the glory of the most Holy Trinity.

9. For that same end, let us also offer them all the sorrows that have ever been, are now and ever will be in the universe, particularly those of people who do not put them to good use. Since all these things are ours, according to the divine Word, we should use them to glorify our heavenly Father, together with our most adorable Head, Jesus, who uses all things for his Father's glory.

10. Let us pray our good Angels, all the Angels and all the Saints, and our good Sister, (104) to do all the above for us, as well as all the other things we ought to do, in order to give thanks to God for our debt to him in times of tribulation.

Do you not really want all these things, my dear Daughter, as well as to unite yourself to those who are doing or will do them for you? Yes, of course, you do. For this intention, therefore, say with all your heart: Amen, amen, fiat, fiat.

(104). Father Eudes is talking here about Marie des Vallées who died five years earlier, and for whom Mme de Camilly had great veneration.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

117-

The letter does not end there. Father Eudes fears that Mme de Camilly is herself close to death. He

gives her simple, precise advice, apt to free her from any anguish: "Do not trouble yourself about making a general confession. There is absolutely no need for that ... Put all your faith and trust in the pure mercy of Our Lord and the intercession of his most holy Mother." He then goes on to state that he has asked the Lord to give Mme de Camilly, "in whatever way he knows best and is most pleasing to him", a share in all the graces he himself has received, all the Masses he has celebrated, all the missions he has conducted. And, in closing, he asks his correspondent to do three things, of which this is the third:

Here is the third and principal thing I ask of you, my dearest Daughter. When God has shown you mercy - and this you must expect with confidence from his infinite goodness and the intercession of our glorious Mother and our good Sister - take our Congregation and the house of Our Lady of Charity under your special protection in heaven. To that end, my dear Daughter, I ask you to agree to my constituting and establishing you the solicitor and provider of all our spiritual and temporal affairs, as of now, in the name of Our Lord and his most holy Mother, so that you may intercede and plead for us with God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, our good Sister, all the holy Angels and all the Saints. Will you accept this position, my dearest Daughter, and give yourself to the Son of God and his divine Mother, in order to accomplish this carefully according to their most holy will, and try to obtain for us now from the goodness of God four main things? 1. Several good brothers and excellent workers to help us work at the salvation of souls. 2. The favor of building a church in Caen in honor of the most holy Heart of our most honored Mother. 3. A house in Paris, with a

118-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

church or a chapel, in which to celebrate the feast of this same Heart. 4. Success in Rome for the negotiations concerning our good Sisters. (105)

John Eudes is, therefore, already prepared to establish Mme de Camilly "provider in heaven of all his spiritual and temporal affairs". As a matter of fact, she will die nineteen years later, after John Eudes' himself. She recovers rapidly at the end of October, 1661 and so informs Father Eudes who replies on November 1st, expressing his joy at her recovery and encouraging her anew, now that she is a widow. He is not afraid to be precise: "Yes, my dearest and only Daughter, it is willingly, I assure you, that I will write to you often, since just as your letters are a consolation for me, so too am I consoled when writing to you."

Indeed, a week later, November 8, he writes and expresses his anxiety at not having heard from her:

"What are you doing, my poor afflicted child? What are you doing? In what condition are you now? Are you not making any attempt to temper your grief? Do write me a little about your feelings, my dear good Daughter. It seems to me that I have not received one of your letters in a long time. I think of you constantly, my very special Daughter, and your sorrows are always in my heart." These lines show a profoundly human John Eudes who expresses very simply the solicitude he feels. The rest of the letter is a prayer to Our Lord and the Virgin which he makes in the name of his (105). The matters referred to here concern Our Lady of Charity which M. Boniface has been negotiating in Rome for over five months now.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

119-

correspondent, with this recommendation: "That, my very dear and good Daughter, is what I urge you to say as best you can, every day for a while, and then make a firm resolution to live henceforth like a true spouse of Jesus, giving him without reservation your heart, all your affections, your time and whatever is left of your life, of which but little remains. This is the principal fruit he wishes you to

derive from your grief."

à
120-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

**28. BEREAVEMENT
IN THE CONGREGATION
OF JESUS AND MARY - Jan. 3,1662**

"Were is an affliction which caused me untold sorrow."

The death of M. de Camilly is not the only one to affect Father Eudes at the end of 1661. On October 21, one of the first Eudists, Richard Le Mesle, (106) dies: "One of our best brothers, one of the most serviceable and most attached to the Congregation," John Eudes will say in a letter to M. Manchon. Two months later, on December 27, it was Pierre Jourdan's (107) turn to be called back to the Father.

January 3, 1662, Father Eudes speaks about M. Jourdan's death in a letter to an unidentified confrere. Again he is overcome with grief, but, here too, in faith, he adheres to God's will.

May divine will be our conduct in all things and our sole consolation in our afflictions.
(106). Richard Le Mesle was fifty-three and superior of the house in Caen. He was incorporated October 20, 1646, at the same time as Jacques Finel.
(107). Pierre Jourdan, who was of the same age as Richard Le Mesle, was also one of the first Eudists. He was a highly regarded spiritual director at Caen.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

121 -

Here is one which is very painful for me and has caused me untold sorrow; it is the death of our most kind and lovable brother, M. Jourdan. But it is only just, my dearest brother, that God be the master and his most adorable will prevail over ours. If I indulged my feelings, I would cry aloud with grief and tears: Truly death is bitter!" (108) But when I consider the most holy, most wise and most bountiful will of God, I cry out from the depths of my heart: "Yes, Father; yes, just Father; yes, most bountiful Father, for you will it So».(109)
(108). 1 Samuel, 15,32.
(109). Paraphrasing Matt 11,26.

122 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

**29. METICULOUS ACCOUNTING FOR
EXPENSES - early in 1662**

"His room costs three crowns a month, besides laundry, fuel and candles."

M. Boniface continues negotiating in Rome. Did he meet with unsurmountable obstacles or is he simply unskillful? It is difficult to say, but the fact is that, at the beginning of 1662, after eight months in Rome, he has obtained nothing yet. Still he thinks - and says so - that he is on the verge of success. The only thing that bothers him is that money is soon about to run out. He appeals for help to Father Eudes who has already helped him a few months back. This time, the founder passes the request on to Mother Patin: it is only just, since M. Boniface is working for Our Lady of Charity.

John Eudes senses that Mother Patin is going to be reticent. He, therefore, encourages her, calling on the testimony of M. Boniface, "who tells me that your cause is constantly gaining favor, " and "the affair is now coming to a head."

Next he undertakes to justify minutely the expenses of his emissary, protesting that "he is a sincere and reliable person" who "will spare neither effort nor expediency."

SAINTJOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

123 -

The conclusion is predictable: "I beg you, my dearest Mother, to give the order for money to be found and sent to him ... If you have none, you should borrow some ... and do not send less than four or five hundred pounds..."

My dearest Mother,

May the divine will be our guide in all things.

I received a letter this week from M. Boniface who writes that your cause is constantly gaining favor, thank God, and that this is the time to redouble your prayers, for the affair, he says, is now coming to a head (...)

He also writes (...) that he soon will be out of funds, since he now has but about a hundred crowns. His expenses come to about ten crowns a month, and his room costs three crowns, besides laundry, fuel and candles. Upon arriving in Rome he had to spend more than a hundred crowns on clothing for he left here with badly worn garments, fearing that he might be robbed on the way. He said that wearing apparel is very expensive in Rome and of poor quality, making it necessary for him to buy serge garments for the winter, but he still needs a summer-weight cassock and cloak, which will cost twenty crowns. It is impossible for him, he writes, as active as he is, to keep himself in clothing on less than sixty or eighty crowns a year. He says that it will cost him a great deal to have several documents copied, and much more besides for gifts that he is obliged to give to various people, for one gets nowhere in that country without them. Finally, he writes that I will be amazed when I see his accounts.

124-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

That is what his letter says, and he is a very sincere and truthful man who would spend no money except for necessities. We are very fortunate to have found someone so generous with his time and efforts, which are considerable, for he is working very hard in your interest, sparing no trouble or endeavor, doing nothing but that. Therefore, I am asking you, my dearest Mother, to give orders for money to be found and sent to him.

I wrote to you saying that I had sent him five hundred pounds in September and that it cost me fifty pounds more to have them delivered. Since I had the money then, and he wrote that he needed it, I did not want to trouble you at that time. If I had more, I would send it to him now as gladly as I did before, knowing that you would repay me, but I have none. Please find some, therefore, and send it to me as soon as possible for the rate of exchange will soon be higher; then too, I will be here only for a short time. Otherwise, my dearest Mother, your business would come to a standstill and M. Boniface would have to abandon it. After so much effort and expense, it must not be left in mid-air. One should not begrudge the money spent in the affairs of God. If you have none, you should borrow some or take from your revenue. Do not send less than four or five hundred pounds. It will cost far more than that for the Bulls. You will receive an accounting of all expenditures. Do this as soon as possible, my dearest

Mother, if you please.

I greet very cordially all our dear Sisters, I who am with all my heart, my dearest Mother,

Entirely yours, John Eudes, missionary priest.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

125 -

30. MOTHER PATIN'S OBSTINACY - early 1662

"The whole structure will collapse, and the blame will be attributed to good Mother Marguerite Patin. "

Mother Patin's reply was not preserved. But it is easy to guess at its contents since Father Eudes refers to it explicitly in his next letter, as he destroys her objections.

Mother Patin's health is not very good and John Eudes is worried about it, begging her to "take a little better care of it". Then, without mincing words, he enters into the heart of the subject. One feels he is struggling to contain his impatience. How can Mother Patin think that M. Boniface is wasting his time in Rome? Why doesn't she trust him, and John Eudes himself?

In her reply, she referred to her "close friends" who are astonished that a man should spend so much time in Rome concerning such a matter." "Would to God," replies Father Eudes, "that these friends of yours might consent to replace M. Boniface. They would see how things are done in Rome..." And the founder goes on at length - we will quote only an excerpt of his letter - about the enormous difficulties M. Boniface must overcome. "Tell all this to your close friends, if you please, and they will change their mind or else they will no longer be the close friends of your house."

126-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Next, Father Eudes cautions Mother Patin: "If you fail to send him money ... he will abandon your cause and leave Rome and thus it will have come to nothing." What awesome responsibility will then befall the superior!

My dearest Mother,

May the divine will be our guide in all things.

If I were to yield to purely human sentiments, your illness would move me deeply but, aside from hoping that Our Lord will restore your health, the sight of his most adorable Will forces me to say only one thing: Yes, Father, since you wanted it to be so." (110)

I beg you, my dearest Mother, to take a little better care of your health, and to accept the doctors' judgment in matters that can contribute to your recovery.

But, my God, my dearest Mother, why do you write to me as you do about your undertaking? Do you want to abandon it now that it is so far advanced? Do you think anything can be accomplished in Rome without money, or that M. Boniface can live there and support himself without it costing anything? Isn't it enough that he is giving you his time and efforts? I have told you before and I assure you again that he is a most virtuous ecclesiastic, an honorable man who undertook your project only out of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and out of pure charity, since he has other means

of support. Do you take me for a liar or a cheat? Do you think that he is squandering your money or rather mine? Would you like to pay for all his efforts in like coin?
(110). Matt. 11, 26.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

127 -

But you say that your close friends are astonished that a man should spend so much time in Rome to transact your business, and such business as this. Would to God that these friends of yours might consent to replace M. Boniface. They would see how things are done in Rome, and how the smallest transactions consume both time and patience. Remember, my dear Mother, that if M. Boniface had pushed this matter too vigorously before he was in possession of the last affidavits we sent him, he would have failed irreparably, because without them, our cause would have been rejected a second time, after which all hope would have had to be abandoned.

Remember too, you and your close friends, that this is one of the most difficult matters that can be dealt with in Rome. First of all, in Rome our institute is looked upon as an innovation and, therefore, as one of the most important and most complex things that can be discussed there. Secondly, it is seen as an Order and a community composed of virtuous women who are to devote themselves to the direction and guidance of girls and women of low morals. This situation creates a difficulty which no one has yet been able to overcome in Rome, because it is believed that it is impossible for virtuous women to associate with these others without real danger to their own morals...

Tell all this to your close friends, if you please, and they will change their mind or else they will no longer be the close friends of your house.

Tell them also, and believe it yourself, my dearest Mother, for it is true: in matters of such consequence, it is not admissible to form groundless judgments that are prejudicial to the charity we owe our neighbor, without offend

128-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

ing God grievously. I have already told you several times and I say it again, M. Boniface does nothing else in Rome but look after your cause; this is so true that I refrained from asking him to procure indulgences for us, or anything whatsoever, in order not to distract him or make it possible for you to say that he was busy handling matters other than your own.

Should he remain even a day longer after the negotiations are accomplished, rest assured that it will not be at your expense. He will render you a strict account of your money, together with the money I sent him for you. Do not expect me to send him more. If you fail to send him any, you can be sure that when he has spent what he has left except for what he will need for the trip back, he will abandon your cause and leave Rome, and thus it will have come to nothing. All your efforts on behalf of the house of Our Lady of Charity will have been useless, for without Bulls from our Holy Father the Pope it will not be possible for it to subsist, because when the very first Sister is tempted to abandon her vocation, she will be easily persuaded that her vows are invalid since her community lacks papal approval. She will leave, the whole structure will collapse and the blame will be attributed, before God and man, to good Mother Marguerite Patin who refused to give what was necessary to obtain the Bulls.

This may be difficult to believe, but this passionate plea will have no effect on Mother Patin. A third letter from Father Eudes relates her reactions. She replied she would send no money unless she could be "assured that the negotiations would succeed." "Is it possible," replies the founder in dis

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

129 -

belief, «that Mother Patin, who is so virtuous and so reasonable, could make such a proposal?».

She did not hesitate to suggest that he send the money himself. He begs out, reminding her that he has already sent M. Boniface over six hundred pounds: "from what I had and what I borrowed". Nevertheless, he agrees, but on one condition: "Put in writing that you will pay me the money I will send him."

John Eudes will never receive any such document. Mother Patin, convinced that the Roman matter is ill engaged, believes it should be stopped immediately. Besides, she needs all the available money to furnish and improve the house the community occupies since March, 1657.

Father Eudes who, against all odds, continues to trust M. Boniface, is affected by Mother Patin's obstinate resistance which he cannot understand. She is almost certainly the one he is thinking about when he writes later in his journal (his diary): "In 1661 and 1662, God gratified me with several great afflictions (...) from a few persons who were very dear to me, and over several months caused me the most sensitive pain and anguish I have ever suffered in all my life."

He will bear no grudge against Mother Patin however. Shortly after, he writes to his niece, Sister Marie de la Nativité: " With all my heart I want to forget all that has happened."

130-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

31. GOVERNMENT OF THE CONGREGATION OF JESUS AND MARY - end of Feb. 1664

"Our four houses are united into a single Congregation under the same rule and guidance."

Father Eudes did not recall M. Boniface in spite of Mother Patin's refusing to send him any money. On the contrary, he takes his expenses upon himself.

In the meantime, M. Boniface changes his mind, realizing that, in spite of the assurances he has been trying to give, nothing is happening. Disappointed, and probably humiliated, he decides, against Father Eudes' wishes, to spend his time looking after the interests of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary instead. He dreams about surprising the founder with the announcement of papal approval of his Congregation. What a marvelous accomplishment this would be for him!

In May, 1662, he addresses a request to the Pope in which he asks for this approval formally - and most awkwardly. It is rejected on the 31st of the same month. Much later, as we will see, this will go against Father Eudes. For the moment, he does not even know it exists. M. Boniface would surely have spoken to him about it had it succeeded but, since it failed, he thinks it is better to remain silent.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

131 -

M. Boniface changes course once again. This time he decides to try to obtain from the Congregation of the Propaganda, renewal of the powers it had granted in 1648 to Father Eudes and his companions. He will leave Rome in September, 1663, without really achieving that goal.

His efforts were not totally in vain. On August 19, 1663, the Congregation of the Propaganda wrote a letter to Cardinal Grimaldi, Archbishop of Aix,(111) who had previously given favorable letters to Father Eudes. The Congregation authorized him to grant the missionary a renewal of the powers he had received in 1648, on the condition he investigate Father Eudes' work.

Grimaldi obtains swiftly from Father Eudes a detailed report on his missions,"(112) and actually grants him the renewal of said powers. But the missionary added to his report a request for enlarged faculties, valid in all of France, with the possibility of communicating them to priests other than his Eudist confreres. The cardinal sends this request and the report to Rome on January 10, 1664. Then he asks Father Eudes for additional information about conducting seminaries and the form of government in force in his Congregation.

(111). As early as 1645, Father Eudes had been recommended to Cardinal Grimaldi, the Archbishop of Aix, by his friend, Bishop Cosp6an, Bishop of Lisieux (who died in 1646). The cardinal, an Italian who had been Papal Nuncio in Paris, had good connections in Rome.

(112). This report was written by Father Eudes during a mission at SaintL6 (Diocese of Coutances), and sent on November 24, 1663, to the Archbishop of Aix.

132-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

The text of father Eudes' reply'(113) was preserved (while such was not the case for the preceding report). It gives us precious information on the relation that existed among the Eudist houses, which "are united into a single Congregation" ' while being totally at the service of the bishops. The Superior of the Congregation has important powers, since he is the one who appoints local superiors and may transfer confreres from one house to another, "which is necessary and very useful for many reasons" for, Father Eudes speaking no doubt from experience, comments that "many grow weary of living always in the same place; some dislike always dealing with the same people; a few form dangerous attachments..." It is the clear affirmation of the principle of a generalate, already adopted by Bdrulle and, in the previous century by Ignatius of Loyola, but contrary to what was practiced in the traditional Orders, where each house was distinct and practically independent from the others.

My Lord Bishop,

Here I am at your Eminence's feet to beg for his holy blessing and thank him infinitely for the favor he has done us in writing to Rome. I beg him most humbly to continue to honor us with his good will and protection since it is true that, through the grace of God, we seek only the glory of his divine Majesty and the salvation of souls.

To broach the main subject immediately, I shall state the following facts, to comply with your Eminence's orders:

(113). This reply was written at the end of February, 1664, during a mission Father Eudes was giving at Meaux.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

133 -

1. Our four houses (in Caen, Coutances, Lisieux and Rouen) are united into a single Congregation under the same rule and guidance, without prejudice to the dependence of each upon its own Prelate who exercises over it the same authority he has over all other persons and places of his diocese who are under his episcopal jurisdiction.

2. The Superior of each house is chosen by the Superior of the Congregation and presented to the

bishop of that particular diocese for approval and confirmation, if he finds him acceptable; if not, another must then be presented to him.

3. Everyone in the house, our own members as well as the seminarians, is under the jurisdiction of the Superior of that particular house.

4. We have sufficient funds only for the support of our own members and, until God inspires our Prelates to do what your Eminence has done for your seminary, or provides for it in some other way, the seminarians must pay their own room and board which, in Coutances, amounts to 200 pounds. At Caen and Lisieux, where living is not as cheap, it amounts to 250 pounds. At Rouen, where expenses are still higher, 300 pounds.

5. Since our houses form a Congregation which is under the guidance of one Superior, its members are sent from one house to another, as in other congregations, a practice which is necessary and very useful for several reasons. They are also taken from all the houses to participate in the missions, as the needs arise; for many grow weary of being constantly in the same place; some dislike dealing always with the same people; a few form dangerous attachments, and

134-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

often differences of disposition make these changes imperative. For all these reasons, it is necessary for the seminaries to be united and under a single direction in order to insure their subsistence and their usefulness to the Church.

It would appear that Cardinal Grimaldi will not have the opportunity of relaying this information to Rome. His letter of January 10, 1664, will have practically no effect. The Congregation of the Propaganda's reply, dated March 29, 1664, will state that it is preferable to wait before giving enlarged powers to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. A new Nuncio is about to be named to Paris: he will be asked to review the question. It is, therefore, a postponement that inspires little hope.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

135 -

32. PRESENTATION OF A SUPERIOR TO HIS COMMUNITY - April/May, 1665

"We has all the qualities required of a superior."

The previous letter shows that in early 1664 the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, with its four houses, is beginning to adopt a satisfactory living pace.

Still, during the previous years, the seminary at Caen worried Father Eudes. Indeed, on February 2, 1659, less than two months after the very promising acquisition of the land of Petits-Prés (114), Bishop Servien of Bayeux died. Once again the founder was deprived of one of his best supporters; once again he was anxious about the appointment of his successor, hoping for a time that it would be Bishop Auvry. (115) As a matter of fact, it is Bishop Francois de Nesmond who was appointed in the course of 1659. Fortunately, he is well disposed towards Father Eudes who met him several times in Paris in 1661 and attended his episcopal consecration, in the church of the Sorbonne, on March 19, 1662. On arriving

(114). Bishop Auvry, Father Eudes' friend, has just resigned the See of Coutances. On June 1st, 1659, John Eudes writes to him: he has heard that the Bishop has been approached for the See of Bayeux, and

he begs him to accept.

(115). Only thirty years old when appointed, Bishop de Nesmond will be Bishop of Bayeux until his death in 1715. He will actually reside in his diocese, a practice which was not common at the time.

136-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

in his diocese, Bishop de Nesmond visited the seminary at Caen on February 8, 1663, then, the following summer, the parish of Ldtanville where John Eudes was giving a mission. On May 20, 1664, he blessed the cornerstone of the church of the proposed seminary, which will be dedicated to the Heart of Jesus and Mary. (116) This, of course, is but the first stage of a construction that will extend over many long years, but it is a decisive step. (117)

At this time, the houses of Coutances, Lisieux and Rouen are free from any major problems. The Rouen house, however, was afflicted the previous year by the death of its superior, M. Thomas Manchon, on February 6, 1663, at the age of forty-six. Father Eudes in his Wmorial says that "he died with the most saintly dispositions one could ask for."

(116). On July 1st, 1662, thanks to a generous gift he received, John Eudes was able to free himself from a heavy financial obligation contracted in 1658 when he bought the land of Petits-Prés; that allowed him to consider building this church. He first thought of dedicating it to the Heart of Mary, and that was probably still his intention when the cornerstone was laid. Yet, a few years later, in his Last Will and Testament (1671) he states that it is consecrated to "the Heart of Jesus and Mary". This change almost certainly corresponds to the evolution in his thinking which led him, in 1672, to celebrate the Feast of the Heart of Jesus. It is worth noting that, in the Bulls which will be granted in 1674 by Clement X, allowing the establishment of confraternities of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus and Mary in the six churches or chapels of the Eudist seminaries, the places of worship will all be called "church or chapel of the Heart of Jesus and Mary".

(117). The construction of the church, very slow in the beginning because of a lack of funds, will be accelerated in 1673 by a gift of twelve thousand pounds from the Duchess de Guise. The building will be sufficiently advanced in 1680 to allow burial of the founder's body in the choir. It will not be completed until 1687. The other buildings of the seminary will go up slowly, in several stages: the main wing will be finished in 1703, and the other wing will not be undertaken until 1731. At the time of the French Revolution it became the City Hall, and was destroyed by the bombardments of June, 1944.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

137 -

To succeed M. Manchon, John Eudes appoints Louis Faucon, who will be replaced two years later by Jacques de la Haye de Bonnefond. (118)

The letter presented here is the one in which John Eudes announces to the Rouen community the appointment of M. de Bonnefond. The founder, who has surely not forgotten the difficulties encountered at Lisieux in 1658-59, avoids imposing his choice authoritatively. He tries to convince his confreres of the wisdom of this choice and draws a most sympathetic picture of the new superior for whom he visibly has much esteem and affection.

After a great deal of prayer asking for the grace to know the adorable will of God regarding the Superior I had to send you, I found none better suited than our dearest brother, M. de Bonnefond. He ranks high in virtue and piety, is very wise and prudent, is learned and has served as bursar, which makes him better qualified for the superior's post. His great reluctance is joined to submission, two indications of his capacity for this position. For it is a maxim that whoever does not know how to obey is

not fit to command. Besides, he has no failing which might prevent him from setting good example. Finally, he knows how to get along with people. So, he has all the qualities required of a superior, which are very rarely found in one person.

(118). Jacques de la Haye de Bonnefond, who will be mentioned again later, was then thirty-two. He died in 1711.

138-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

33. PAPAL APPROVAL OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY - Oct. 11, 1665

«Infinite thanks be rendered to the most Blessed Trinity! »

In spite of M. Boniface's failure in 1662-63, Father Eudes has not given up on obtaining papal approval for Our Lady of Charity.

An opportunity comes up in 1665. Two Cistercian monks, Abbots de Rancé and George,(119) are at this time in Rome to defend the Strict Observance reform of the Order vigorously opposed by the Abbott of the Citeaux monastery. Father Eudes, probably supported by the Bishop of Chalons. (120) Bishop Vialart, a friend of de Rancé, asks them

(119). Armand de Rancé (1626-1700), converted in 1660 after a very agitated life, withdrew to the Cistercian monastery of Soligny (Ome) in 1664, and became the vigorous promoter of the reform called The Strict Observance, already in force in other monasteries of the Order, among them, Le Val-Richer (Calvados) which John Eudes knows well and whose Abbot is Dom Dominique George, de Rancé's companion in his Roman negotiations. Less fortunate with their own appeals than with those in favor of Our Lady of Charity, the two monks will not get any favorable decisions concerning the reform advocated by the Strict Observance camp. De Rancé's action at Soligny, however, will be the starting point for what is called today The Order of Reformed Cistercians of Our Lady (Trappists), officially constituted in 1861.

(120). From May 20 to June 25, 1665, Father Eudes conducts a mission at Chfilons-sur-Mame. He then goes to Clairvaux, a reformed Cistercian monastery where he stays for a fortnight and give conferences to the monks.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

139 -

to intervene in favor of Our Lady of Charity. Taking advantage of the influence of Cardinal de Retz. (121) another of de Rancé's friends who is himself in Rome since June 13, 1665, they meet with total success as early as the month of September. Mother Patin, who is rapidly informed of this good fortune, passes the news on to Father Eudes who is in Paris at the time.

John Eudes replies on October 11, 1665. Rewarded at last for his persevering efforts, he experiences a "Joy too great for words" and gives thanks to the holy Trinity, to Jesus, to the Virgin Mary, to the angels and the saints. He does not fail to recognize in the event an invitation to "the practice of sound virtues... especially, especially, especially zeal for the salvation of lost and abandoned souls."

I thank you with all my heart, my dearest Mother, for the wonderful news you sent me. My joy is too great for words. Infinite thanks be forever rendered to the most Blessed Trinity, infinite thanks to our most lovable Jesus. Eternal thanks to his most holy Mother and ours. Immortal thanks to our most honored Sister Marie des Valées who contributed much to this splendid success. Immortal thanks to all the angels and all the saints, particularly Saint Francis de Sales.(122) Blessings upon blessings on all who have worked to achieve it.

(121). Cardinal de Retz (1613-1679), had resigned as Archbishop of Paris in 1662, but still maintained considerable influence in Rome.

(122). Francis de Sales who died in 1622 and was beatified in 1661, had just been canonized a few months earlier, on April 19, 1665.

140-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

Let us rejoice in Our Lord, my dearest Mother; let us rejoice, my dearest Sisters. May these favors from heaven incite us to love our most bountiful Jesus and our most lovable Mother more fervently and serve them more faithfully through the practice of sound virtues, particularly humility, obedience, charity, and especially, especially, especially zeal for the salvation of lost and abandoned souls. It is in this way that you can manifest still more the love you bear him who sacrificed himself for their sake, as well as your desire to please his most charitable Mother.

Besides, I am sure that you have well sung our holy Alleluia. Oh, what a great desire I have to sing it with you, my dearest Mother and my dearest Sisters, and bring you a sacred relic of the holy Martyrs, companions of Saint Denis, which I obtained for you from Mine de Montmartre. (123) Indeed, I have not forgotten you, my dearest Sisters, although you appear to have forgotten me entirely inasmuch as I have had no word from you since I left Caen. (124) I assure you that each day I carry all of you together and each one in particular on my shoulders to the holy altar as my poor lambs, and in my heart as my dear daughters, that I may offer you in sacrifice with our adorable Host, to the glory and praise of the most holy Trinity, and do a number of other things for you which would take too long to write.

(123). For several years now, Father Eudes has entertained a close relationship with the Benedictines of Montmartre, whose Mother Abbess is Frangoise-Rende de Lorraine.

(124). John Eudes is in Paris since mid-July. He came after the mission at Chfilons and his stay at Clairvaux. He has, therefore, been away from Caen at least five months. He will go back by way of Rouen where, at the end of October, he will make his annual visit to the seminary. On December 29, 1665, he will begin a mission at Saint Pierre Parish in Caen.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

141 -

Please read this letter, my dearest Mother, to all our Sisters, and do not forget before God the one who is truly, in the most holy Heart of Jesus and Mary, my dearest Mother,

Entirely yours,

John Eudes, missionary priest.

A few months after this letter was written, on January 22, 1666 actually, Pope Alexander VII signs the Bull of approval of Our Lady of Charity. This constitutes a capital document to which reference will be made often later. It definitively consolidates the foundation which will reveal itself capable of resisting many a storm.

A little later, Bishop de Nesmond, to whom the Bull had been sent officially, asks the Sisters to renew their vows, which will become "solemn and irrevocable". The ceremony takes place on June 3, Ascension Thursday, during a Mass celebrated by the bishop with Father Eudes as the preacher.

It is now time to finalize the Constitutions. A letter to Mother Patin, dated November 12, 1666, explains his concern for all to be clear and precise. He recommends adding to the Constitutions three

chapters already written and deleting one sentence. He also mentions the Directory which should be placed at the end of the Constitutions, and the Ceremonial Book which, Godwilling, "we will draw up on some other occasion."

142-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

3 4 . GENEROUS SETTLEMENT OF A FINANCIAL LITIGATION - around 1668

"I would much prefer peace to all the settlements one can imagine."

It is at Evreux where he began a mission on All Saints Day, 1666, that John Eudes wrote the letter to which we have just alluded. This mission will have an important consequence, namely: the Congregation of Jesus and Mary's foundation of a fifth seminary, this one in the city of Evreux, at the request of Bishop de Maupas. In a letter to Mother Patin, written on January 13, 1667, the day the mission ended, (125) John Eudes sees this foundation as "a new cross" which Jesus and Mary "have placed on my weak shoulders".

However, thanks to Bishop de Maupas' resolute and very benevolent support, as well as the assistance of various benefactors, both clergy and lay, the seminary at Evreux gets off to a relatively easy start under the direction of M. Simon Mannoury. It is only a little later, probably during 1668, that the first difficulties arise as a disagreeable financial litigation opposing the Canons of Evreux to Father Eudes. For

(125). This letter, the last one to Mother Patin which was preserved, is a very cordial reply to "the beautiful and grand letter, full of goodness, charity and cordiality" which she has just sent the founder. "My heart," he writes, "is full of affection and tenderness for you and for all my dearest daughters."

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

1 4 3 -

various motives, they gripe about paying to the seminary the fees for room and board set by the bishop in accordance with the letters patent he received from the king even before the seminary was founded.

More concerned with peace than with economic advantages, declared enemy of all that resembles a court case, Father Eudes very rapidly gives up the idea of claiming these fees, as is indicated in the letter to Bishop de Maupas which we are quoting here.

I would much prefer peace to all the settlements one can imagine. We get along very well without them in our other seminaries and still manage, thank God, to perform all our duties, for divine Providence has never abandoned us. That is why, my Lord Bishop, I beg your Grace with all my heart, by all the kindness you have always shown your most unworthy servants, to allow the Canons of Evreux not to pay room and board. We will all be most grateful to you for this favor.

144 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

3 5 . OUR LADY OF CHARITY ELECTION - Jan. 9, 1669

"You should not consider yourself as the superior; the true superior is the Mother of God."

It is in 1668, on April 28 to be precise, that Father Eudes gives a very personal expression to

his devotion to Mary by drawing up and signing with his blood a "Covenant contract with the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God." In it he thanks her for accepting that he choose her as his spouse "from his most tender years". He tells her of his desire to belong totally to her and become like her. Sure of Mary's "incomparable favors" in his regard, he states how much he wants to love her in return, as well as her son Jesus: "Would that I had all the hearts of men and angels, with all the capacity for loving that ever was and ever will be, to use them to love Jesus, the Son of Mary, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Please permit," he adds, "that I may have but one soul, one spirit, one will and one heart with you." Then, he asks her to watch particularly over his spiritual children.

During the following months, two deaths occur in the community of Our Lady of Charity. The first, on May 30, 1668, is the death of Sister Marie de l'Assomption de Taillefer, the first to be professed who, in the most critical times of the foundation, while she was still but a postulant or a novice, stood firm with Maric Herson.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

145 -

Next, on October 31, Mother Patin herself dies. No doubt, this Visitation Nun, at first (1644-47) lacked enthusiasm, even conviction. But, when she returned to Our Lady of Charity in 1651, she gave the best of herself to Saint John Eudes' work. Tenacious, even obstinate, she sometimes made the founder suffer because she found some of his actions disconcerting. But he never mistook the rare human and spiritual qualities of his collaborator. He knows that she is the one who gave the decisive impulse to Our Lady of Charity and he is profoundly grateful for that.

Mother Patin's death leaves the community somewhat in a quandary. At first asking the Visitation to send another superior is considered. This easy way out is fortunately dismissed after the energetic intervention of a young Sister, Marie-Ang6lique de Balde. She finds strange that a community which guides penitents needs to look elsewhere to govern itself! On December 22, 1668, the community of Our Lady of Charity elects as Superior Sister Marie du Saint Sacrement Pierre, who is originally from Lisieux, is fortyfive and ten years professed.

As foreseen by the Constitutions, the election is presided by the ecclesiastical superior, M. Claude Le Grand. Father Eudes is in Paris at the time and that is where he receives news about the election as well as a message from the newly elected superior.

His reply, written January 9, 1669, is a little masterpiece. Extremely well composed, written in a sober and limpid style, it reflects a great sense of the supernatural and great wisdom. The founder first invites the new superior to consider her junction, not as "an honor or an advantage" of which she could prevail herself, but as a charge which

146-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

she must fulfill as "vicar or substitute" of the Virgin Mary, the true superior, in order to "guide her Sisters by the spirit of their Spouse and their Mother."

Then, come four recommendations, brief but pressing, particularly the fourth: "Speak to your Sisters more by your deeds than by your words." Guide them with great charity, meekness and kindness." "See that the Constitutions are strictly and carefully observed." "Remain faithful to the purpose for which the house was established, to serve the penitents."

Father Eudes adds that he "hopes to be able to answer the rest of Sister Marie du Saint-Sacrement's letter in person". Nevertheless, he risks a bit of advice which probably seems more urgent to him: "There are many reasons why one must not be in too much of a hurry to write the biography of a person who has just died." The new superior has, therefore, already planned to have Mother Patin's

biographical sketch composed and, as the future will show, is in no way disposed to change her mind...

My dearest daughter,

With all my heart I give thanks to Our Lord and his most holy Mother for having chosen you to take charge of their house. I say take charge, for you do well, my dearest daughter, not to look upon it as an honor or an advantage, but rather as a cross and a very weighty burden, since superiors must answer to God for the salvation of the souls God has entrusted to them.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

147-

You should not consider yourself as the superior, for the true superior is the most holy Mother of God. You are only her vicar or substitute. That is why you must cast yourself at her feet often, especially whenever you have to perform some action as superior. There, make an act of selfrenunciation, give yourself to her and implore her to annihilate your own spirit within you and grant you hers, which is that of her Son, so that you may guide your Sisters by the spirit of their Spouse and of their Mother.

To that end, there are four things you should do, my dearest daughter:

The first: speak to your Sisters more by your deeds than by your words, assuming the lead in all things and trying through your behavior to be a model of all virtues.

The second: guide them with great charity, meekness and kindness, anticipating all their spiritual and material needs, and demonstrating in all things that you have a truly maternal heart full of concern, tenderness and cordiality in their regard.

The third: see that your Rules and Constitutions are strictly and carefully observed, and to that end you yourself should study them diligently, particularly those that concern you.

The fourth: take special care of the penitents and overlook nothing you can do for their perfect conversion because, since the house was established for that purpose, all the graces that God may choose to grant it depend on that. As long as the duties belonging to this Institute are properly fulfilled, God will shower his blessings abundantly on your

148-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

community; but as soon as they are neglected, he will abandon you and the whole structure, spiritual as well as material, will collapse.

I hope, God willing, that I will soon be able to answer the rest of your letter in person. There are many reasons why one must not be in too much of a hurry to write the biography of a person who has just died.(126)

I send my most cordial regards to all my dearest Daughters. I have always felt and always will feel toward them a truly paternal heart, I who am, in truth, my dearest Daughter,
Entirely yours, John Eudes,
missionary priest of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.
(126). The very next year, 1670, The Life of Venerable Mother Fran~oise Marguerite Patin, written by Sister Marie- Angélique de Balde, was published in Caen. The new superior did not, therefore, pay much attention to Father Eudes' advice!

36. DELAYS IN A FOUNDATION OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY - Jan. 19, 1670

"I am surprised that it is impossible to send any of our Sisters here right away."

1669 is a year of multiple and various preaching engagements for Father Eudes: a Lenten series at the Sainte-Chapelle;(127) three or four missions in Normandy in the spring and early summer; a conference to the monks of Val-Richer, on July 26; a sermon to the Benedictine Nuns of Evreux, on October 27.

On December 1st, Father Eudes begins another mission in the Cathedral of Rennes; it will be the longest of all his missions (over four months). Soon after arriving in the city, he foresees the possibility of founding a community of Our Lady of Charity there; it would be the Order's second. For several years, Rennes has had a house for penitents, directed by Marie Heurtaut, who was a novice of Our Lady of Charity in Caen around 1660.(128) Father Eudes, who probably knows the young girl from those days, is immediately

(126). The Sainte-Chapelle had been erected by Saint Louis, in Paris, in the Ile de la Citd, in the XIth century. Bishop Auvry is the one who asks Father Eudes to preach there.

(128). Marie Heurtaut, for complex reasons difficult to understand today, had not been admitted to profession when the community voted on her request, much to Mother Patin's dismay. In 1666, she had encouraged Marie to go to Rennes to assume direction of the house for penitents.

150-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

won over by the expertise and faith with which she handles her duties. Without delay, he writes to the Superior of Caen, Sister Marie du Saint-Sacrement, explaining the situation. He asks her to send him copies of official documents relating to the Order's first house, and especially to send a few Sisters who would form the nucleus of a small community in Rennes to which Marie Heurtaut could rapidly be integrated.

The following letter, dated January 19, 1670, shows that Father Eudes' wishes were not always acted upon. True, the requested copies arrived - even though one important one is missing. But Sister Marie du Saint-Sacrement, without categorically refusing to send Sisters to Rennes, replied that this was impossible for the moment.

John Eudes first gives a few precisions - which a XXth century reader may find difficult to understand, but which attest to the founder's attention to administrative questions. Then he expresses surprise at the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Superior of Caen. Is it really impossible to find any Sisters who might be willing to come to Rennes? John Eudes cannot believe that is the case.

He tries to find reasons for the partial refusal and refutes them one after the other. He asks himself if "this obstacle and this delay" are not the work of the devil himself. He deplores above all, with the sadness one can easily imagine, the fact that the Superior is not being totally honest with him: "Why, my dear Daughter, are you so reserved with me. pp,

I received the copies of the documents you sent me, my dear Daughter, but the judgement of verification from

the Parliament is missing. There is one which orders only that Caen be informed of the conveniences and inconveniences of the city. We do not need that one, but a different one which is in your possession, was issued later and orders registration of your letters patent from the King. Please have a copy of it made as soon as possible and send it to me without delay, because the Bishop of Rennes wishes to see it.

I am surprised at your writing me that it is impossible to send any of our Sisters here right away. Why is that, my dear Daughter? Is it because there are none who wish to come? I cannot believe that the Daughters of Charity could have so little love for God and so little charity toward souls who have been redeemed by the precious blood of his Son.

Might it be that they have some grievance against the Superior here? But she is all charity, meekness and kindness. (129)

Is it because you think that you will be asked for a dowry, or room and board, or the expenses of the trip to be made by those who come? I give you my word, none of these things will be demanded of you. A President has offered to have them brought here in her carriage. (130) If they do (128). Marie Heurtaut is the person in question here. Perhaps the picture the monastery of Caen has retained of her is not totally favorable. Father Eudes defends her vigorously. (129). John Eudes knows from experience that unavowed financial difficulties can engender deep malaise. He makes the first move, announcing a clear and magnanimous position aimed at dissipating any anxiety the Sisters of Caen might have. The President he mentions is Mine d'Argouges, wife of the President of the Parliament of Rennes, who will try in vain to establish a community of Our Lady of Charity in Paris.

152-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

not like it here, they will be able to leave. (130) Moreover, as long as they remain, your house will be freed from room and board of two girls. It will also be strengthened by the union which will be formed with this house, and it will furnish an example for other establishments of your Order. (131)

Lastly, I do not know the origin of this hindrance or delay, but I do know that the devil, who is enraged at the communities engaged in working for the salvation of souls, will do all in his power to prevent this plan from succeeding and postpone its execution, because he knows only too well that, when we have left here, it will be easy for him to create obstacles.

But why, my dear Daughter, are you so reserved with me who have no other intent than the glory of God, the salvation of souls and the advantage of your house? Why don't you simply tell me what the trouble is so that I may try to remedy it? You can let me know as safely in writing as by word of mouth, since the mail never gets lost. (132)

(130). To encourage the Sisters to come to Rennes, John Eudes offers them a trial period.

(131). John Eudes foresees expansion of Our Lady of Charity and is concerned about the way in which union will exist among the houses. In fact, until the beginning of the XIXth century, all the houses of Our Lady of Charity were autonomous, as was the case in many religious Orders. In 1835, Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, with papal approval, established a generalate in order to group all the houses she had founded and those she might found in the future, thus giving birth to the Congregation of the Good Shepherd of Angers. The other houses of the Order, and those they founded, were organized, from 1945 on, in several countries, into Federations and Unions. Lately, an International Union was also established in Rome.

(132). Father Eudes has great faith in the postal service.

Most cordial regards to all my dear Daughters. I beg them to have a very special devotion to the divine Infant Jesus and his most holy Mother.

In the love of the most holy Heart of the Son and the Mother, I remain, regarding both you and them, my dearest Daughter,

Entirely yours, John Eudes,
missionary priest.

This pressing letter will have no immediate effect. It will help the Caen community, however, to envision the perspective of a foundation. Three years later, in May, 1673, two Sisters will be sent to Rennes and, the following November 13, a house of Our Lady of Charity will be canonically erected in that city. Very soon, Marie Heurtaut will be integrated as a religious in that community and will take the name of Sister Marie de la Trinité. She will then play an important role in the expansion of the Order, as will be seen later.

154-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

37. MISSIONARY ZEAL - April 16, 1670

"I have resolved to spend the rest of my life conducting missions."

Arrested in his desire to found a community of Our Lady of Charity in Rennes, Father Eudes will be able, on the other hand, to rapidly open a house of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary there, its sixth. Bishop de la Vieuville who, as the mission progresses appreciates the good work Father Eudes and his companions are doing, invites them, on March 8, to assume direction of the seminary he has been planning to open for several years. To that end, he gives them a garden he has bought and a building he has erected, thus providing them with relatively important income. The missionaries immediately move in: the Rennes community is founded. The exercises of the seminary, however, will begin only two years later, in 1672. (133)

Concern for establishing his two institutes in Rennes has not kept Father Eudes from conducting the mission and doing himself an important part of the preaching. He did so with as much zeal as when he was thirty years old, as he (133). Bishop de Vieuville will ask his candidates for the priesthood to spend three months at the seminary before receiving Minor Orders, and the same period of time before each of the Major Orders (subdiaconate, diaconate and priesthood). There is still far to go before reaching the philosophy and procedures of the XIXth and XXth century seminaries.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

155 -

says himself in a letter written on April 16, 1670, three days after the closing of the mission.

Only a very brief excerpt of this letter addressed to a Benedictine of Montmartre, Sister Saint-Gabriel, has been preserved. Father Eudes, happy and grateful for the grace God has granted him at over sixty-eight, states that he is more than ever determined to continue his missionary ministry.

God granted me so much strength on this mission that I preached almost every day for twelve weeks to an enormous audience in the cathedral with as much vigor as I had at the age of thirty. That is why I have resolved to spend the rest of my life in this work. After the summer missions, we are committed to giving one at Clermont-en-Auvergne, on All Saints Day. (134)

In fact, the Rennes mission is followed, from April to July, 1670, by three others in the same diocese. The following year, 1671, from March 23 to 29, at the request of Bishop Harlay de Champvallon who, from Archbishop of Rouen has just become Archbishop of Paris, Father Eudes gives a mission at the Chateau of Versailles. He notes in his Wmorial (diary): "God did me the grace of giving two forceful exhortations before the Queen (135) with the monstrance in hand, and a third, still more powerful, before the King."

(134). It would seem that, for unknown reasons, this mission never took place.

(135). Marie-Thérèse of Austria, wife of Louis XIV.

156 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

The missionary does not let the success of this preaching before the court and the king himself go to his head. On the contrary, it may be for him the opportunity to better evaluate the precariousness of human success. A few weeks later, on April 24, 1671, he makes his Last Will and Testament. Facing death lucidly and serenely, he states, in twenty-one numbered paragraphs how, in the very depth of his being, he wishes to live out his death. He wants to die as a "child of holy Church" and receive the sacraments. He begs for forgiveness from all those he may have offended, and expresses forgiveness himself in the spirit of Jesus on the Cross. He details some concrete wishes concerning his burial, the destination of a few objects and relics he possesses. He prays that his successor will govern the Congregation in the spirit of Jesus and Mary and recommends to all his confreres fidelity to their vocation and respect for the spiritual heritage he leaves them. Amazed at "the incomprehensible love by which (Jesus and Mary) gave him their most lovable Heart in a very special way", he in turn gives it to his spiritual sons and daughters, "as something that is mine and of which I can dispose". He asks for the grace to die "in the love (of Jesus), by his love and for the sake of his love."

On the following May 15th, Father Eudes receives from the new Archbishop of Paris vast powers extending over the whole diocese. On the other hand, he hopes to occupy a house given to him by a widow, Mme de Traversay. The time seems ripe to realize a project he has been thinking of for a long time, namely: to establish a community in Paris. It would undoubtedly be a decisive act toward consolidating and developing his Congregation.

But multiple difficulties will arise. The pastor of Saint-Josse Parish, where the house given to him by Mme de

SAINTJOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

157 -

Traversay is located, is afraid the influence of a Eudist community will be prejudicial to him. When the benefactor dies, he succeeds in having her wishes contravened. John Eudes, therefore, has to look for another house. In March or April, 1672, hope is revived: Colbert signs letters patent allowing the Congregation of Jesus and Mary to buy a house in Paris and, about the same time, the archbishop authorizes the establishment of a community. Alas! these hopes will also soon be dashed. On July 9, 1672, the Parliament of Paris, where Father Eudes' adversaries are very influential, rules against the project. The founder is deeply affected: "The magistrates demand so much," he writes the same day to M. de Bonnefond, "that it is very discouraging and prompts me almost to abandon the whole idea, having come to doubt that it is God's will that we pursue this matter." And he adds: "Have prayers said over this."

Seldom does one hear John Eudes speak of abandoning a project. It really has to appear to him, in the light of faith, impossible to realize. But the missionary does not lose his enterprising spirit: just twenty days later, on July 29, 1672, he decides to have the liturgical Feast of the Heart of Jesus celebrated on the following October 20th.

38. INSTITUTION OF THE FEAST OF THE HEART OF JESUS - July 29,1672

"Let us with joy and jubilation embrace the solemnity of the divine Heart of our most lovable Jesus."

One will recall, it was more than twenty-four years earlier that Father Eudes instituted the Feast of the Heart of Mary, now celebrated in a number of dioceses and religious institutes. For years he has been happy with that. Is not the Feast of the Heart of Mary at the same time the Feast of the Heart of Jesus, since Jesus and Mary have but one and the same heart?

Still, for the past few years now, John Eudes has felt the need for a new initiative: establishing a liturgical feast of the Heart of Jesus. By celebrating in two distinct feasts the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary, Christians will more easily understand what these Hearts represent. They will be able to discover more fully the doctrinal and spiritual richness of worship of the Heart of Jesus and of the Heart of Mary.

Around 1668, John Eudes composed an office and a Mass in honor of the Heart of Jesus. In 1670 and 1671, he had these texts approved by the Bishops of Rennes, Coutances, Evreux, Paris, Bayeux and Lisieux. On July 29, 1672, he judges there is no need to wait any longer: he addresses to his confreres a letter full of joy and gratitude to

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 159 -

the Lord. In it he invites them to celebrate the Feast of the Heart of Jesus in their houses on the following October 20th.

Although this letter is quite long, we are quoting large excerpts from it. John Eudes first repeats, with more precision, what he has already expressed in his Last Will and Testament and in several of his earlier writings: Jesus gave to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, and in a special way, the Heart of his Mother and his own Heart. He did so from the very birth of that Congregation which, when celebrating the Heart of Mary also celebrated that of Jesus: "Our intention always was, from the very beginnings of our Congregation, to look upon and honor these two lovable Hearts as one Heart." The Feast of the Heart of Mary is, for the Church, a providential preparation for the celebration of the Heart of Jesus, "which will be a fresh source of infinite blessings for all who will be disposed to celebrate it in holy fashion."

My dearest and beloved brothers,

It is an inexplicable grace which our most lovable Savior has granted us in giving our Congregation the admirable Heart of his most holy Mother. But not being content, in his infinite goodness, to stop there, he has gone even further in giving us his own Heart, to be, along with the Heart of his glorious Mother, the founder and superior, the beginning and end, the heart and life of this same Congregation.

He conferred this great gift on us from the very birth of our Congregation for, even though we have not celebrated a special and particular feast of the adorable Heart of Jesus, we never intended to separate two hearts which God has so closely joined together, the most august Heart of the Son of

God and the Heart of his blessed Mother. On the contrary, our intention has always been from the very beginnings of our Congregation, to consider and honor these two lovable Hearts as one, in unity of spirit, feeling, will and affection, as is clearly indicated in the salutation to the divine Heart of Jesus and Mary which we recite each day, as well as in the prayer and several parts of the Office and Mass we celebrate on the Feast of the Virgin's most Sacred Heart.

But divine Providence, which ordains all things with marvelous wisdom, has willed to introduce the feast of the Heart of the Mother before that of the Heart of her Son, in order to prepare the hearts of the faithful to venerate his adorable Heart and dispose them to obtain from heaven the grace of a second feast by the great devotion they have shown in celebrating the first (...)

It is this ardent devotion of the true children of the Heart of the Mother of love which has obliged her to obtain from her beloved Son this very singular favor he has granted his Church: giving her the feast of his royal Heart which will be a fresh source of infinite blessings for all who will be disposed to celebrate it in holy fashion.

But who is there who would not do that? What solemnity is more worthy, more holy, more excellent than this one, the fountain-head of everything great, holy and venerable in all other feasts? What heart is more adorable, more admirable and worthy of love than the Heart of this God-Man whose name is Jesus? What honor is not due this divine Heart which has ever rendered and will eternally render God more glory and love, at every moment, than all the hearts of humans and angels can render him during a whole eternity? What zeal should not be ours to honor this august Heart,

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

161 -

the source of our salvation, the origin of all the joys and pleasures of earth, an immense furnace of love toward us, which thinks of nothing else, day and night, save to confer on us an infinity of blessings.

John Eudes then refutes two objections. First, the newness of the feast: "All feasts," he answers quite appropriately, "were new when they were celebrated for the first time." Next, the lack of papal approval: "Each bishop (in his own diocese)," he goes on to explain, "has the same powers in this regard as the sovereign pontiff in the universal Church." (136)

Then, in the last part of the letter, which follows, the founder urges his confreres to recognize the richness of God's gift to the Congregation and prepare themselves, as well as possible, to celebrate the feast. He closes with some practical advice to that end.

Let us acknowledge, my dearest brothers, the infinite grace and incomprehensible favor with which our bountiful Savior has honored our Congregation by giving it his most adorable Heart, together with the most lovable Heart of his holy Mother. They are two inestimable treasures which (136). This opinion was commonly held in the XVIIth century and John Eudes says he shares this belief "with Saint Francis de Sales and with a great number of very illustrious and knowledgeable prelates and eminent doctors." Two centuries later, in 1861, the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and the Order of Our Lady of Charity will obtain papal approval of the Masses and Offices composed by Father Eudes for the Feasts of the Heart of Mary and the Heart of Jesus, later extended to the Congregation of the Good Shepherd and other Congregations of women religious. This approval was confirmed in 1973 when the postconciliar liturgical reform took place.

162-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

contain an immensity of heavenly blessings and eternal riches of which he has made our Congregation the depository, wishing to implant them in the hearts of the faithful through us.

Let us humble ourselves infinitely at the sight of our own infinite unworthiness in the face of such tremendous considerations. Let us be deeply grateful for the ineffable bounty of our most benign Savior and the incomparable charity of his dearest Mother and ours. Let us never cease blessing, praising and glorifying them, and inviting all creatures to join us in blessing and thanking them. Let us with joy and jubilation embrace the solemnity of the divine Heart of our most lovable Jesus.

I am enclosing the Office and Mass of this feast, approved by all our prelates. Let us use all the care, diligence and fervor possible to celebrate it well.

To that end:

1 - Invite all our friends and all devout persons.

2 - If you receive this parcel soon enough, have the feast proclaimed; if there is time, a sermon should be prepared.

3 - Fast on the vigil of the feast.

4 - Have twelve poor people dine in the refectory on the eve of the feast or the day before (137). Inviting twelve poor people to dinner on certain occasions was one of the concrete means indicated in the Constitutions to arouse awareness of the duty to share.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

163 -

The octave is not yet printed so I could not send it to you. (138))

Finally, my dearest brothers, I urge you to celebrate this feast with all possible devotion and solemnity, and then write me all about it. (138)) you will thereby cause great joy to the one who wishes you the holiest blessings of our most bountiful Savior and his sweet Mother, and who is, in the sacred love of his divine Heart, my dearest brothers,

Your unworthy servant, John Eudes,
priest of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

(138). An octave is the extension of a feast for eight days; a current practice in the Church in the XVIIIth century. In the course of the following centuries, octaves became very numerous to the point of encumbering the liturgical calendar; some even overlapped. The post-conciliar liturgical reform retained only two: the ones for Easter and for Pentecost.

(139). This first liturgical feast of the Heart of Jesus took place, therefore, before the apparitions to Saint Marguerite- Marie Alacoque (December, 1673 - June 1675). Celebrated on October 20, 1673, only in the Eudist houses, it was obviously adopted, shortly thereafter by the monasteries of Our Lady of Charity, and later in numerous dioceses and religious institutes, not only in France, but also in Canada. The Feast of the Heart of Jesus was approved by Pope Clement XIII in 1765, at the same time as a text for the Mass, *Miserebitur*, and extended to the universal Church in 1856. Popes Pius X and Pius XI gave Father Eudes, in the Brief of Beatification (1909) and the Bull of Canonization (1925) the triple title of "Father, Doctor and Apostle of the liturgical worship of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary."

164-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

It can be said that the Feast of the Heart of Jesus is the culmination of Father Eudes' spiritual and apostolic itinerary. Indeed, in the Heart of Christ, he contemplates the mystery of Love in its totality: the eternal love of the Father for us, of which Jesus' love is the echo and manifestation in the history of mankind; the love of Jesus for his Father, the model of what our daily response to the Father's love

should be; Jesus' love for the Virgin Mary, his Mother, to the point of joining her to him so intimately that she becomes one Heart with him. Our hearts too are destined to be intimately united with the Heart of Jesus. More precisely, Jesus gives us his own Heart, and that is how love can enter into our lives, transform them and give them true meaning.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

165-

39. ANXIETY CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING A BISHOP - Sept. 1672

"I desire no benefice save the Cross of my Savior Jesus Christ."

Shortly after sending the previous letter to his confreres on July 29, 1672, John Eudes enters into a period of great anxiety. He knows that the Bishop of Evreux, Bishop de Maupas, feels he is getting old and is looking for a coadjutor. John Eudes discovers, at the end of August, that the bishop's candidate is none other than himself.(140)

He experiences contradictory emotions. He cannot believe that such an appointment could take place, since he knows that his enemies will do all they can to block it and they have enough influence to be successful. On the other hand, he fears that, through some mysterious chain of events, what seems unlikely might actually take place. He is overcome by this possibility: "I have like lost my mind and power of speech,(141) he writes to M. Mannoury, at the beginning of September, 1672, just after hearing about it. 141 Two letters

(140). Bishop de Maupas is three years younger than Father Eudes. He will die one week before him, on August 12, 1680.

(141). Simon Mannoury is then superior of the Seminary of Evreux, where he has been since its foundation (1667).

166-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

follow, only a few days apart. They are more serene but reflect the same interior turmoil.

The letter we quote here (only in part because just an excerpt has been preserved) bears witness to the deep peace of a man who seeks only the will of God and "wants no other benefice" but the Cross of Christ. The anxiety and fear of the first moment are now passed and nearly forgotten, to the point where Father Eudes states that "the news has not caused (him) the slightest disturbance." Obviously an exaggeration. The conviction that the appointment will not take place seems to have gained ground in his mind, and he tells M. Mannoury so with realism and humor: "I know men and I feel quite sure that this is the cross they will most willingly spare me."

This news has not caused me the slightest disturbance, both because I am quite certain that, no matter what may be said, nothing will come of these proposals, and because, if it were to happen, it would assuredly be God who had so willed it. Tell the Bishop of Evreux that I desire no benefice save the one chosen by my Savior Jesus Christ for himself, that is to say, his Cross. So far, I have had all kinds of crosses and, by the grace of God, have not bent under the burden. As for this new cross which threatens me, I have no fears at all. I know men and I feel quite sure that this is the cross they will most willingly spare me.

In fact, Bishop de Maupas' project dies soon after mid October. Father Eudes will no longer have to worry about any possible episcopal appointment. He spends the rest of the year in Paris, still hoping

perhaps to open a house there

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

167 -

for, on August 30th, the archbishop had given him permission to buy a house in spite of Parliament's negative attitude. This ultimate hope is dashed on December 30th: on that day, Jean Le Carnus, Prevost of the Merchants of Paris,(142) presents a lengthily substantiated refusal to the establishment of a Eudist community in the capital city.

1672, filled with all sorts of concerns and worries, therefore, ends painfully. "In the year 1672," John Eudes will write in his Mimorial (diary), "I was almost always suffering from some cross." But he will add, thinking perhaps about the celebration of the Feast of the Heart of Jesus, "Among them (his crosses), divine Bounty gave me so many graces that I could say: I am full of consolation; I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulations.(143)

(142). At the time, this was the official title of the person responsible for the City of Paris, whose duties were similar to those of a mayor today.

(143). Corinthians: 7,4.

168 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

40. ADVICE FOR EXERCISING THE OFFICE OF SUPERIOR - 1673

"Strive to guide your daughters
with all possible meekness."

In early 1673, Bishop de Nesmond makes the canonical visitation of the community of Our Lady of Charity at Caen. But he is preoccupied by another community in his diocese, the Charity of Bayeux,(144) which is in a critical situation. He requests and is granted two Sisters of Our Lady of Charity to be sent as reinforcements, expressly promising that it will be for a short time only. So, Sister Marie de la Nativité Herson, Father Eudes' niece, and Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus de Boisdauid (145) leave for Bayeux and become superior and assistant superior of the troubled community.

Sometime later, at a date it is not possible to determine exactly, John Eudes writes to his niece. He knows her well and feels the need to give her some advice. Already, in 1651, when she took the habit, he "especially recommended" to her "to be pleased to be looked upon and treated, all her life, as the last one in the house." He knows she has a ten

(144). This is the community Marguerite Morin, Father Eudes' former collaborator, had founded in 1652.

(145). This Sister, professed the previous year, is the daughter of the other Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus de Boisdauid, who died in 1660.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

169 -

dency to be authoritarian, and fears she might give into it now that she heads a community. Perhaps, although he says otherwise, he has had unfavorable echoes about the way she is governing the community. He tries to help her, delicately but clearly. He sends her two books, which he has found profitable himself. He invites her to read them and especially put them into practice, with particular insistence on meekness. Therein lies the problem: Sister Marie de la Nativité risks giving in to "that rough, sharp, dry, haughty and dominating spirit", which John Eudes has all too often noticed in superiors, both men and women. Aware of the dangers this presents for a community, he urges his niece

to make efforts to "guide (her) Daughters with all Possible gentleness, kindness, cordiality and tenderness." He invites her to pray Our Lord and his holy Mother to give her that spirit which is theirs. But he does not forget himself in the picture: "Pray them often to give it to you, and to me also." In his niece, John Eudes sees a bit of his own self.. the difficulties she encounters, he has run into also. He has often had to wage war against his "own mind and will." He himself needs to acquire more of that spirit of gentleness, humility and service. Note the last piece of advice, of course easier to hear than to follow, but so relevant and important: ask one of your Sisters to tell you of your shortcomings."

Enclosed, my dearest and beloved Daughter, are two books for you which I have found very helpful. Please read them carefully and, more to the point, put them into practice, especially regarding meekness, since a rough, sharp, dry, haughty and dominating disposition serves only to spoil everything, to destroy the affection, trust and filial tenderness which should be present in the hearts of those in our charge and tends to fill them with fear, terror, contempt, aversion and hatred. In a word, it is good only for destroy

170-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

ing a community, developing a critical and disastrous situation and putting the head of a superior on the block.(146)

I do not think, my dearest Daughter, that you are behaving this way, nor has anyone said so to me, but since I know from experience that being a superior ruins many persons by giving them that haughty, domineering, hard and bitter, dry and harsh spirit, I am always afraid. Strive, therefore, I beg you, to guide your Daughters with all possible meekness, kindness, cordiality and tenderness. It is the spirit of Our Lord and his most holy Mother. Pray them often to grant it to you and to me also. Ask one of your Sisters to tell you of your shortcomings in this respect.

Entirely yours. John Eudes, missionary priest.

It is surely quite willingly that Father Eudes saw the two Sisters of Our Lady of Charity leave for Bayeux to be of service. He does not forget, however, that the bishop has promised it would be only for a limited time and he will remind him of his promise in due time.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

171 -

41. THE QUEEN'S SATISFACTION OVER THE SAINT-GERMAIN MISSION -April 21, 1673

"She showed more satisfaction than one can say."

From March 26 to April 9, that is from Palm Sunday to the First Sunday after Easter, Father Eudes is involved in another mission at court. This time it takes place at the Palace of Saint-Germain-en-Laye.(147) it proves that the mission in March, 1671, at Versailles, was appreciated. The founder's horizons are, therefore, far from obstructed in spite of the rude opposition he met in Paris the preceding year.

On April 2, Easter Sunday, Father Eudes writes to M. Bonnefond, then at Caen, and gives him news of the mission: two confreres preach at six in the morning; a third teaches catechism at two in the afternoon; John Eudes himself "preached every evening, with as much vigor as ever," on subjects which touch the people and go to their hearts. Then he congratulates himself on the reactions he has heard about: 'Thanks to God, everybody expresses great satisfaction and all assure me that their Majesties feel

the same way. The Queen told me yesterday that I was to continue preaching again every day of this week."

(147). At this time, the King resided at the Palace of Versailles, still under construction, only from time to time. The Saint-Germain-en-Laye Palace was his usual residence.

172-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

The Queen, therefore, wanted to encourage the missionary personally. That is not all. On April 20, that is to say, eleven days after the end of the mission, having gone to the Carmelite Convent in Paris where she knows Father Eudes will be coming soon, she commissions Sister Thérèse (148) to tell him clearly, and as soon as possible, how happy she is about the mission and its results. The Sister carries out her mission that very night and John Eudes, the next day, writes to M. Bonnefond again to share his great JOY.

In the excerpt of his letter which we quote here (the only one that has come down to us today), the missionary transcribes, with obvious satisfaction, what Sister Thérèse told him on behalf of the Queen. He stops a moment as if to avoid a temptation of pride: "Pray God to bless our small efforts." Then he returns to his subject: he must relate, still more clearly, the goodness and friendship the Queen has shown him. But he reacts immediately: "Blessed are they who are loved by the Queen of heaven!" He does not want to forget that the only Queen whose esteem is really important for him is the Virgin Mary.

Yesterday, the Queen called on the Carmelite Nuns here while I was at Montmartre. (149) She showed more satisfaction than one can say over the mission and the preachers. She said that other sermons were only words, but that ours penetrated the depths of the heart, that everyone was moved by them and that she could see a change in the King's behavior.

(148). Sister Thérèse is probably an extern Sister, that is to say, a person in charge of the convent's relations with the outside world.

(149). At the Benedictines of Montmartre.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

173 -

Pray God to bless our small efforts. Finally, she demonstrated such benevolence, such enormous friendship (those are the words of our good Sister Thérèse who made the account as glowing as possible), toward the nonentity of nonentities that it is impossible to imagine. She earnestly enjoined Sister Thérèse not to allow the day to pass without telling me all these things. Blessed are they who are loved by the Queen of heaven!

174 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

42. NEW ATTEMPT IN ROME

- Oct. 1673

"I am confident that Our Lord and his most holy Mother will remove all these obstacles."

On April 17, 1673, that is to say, a week after the closing of the mission at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, King Louis XIV gave Father Eudes three favorable letters, addressed one to Pope Clement X, one to Cardinal Orsini, Protector of France in Rome, and one to the Duke d'Estrées, ambassador of France in Rome. On the other hand, Nerli, the Papal Nuncio in Paris, on May 5th, sends a memoir from Cardinal de Bouillon (150) which refers to the King's three letters and recommends Father Eudes' Congregation. Then, on June 1st, the Archbishop of Paris writes a letter to the Pope in the same vein. It is the ideal time to try again to obtain papal approval for the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

June 5th, M. Bonnefond, Father Eudes' trusted agent, leaves Paris for Rome, bringing the precious documents from the King and the archbishop's letter. Reaching his destination on July 8th, he begins the very next day, and soon discovers that his mission will not be easy. Several cardinals (150). Member of an illustrious family, made a cardinal at twenty-six in 1669, chaplain general of France in 1671, Emmanuel Th6dodose de la Tour, Cardinal de Bouillon, could be considered a powerful protector in 1673. In fact, he fell out of royal favor shortly thereafter.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

175 -

who previously had to examine the file of Father Eudes' Congregation, seem to be prejudiced against him. He has been depicted to them as ambitious, having left the Oratory out of a spirit of independence, seeking to destroy that Institute to replace it with his own.

On July 10th, in a long letter to Father Eudes, Jacques de Bonnefond tells about his trip and the situation as it appears to him in Rome. Other letters will follow confirming that Father Eudes' adversaries are extremely active in Rome, (151) and that they have won over to their cause influential people, such as the French ambassador, the Duke d'Estr6es.

It is after receiving one of these letters that the founder, in October, 1673, sends this reply of which the following excerpt alone has come down to us. In it, he shows a profound detachment regarding his undertakings and reaffirms that he has "no other desire in the depths of my soul than to seek in all things what is most pleasing (to God)." He rejoices over two things which are certain and will remain true no matter what happens: the Lord is God; no one will ever be able to stop us from loving Jesus and Mary. Then he encourages his confreres cordially, trying to put them at ease: "Even if you gain nothing after having done all you can, I will be as happy, God willing, as if you had succeeded."

I always implore God in his goodness to destroy our little Congregation entirely if it does not exist for his greater glory, and I embrace with my whole heart all the (151). They are a group of Oratorians who are determined to destroy his Congregation. Several Vincentians join them in this, believing that their own institute is menaced by the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

176-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

mortifications and humiliations which would consequently be mine. Thanks to my Savior, I believe that I have no other desire in the depths of my soul than to seek in all things what is most pleasing to him. Let us take heart and rejoice in two things that should cause us to die of joy:

First, that all the enemies of our great God never keep him from being what he is. Know that the Lord is God, (152) says the prophet; and the most holy Mother of God says: My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. (153)

Secondly, that all the powers of earth and hell can never hinder us in our sole and all-important occupation, that of serving and loving our most adorable Jesus and his most holy Mother. Let us lose all rather than lose the least particle of trust we should have in their incomparable goodness toward our Congregation, of which they have given us such abundant proof.

We have never transacted any business without its being accompanied by some cross. And that is the true character of all God's affairs. The more they are thwarted, the greater are the fruits and blessings resulting from them. I have high hopes for this affair, since there have been so many difficulties connected to it. I am confident that Our Lord and his most holy Mother will, in their

goodness, remove all these obstacles.

(152). Ps. 100,2.

(153). Luke 1,47.

SAINTJOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

177 -

Finally, my dearest brother, one would never accomplish anything in God's affairs if one were easily rebuffed by obstacles and difficulties. Even if you gain nothing after having done all you can, I will be as happy, Godwilling, as if you had succeeded. For what is it I seek? My own interest and gratification? By no means, thank God, only his will!

178 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

43. UNJUSTLY REJECTED BY THE KING

-April 15, 1674

"Last night I received a sealed letter from you ordering me to retire to the seminary at Caen."

When John Eudes writes the preceding letter, he is very much aware of the difficulties confronting M. de Bonnefond. He does not suspect, however, that his assignment is definitively compromised. Indeed, in Rome, probably in early August, 1673, the adversaries of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, on the lookout for documents which might compromise the founder, come across the petition Louis Boniface presented to the Pope eleven years earlier, in May, 1662. This petition had failed in its objective to obtain approval for the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. Besides, it was badly drawn up: it proclaimed the members of the Congregation ready to commit themselves, by irrevocable vow, to sustain at all times the authority of the Roman pontiff, even in dubious matters.

A copy was promptly made and sent to France, August 8, 1673. On September 8, Louis XIV was informed of the tenure of this document. It is very likely that the comments that were made to him hardened still more M. Boniface's text. The King was irate, seeing in the petition an obvious sign of Father Eudes' lack of trust in him. If he has declared himself an unconditional supporter of the Pope, it is surely that he puts little store in the authority of the King of

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

179 -

France (154) Louis XIV decided to withdraw the protection he had given the missionary.

Imagine Father Eudes' surprise when, a few weeks later, he is asked to account for M. Boniface's petition. Up to that time he even ignored it existed!... On November 27, 1673, he makes a statement before the king's representative in Caen, protesting that the petition was made without his knowledge and he totally disavows its tenure. Alas! the founder's good faith is in doubt. His adversaries, who exploit the affair to the fullest, take measures to prevent his voice from reaching the king's ear.

For a time, Father Eudes counts on the support of M. Boniface. On March 10, 1674, the latter draws up a written statement: he indicates he does not recall addressing a petition to the pope, but he is sure that if he did it was without Father Eudes' participation. His testimony, renewed on April 8, has no effect.

(154). Being an absolute monarch, Louis XIV does not accept limitations to his power, even from the Pope. Since the beginning of his reign, he has done everything - taking advantage of the antiroman feelings of many bishops - to lord it over the life of the Church in France, and is very touchy regarding anyone who appears to challenge his views. In 1673 precisely, the climate of relations between the king

and the pope is deteriorating. The affair called La Rdgale has just begun. It originated with Louis XIYs decision to give himself important powers, both spiritual and temporal, in all the vacant sees of the kingdom. This matter, in which the vast majority of bishops, headed by Bossuet, will support the king with barely a few nuances, will constitute a particularly strong expression of gallicanism, characterized by the will to limit the power of the Sovereign Pontiff in France as much as possible. Without the moderation of the popes, this matter could have degenerated into a genuine schism. It will end with a compromise in 1693.

180 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

On April 14, the die is cast. Father Eudes, then in Paris, is given a sealed letter, (155) signed by Minister Colbert. He is ordered to leave the capital city immediately and retire to the seminary in Caen which he is not allowed to leave.

For John Eudes, this is a terrible shock, a real clap of thunder. Here he is brutally rejected by the sovereign he has always served as best he could and for whom he feels sincere affection!... In an instant, the founder believes the worst is to be feared. Louis XIV is capable of suppressing, with a stroke of the pen, both the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and the Order of Our Lady of Charity. Perhaps tomorrow the efforts of more than thirty years might come to naught...

But, Father Eudes is well aware that Colbert's order allows for neither protest nor discussion. With everything at a standstill, he sets about carrying out the order. Next morning, Sunday, April 15, 1674, heavy hearted, he writes to the minister to advise him of his punctual compliance.

His letter, preserved at the National Library, is profoundly touching. He states having done all he could to leave Paris immediately, but was unable to find space in the coaches, that is to say, public transport. At his age (nearly seventy-two and a half), he cannot undertake the journey on horseback or on foot. He will, therefore, have recourse to a wheel chair (a private means of transport) which someone will send from Evreux. Not a word of complaint, not even a comment. But one can easily suspect, behind these lines which try to remain serene, the unspeakable sorrow of a (155). "Sealed letters" were letters bearing the King's seal. Most of the time, they contained orders of imprisonment or exile without a hearing.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

181 -

man unjustly condemned without having been given the opportunity to give the least bit of explanation.

My Lord,

Last night, I received a sealed letter which was delivered to me from you, ordering me to retire to the seminary at Caen. I immediately made arrangements to obey. I will presently leave Paris and await, along the way, a wheel chair which is being sent to me from Evreux, since I was unable to reserve a seat in public coaches, and my age does not permit me to go on horseback or on foot. I felt, my Lord, that I was under an obligation to you to inform you of my prompt obedience, and protest that I remain, my Lord, with profound respect,
Your most humble and most obedient servant,
John Eudes, priest.

When John Eudes leaves for Caen, on April 15, 1674, Jacques de Bonnefond is still in Rome, but the discovery of the Boniface petition has ruined whatever chances he could have had of obtaining papal approval of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. Father Eudes' adversaries have not failed, indeed, to make vocal in Rome the news that the king does not want the approval to be granted. Father Eudes'

chargé d'affaires is, therefore, thinking of returning to France.

However, after a pilgrimage to Loretto and Assisi, he decides to solicit various favors from the pope, and that will cause him to extend his stay in Rome until the first months of 1675. Among other things, he will obtain a Brief granting

182-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

indulgences for the missions which the priests of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary will preach, and Bulls authorizing the erection, in the six seminaries entrusted to the Congregation, of «confraternities of the Heart of Jesus and Mary. »(156)

This result, of course, is mediocre when compared to what he had hoped for.(157) But, for Father Eudes, this is "an extraordinary consolation," as he will write in his Wmorial. (158) (156). These Bulls gave official status to the confraternities Father Eudes had established, as early as 1648, in the various parishes where he had conducted missions. Their goal was twofold: "Invite the members to try to become true children of the Heart of Jesus and Mary through a careful imitation of the virtues with which it is adorned... ; Incite them to obtain from the Father of mercies Pastors and Priests according to his Heart for the Church."

At a date it is difficult to determine, Father Eudes had also created for persons wishing to consecrate their life to God in celibacy while staying "in the world", a sort of lay Institute, the Society of the Children of the Heart of the Admirable Mother. The feminine sector developed greatly in the XVIIth and XIXth centuries, and several of its members founded religious communities: Jeanne Jugan, the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor; Amélie Fristel, the Congregation of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary; Marie-Thérèse Auffray, the Congregation of the Daughters of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary of Saint-QuayPortneux.

(157). Pontifical approval of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary will not be obtained until much later, in 1864, for ten years, then definitively in 1874.

(158). One of the reasons why Father Eudes rejoiced was that the Bulls, by authorizing erection of the confraternities (which, in fact, already existed), approved by the very fact, at least implicitly, worship of the Heart of Jesus and of the Heart of Mary, which was so dear to him.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

183

44. INGRATITUDE AND TREASON

- Oct. 1674

Hudge for yourself the extent of my sorrow and anguish! It made me sick."

Back in Caen as a result of Colbert's sealed letter, Father Eudes is far from the end of his suffering. His enemies (159) have discredited him with the King, thus neutralizing M. de Bonnefond's efforts in Rome, but that is not enough: they want to disqualify him in France also in the opinion of those who know and appreciate him. In the last months of 1674, they launch a campaign of calumnies against him, (160) well prepared long beforehand. One of Father Eudes' secretaries will have a hand in it, a cleric in Minor Orders, who yielded to corruption and handed over documents, in particular a copy of the missionary's notes about Marie des Vallées, meant only for his personal use.

This is what is referred to, in all likelihood, in one of Father Eudes' letters, in October, 1674, to Jacques de Bonnefond, who is still in Rome. We can estimate, from the two short excerpts that have been preserved, how deeply John Eudes was touched: it made him sick.

(159). The Jansenists who do not forgive Father Eudes for his intransigence in their regard team up with the Oratorians hostile to him.

(160). Already in 1659-60, Father Eudes had been severely calumniated. But this new campaign will be still more violent, and will reach a far broader public.

184 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

I can tell you, my dearest brother, that since I came into this world I have not suffered such a bloody persecution as this one. What grieved me most is that it is one of my own children who used to live here, who never received anything from me but every possible mark of friendship, who was my most cruel persecutor. He rendered me evil for good."(161)(...)

Judge for yourself, my dearest brother, the extent of my sorrow and anguish! It made me sick.

(161). Paraphrasing Ps 35,12.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

185 -

45. PUBLICATION OF A SLANDEROUS LIBEL -Dec. 12,1674

"They accuse me of thirteen heresies."

What spearheaded the campaign destined to destroy Father Eudes is a violent 127 page pamphlet, known under (162) the harmless title of a Letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne, which began to circulate at the beginning of December, 1674. The author is a certain Charles du Four, Abbot of the Cistercian Monastery of Aunay (Calvados).(163) Using, in tendentious fashion, the notes delivered by Father Eudes' secretary, as well as other hand-written documents about Marie des Vallées,(164) he accuses the missionary of having committed characterized heresies, aggravated by "extravagances, absurdities and impertinences". In passing, he criticizes via

(162). The complete title is: Letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne on the subject of several writings about the life and state of Marie des ValMes from the Diocese of Coutances.

(163). In 1660, Charles du Four has already collaborated in editing a Winoire most hostile to Father Eudes.

(164). About ten years earlier, a monk of the Cistercian Abbey of Barbery (Calvados), abusing of the trust of one of his confreres to whom Father Eudes had lent a memoir he had written about Marie des Val16es, had succeeded in making a summarized and probably deformed copy of it. Other copies, also more or less truncated or falsified, had also been produced. However, one must recognize that even Father Eudes' text, which sanctioned a bit too rapidly certain extraordinary facts and certain "revelations", was an easy target for criticism.

186-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

lently devotion to the Heart of Mary as preached by John Eudes. He concludes stating that, had John Eudes lived during the Inquisition, he would have been burned at the stake.

Father Eudes is literally aghast when he learns about this libel. On December 12, he informs M. de Bonnefond about what has just happened. He already senses that the prejudice this will cause him will be immense, since the libel has been "distributed all over France and in all the communities of Paris." He indicates to his correspondent "the cause of the anger" of his attackers: "I oppose their new ideas everywhere; I faithfully support the faith of the Church and the authority of the Holy See."

Here I am involved in another persecution, more bloody than all the others. The gentlemen of the new doctrine, (165) have had a libel published against me and have distributed it all over France and in all the communities of Paris. It concerns my writings about Sister Marie. It is full of falsehood, calumnies and all sorts of marks of their passion. They accuse me of thirteen heresies, that is to say, arianism, nestorianism, monothelism,(166) jansenism, regarding four condemned propositions, etc. The cause of their anger is that I oppose their new ideas everywhere, that I faithfully uphold the faith of the Church and the authority of the Holy See. Besides, I burned a detestable book written against devotion to the Blessed Virgin at the end of which it is said

(165). John Eudes gives this name to the Jansenists. He considers them his "great benefactors".

(166). Arianism, nestorianism and monothelism are Christological heresies of the 4th, 5th and 11th centuries. Saint John Eudes' doctrine is certainly free of any of them. But the accumulation of these learned terms could not help but impress readers.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

187 -

that we must not pray to her nor to the other saints, that she is not the Mother of God, although she is called Mother of Jesus. An Abbot from M. de Sainte-Marie's area (167) is the author of this libel, along with several others.

(167). M. Louis Faucon, dit de Sainte-Marie, a Eudist from Aunay where the monastery of which Charles du Four was Abbot was located. Superior of the seminary at Rouen after M. Manchon's death, from 1663 to 1665, he was again serving in that capacity in 1669 or 1670.

188-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

46. WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS - Jan. 1675

"I cannot bring myself to do otherwise than try to imitate him in his patience and silence."

The publication of the Letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne stirred up strong reactions among the Eudists. Without delay, the superior of the seminary in Rouen, Louis Faucon, writes to the founder in the name of the confreres of the community. His most cordial letter ensures Father Eudes of the sympathy and support of all, but at the same time presses him to write and have something printed in order to defend himself against the calumnies of which he is the victim.

The reply, written in January of 1675, is also very cordial. John Eudes is deeply touched by the marks of affection which his confreres have just shown him, and he thanks them warmly... But he energetically rejects their advice: since his sole desire is to imitate Christ in his Passion, he will keep silent in the face of his detractors, leaving it up to God, if such is his will, to find someone who will respond to the libel.

A thousand thanks, my dearest and beloved brother, for the charitable and cordial letter you sent me. I am most grateful to you and to all those gentlemen who are noted

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

189 -

therein."(168) I beg you to assure them of my gratitude and thank them a million times for me. Their zeal and goodness are most praiseworthy but, because I can find no evidence in the holy Gospel that our divine and adorable master ever used the ways and means indicated in your letter to defend himself against the injustice and cruelty that he suffered at the hands of the Jews, I cannot bring myself to do otherwise than try to imitate him in his patience and silence: But Jesus remained silent. (169) Perhaps

God will find someone to answer the libel. (170) Be that as it may, I gladly embrace all the crosses it may please God to send me, and I earnestly entreat him to forgive those who are persecuting me. My numerous sins are deserving of a thousand times worse...

(168). The Eudists of the seminary in Rouen mentioned by M. Faucon in his letter.

(169). Matt 26,33.

(170). In fact, a Vicar General of Bayeux, M. de Launay-Huë, encouraged by a group of Father Eudes' friends, will publish, in 1675, Refutations of the Letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne, which will in turn provoke new attacks on the part of Charles du Four and his friends.

190-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

47. LOVE FOR ONE'S ENEMIES

- around 1675

"I am most indebted to them for giving me such precious opportunities to practice the most beautiful virtues."

Widely distributed, the Letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne does not fail to tarnish Father Eudes' image. (171) People who, until then, had esteemed and admired him, are shaken. The Bishop of Bayeux himself asks for explanations. John Eudes gives them to him frankly and humbly, on June 25, 1675. (172) He felt it was his duty, he says, "to put in writing what he has been able to learn" about Marie des Vallées, in order to see more clearly himself and give an accounting to his superiors. Unfortunately, copies were made, "without his knowledge and against his will", and "ill intentioned people not only confused and mixed up the missionary's texts with other writings..., but they truncated and altered them in several places." This being said, John Eudes recognizes that he is "not impeccable or infallible".

He is ready to correct whatever would not be "entirely in

(171). The Letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne and other writings hostile to Father Eudes published at this time will have deep and lasting consequences. The very negative image these pamphlets give of the missionary will recur in numerous texts of the XVIIIth century, especially the dictionaries which were widespread and largely consulted.

(172). He has already given explanations, on January 2, 1675, to the Bishop of Meaux.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

191 -

keeping with Church doctrine." The bishop accepts his explanations and, later, will defend Father Eudes against his detractors.

The founder's sufferings, particularly the one caused by the king's displeasure, remain no less painful. Several letters, impossible to date exactly, but surely written in 1675 or the following year, reflect this suffering which, John Eudes tries not to dramatize: "My little crosses would be of little importance on stronger shoulders than mine whose weakness often makes them sag under their weight. "

When the missionary alludes to those who cause his suffering, he inevitably calls them his "benefactors". Here too he tries to follow literally the example of Christ in his Passion. He prays for them: 'I beg Our Lord to forgive them all the harm they are doing... Recently, one of them died suddenly. That caused me great sorrow because he was one of those who worked on the libelous document. Please God, he has not had to suffer for it! But if that should be the case, there is nothing I would not do to save him, if that were possible.'

Here is an excerpt from a letter to a Sister of the Montmartre monastery. Father Eudes states that he is "much obliged" toward his "benefactors". We are perhaps tempted to smile and find that he

exaggerates! Such is not the case. He simply recognizes, in faith, that these men who make him suffer so are really rendering him a service. Without them, he would not have all the occasions he has to "practice the most beautiful virtues," would not be stimulated in the same way to love Jesus and Mary!

192-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

I would be crushed under the weight of my sufferings if Our Lord and his holy Mother were not sustaining me, but they are giving me an altogether singular strength for which I ask you to help me thank them. Help me also, I beg you, to pray a lot for my benefactors to whom I am most indebted for giving me such precious opportunities to practice the most beautiful virtues, particularly humility, submission to divine will, and love for Jesus crucified and for his most holy Mother also crucified with him.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

193-

48. RECOVERY FROM A SERIOUS ILLNESS -Nov. 7,1678

"God gave me the time to convert and begin a new life."

At times, a happy event throws a glimmer of light into this otherwise somber period which follows Colbert's sealed letter and publication of the Letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne. One such event is when, on, May 30, 1675, Father Eudes' niece, Sister Marie de la Nativité Herson, is elected superior at Our Lady of Charity, replacing Sister Marie du Saint-Sacrement Pierre, who had finished her second three year term.

Sister Marie de la Nativité has returned to her monastery after having governed the Charity of Bayeux for two years. At one time, Father Eudes feared that she would take root there along with her companion, Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus. And, at least twice, he asked them to remind Bishop de Nesmond of his formal commitment to retain the Sisters in Bayeux only for a short time. The second time, he even incites them to a real campaign of harassment: "Press the bishop about his promise and how hard it is for you to be away from your convent so long, as well as about the fact that, since there are a large number of Sisters in his diocese, he can find a few to replace you. Do not be satisfied with speaking to him once, nor four, nor a dozen times, but do not cease asking, begging and pressing him orally and in writing." Finally, Father Eudes won out: Sister Marie de

194-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

l'Enfant-Jésus returned to the monastery of Caen on September 8, 1674, and Sister Marie de la Nativité on the following February 8.

John Eudes is surely overjoyed when, at the end of May or early in June, 1675, he learns about his niece's election as superior of Our Lady of Charity. He knows she has her limitations, but he also knows that their mutual relationship has always been marked by great trust in each other. At last - and for the first time - he is at ease to work in collaboration with the superior of the community he founded. (173) He helps her and advises her in matters of government. With her, he completes and revises the Constitutions and their annexes (Directory, Book of Customs, Ceremonial). (174) He encourages her to send Sisters to Hennebont (Morbihan), for a foundation which begins in 1676. (175)

(173). Curiously, Sister Marie de la Nativité will not be reelected in 1678, after her three year term. The community will choose Sister Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus. Perhaps Father Eudes' niece has not yet acquired the spirit of "gentleness, kindness, cordiality and tenderness" which he recommended to her

when she was at Bayeux!... Later, after the founder's death, she will again become superior, from 1684 to 1690 and from 1696 to 1702. She will die on June 4, 1712, at eighty-three.

(174). In 1670, Sister Marie du Saint-Sacrement Pierre has already published the Constitutions, with the bishop's approval, but in the absence of Father Eudes who is preaching a mission in Rennes... Not having been able to express his views on the latest modifications, the founder was surely displeased. The revision he makes with Sister Marie de la Nativité will lead to a new edition in 1682 which, unfortunately, will be published without the bishop's approval. In spite of the minor differences in the two editions, this situation will engender a malaise in the Order which will not be dispelled until the General Chapter of 1734 in Caen.

(175). In fact, this foundation, begun with so much hesitation, will last only ten years. But in that same year 1676, the fledgling community of Rennes founds another house at Guingamp (Côtes-du-Nord) which will last. Its first superior is Sister Marie de la Trinité Heurtaut. After governing the house of Guingamp for six years, she will participate, in 1682, in an attempt at a foundation in Paris. In 1686, she will become superior of the monastery in Vannes, founded three years earlier by Hennebont and Rennes.

SAINTJOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

195-

On December 1st, 1675, Father Eudes will have the joy of beginning a mission at Saint-Lô: no doubt did he consider that the sealed letter did not forbid this journey since he remains inside Normandy. This appears to be the last mission to which Father Eudes will participate in person. It lasts two months and is visited by Bishop Lomdnie de Brienne, Bishop of Coutances, who stays a week. Although seventy-four years old, John Eudes still preaches with ease and vigor, even several times outdoors since the church cannot contain the crowd. Confessions are very numerous and Protestants convert.

Shortly after the mission of Saint-Lô, on February 24, 1676, Father Eudes writes to the Archbishop of Paris asking him to intercede for him with the king. It is perhaps also around the same time that he writes a long letter to Louis XIV, explaining the matter of M. Boniface's petition and protesting his own innocence: "Do not allow, Sire, the good faith of a seventy year old priest who has been working for the Church for fifty years to remain under suspicion, nor a Congregation established by letters patent from your father, (176) of glorious memory, to be abolished."

(176). Louis XIII, had given letters patent on December 6, 1642, permitting the erection of the seminary of Caen.

196-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

These actions produce no effect and Father Eudes continues in his disgrace. His physical strength is weakening and he goes out less frequently. He spends his time working especially on several books: The Admirable Childhood of the Most Holy Mother of God, (177) The Memorial of Priestly Life, The Apostolic Preacher (178) The Admirable Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God. (179).

In January, 1678, Father Eudes appoints M. de Bonnefond visitor of the houses of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, giving him total power "so that he may correct all the failings he might discover, make the changes he will see fit, among superiors as well as the other members, and renew in their hearts the desire to observe the Constitutions faithfully."

In September of the same year, John Eudes is taken seriously ill, to the point where he believes he is dying. He recovers, however, and on November 7, writes a very beautiful letter to Sister Saint-Gabriel, a Benedictine of Montmartre.

(177). This book will be published in 1676. It is a long meditation on the mysteries of Mary's childhood, with applications concerning the education of girls.

(178). The Memorial of Priestly Life, which is written for priests, strongly underlines the dignity of their life and ministry. The Apostolic Preacher, as its title indicates, deals with the ministry of the Word. These two books, published only after Father Eudes' death (respectively in 1681 and in 1685), complete another work written for priests, The Good Confessor, published in 1666.

(179). Father Eudes will finish the Admirable Heart less than a month before his death and this book will be published in 1681.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

197 -

We quote here the short segment of this letter which was preserved. John Eudes shows deep and sincere humility, estimating that God allowed him to continue to live "to give him time to convert and begin a new life". He prays, and asks his correspondent to pray, that he may be given the grace, he says, "to begin to love Jesus and Mary as I should, since I do not know if I have yet begun."

My sins have brought upon me an illness which carried me to the brink of death. But he who has the keys of life and death has postponed my death and preserved my life that I may have the time to convert and begin a new life. It is what I most ardently desire, and I beg Our Lord and his most holy Mother to grant me that grace and let me begin to love them as I should, since I do not know if I have yet begun. Help me, dearest Sister, to love them in that way.

198-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

**49. APPEAL TO THE KING'S
CONSCIENCE - Nov. 7, 1678**

"I beg your Majesty to bear in mind that it is a priest who has the honor of addressing you."

The feeling of being at death's door has made even more acute Father Eudes' suffering from the disgrace in which the king keeps him although totally undeservedly. No doubt, he measures more each day how precarious the existence of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary is. (180) If the king has not dissolved it, it is probably because a residue of veneration for the missionary subsists. But what will happen once the founder has died?...

John Eudes decides to make a last attempt for justice to be served. On November 7, 1678, he draws up a new letter destined for the king, which he will send to his old friend, Bishop Auvry, asking him to see that it reaches its destination, if he sees fit. (181)

This letter is also deeply moving. It echoes the immense pain of a man who feels he is going to die without being able to vindicate himself from an enormous and unfounded

(180). He is probably less anxious about Our Lady of Charity which has received papal approval in 1666.

(181). This letter and the one we have just quoted were, therefore, written the same day.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

199 -

accusation to which the king persists in giving credence, and which to John Eudes, "is, in a way, more bitter than death." He implores the king "to give some credence to his words, rather than judge and condemn him as a liar and an impostor." He affirms his fidelity and his attachment to his sovereign." (182)

Sire,

It is the most insignificant of your subjects who returns from death's door, where he still

lingers, having been brought to that point by a grievous illness. But God has not permitted me to leave this world with the hideous brand which was placed on my forehead by the accusation of having presented to our Holy Father, the Pope, a petition offensive to your Majesty's interests. I can assure you, indeed, that this accusation has in a way been more bitter, in this extremity, than death itself which hovered before my eyes. For I should prefer to be dead rather than to do anything displeasing to him who represents on earth the King of heaven before whom I protest that the petition in question never entered my mind.

I implore your Majesty to bear in mind that it is a priest who has the honor of addressing you; one who, for more than fifty years, has daily offered to God the sacrifice of the adorable body and precious blood of him who is eternal truth. Christian charity calls for giving some credence to his words rather than judging and condemning him as a liar and impostor, seeing that I am ready to affirm what I say by every means by which a Christian can confirm a truth, and that I openly proclaim that I disown and detest this petition with
(182). it is not known if the letter actually reached the king.

200-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

my whole heart. I would prefer to forfeit a thousand lives rather than do anything contrary to the least of your Majesty's interests. (183)

I most humbly entreat your Majesty to banish the memory of that miserable petition, even as you wish the Savior of souls to destroy utterly whatever might stand in the way of your eternal happiness. Allow me to come to prostrate myself at your feet in order to protest to you by word of mouth that I am, with the most profound respect, Sire, your Majesty's ...

At the same time (November, 1678), John Eudes also writes once again to the Archbishop of Paris: "Only you," he says, "have enough power and goodness to deliver me." As is often the case in similar circumstances, those who had protected Father Eudes deemed it prudent, after the royal disgrace, to keep their distances. 'Wthough, for nearly fifty
(183). This pledge of fidelity may seem excessive in this day and age. But one must not forget that John Eudes, like the majority of his contemporaries, acknowledges in the king a sacred character, seeing in him God's representative on earth. To be unfaithful to the king is, therefore, for him a most grievous fault of which he suffers terribly from being accused himself. It is worthy of note that later, in 1881, during the beatification investigation, this letter and various undertakings by Father Eudes to regain the king's favor attracted the attention of the Promoter of the Faith (or "Devil's Advocate"), who accused the missionary of gallicanism. It was relatively easy for the postulator of the cause, Father Le Dor6, to free Father Eudes from this accusation by showing that ' on the contrary, he had always willingly and without reservation, upheld the Sovereign Pontiff's authority, particularly against the Jansenists.

SAINTJOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

201 -

years, I have spent my whole life serving the Church and our Lords the Prelates, there is not one who wants to take a step or say a word in my favor, except the Bishop of Coutances.(184) They all refer me to the Archbishop of Paris saying he is all-powerful and is so good that even his own enemies feel its effects." Later in his letter, Father Eudes asks the archbishop to get him an interview with Louis XW
(184). Bishop Auvry, former Bishop of Coutances, to whom John Eudes entrusted the letter he wrote to the king.

202-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

50. END OF A VERY PAINFUL TRIAL

- June 17, 1679

"The King's words filled me with gratification beyond words."

After these two appeals to Bishop Auvry and Bishop de Champvallon, the wait is long and terribly trying." (184) A hundred times each day, John Eudes entrusts to Jesus and Mary what is most dear to him. A hundred times also he restates his attachment: he wants only the will of God and he will try to accept joyfully whatever happens.

He continues to follow his Congregation's affairs closely. In March, 1679, he sends a very cordial letter to M. Raoul de Bon, informing him of his appointment as superior of the seminary of Evreux, replacing a confrere who has just died. (184) "Our Lord and his most holy Mother will be with you, will direct your house through you and will give you all the necessary insights and graces. Receive this charge, therefore, from their hands, rather from their most charitable Heart, corde magno et animo volenti, (185) with a great de

(183). On January 31, 1679, Father Eudes tries something else: he writes to the king's confessor, Jesuit Father François de La Chaise.

(184). Reference here is to François de la Haye, a brother of Jacques de la Haye, dit de Bonnefond. Raoul de Bon will not be at the head of the seminary very long. He will die on April 17, 1680.

(185). With a great heart and much generosity.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

203 -

sire to govern their family in their spirit, which is a spirit of humility, goodness, charity and gentleness."

Finally, at the beginning of June, John Eudes receives the long awaited news from Bishop Auvry: the king asked Bishop de Champvallon to have the missionary come to Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where he will receive him with pleasure.

John Eudes gets under way without delay and the audience takes place on June 16, 1679. (186) The king is welcoming. He listens attentively to what the missionary has to say and replies that he will protect him "in all the occasions that may arise". The king makes no allusion to the past nor does he offer any excuse... But his attitude, in the presence of the Archbishop of Paris and numerous Lords of the court, clearly indicates that he has no quarrel with Father Eudes. For the founder that is the essential point. The king's words fill him with "satisfaction beyond words."

The very next day, from Paris, John Eudes imparts his joy to his secretary, M. Richard Dufour. (187) He gives a detailed account of the interview with the king, then he asks his correspondent to write to all the Eudist houses asking that "an octave of thanksgiving to Our Lord and his most holy Mother" be undertaken, that prayers be said "for the king and all the royal household," and for the two bishops

(186). There is a little uncertainty about the date: it could be the 17th instead of the 16th. In that case, the letter we are going to quote would have been written the 18th.

(187). Obviously, Richard Dufour is not the secretary who, in 1674, betrayed Father Eudes, nor is he connected with Charles du Four, the author of the Letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne.

204-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

who arranged the audience, and that "a strong resolve be taken to serve and love" the Lord and the Virgin Mary hereafter "with more fervor than ever before". In each one of God's blessings, John Eudes

discovers an invitation to forge ahead toward sanctity with more conviction and generosity. (188)

Yesterday, I had the honor of seeing the king at Saint Germain. This is what happened: I was ushered into the king's room where I found myself surrounded by a large group of bishops, priests, dukes, counts, marquises, marshalls of France and king's guards. The Archbishop of Paris took me to a corner of the room. When the king made his entrance, he walked by all these great lords and came directly to me, his expression full of kindness. I then began to speak to him about our affair and he listened most attentively, seeming very glad to hear what I was telling him.

"Sire,

Here I am at your Majesty's feet to thank you most humbly for your kindness in granting me the honor and consolation of seeing you once more before I die, and protest to you that there is not a man in this world who has more zeal and fervor than I where your Majesty's service and interests are concerned. This is the sentiment in which I wish to spend and use the little time left me in this life. I also beg of you most humbly, Sire, to honor us with your royal protection, (188). When he returns to Caen, John Eudes will record in his Mimorial (diary) his account of the interview with the king, ending with warm thanks to "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation" and to "the Mother of grace and blessing".

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

205 -

and to continue to reward us with your graces and favors. This is what I hope from that wonderful benevolence which rejoices and delights the hearts of all who have the honor of speaking to your Majesty, and which never fails to send them away full of joy and comfort."

When the king heard these words he said to me:

"I am very pleased to see you, Father Eudes. I have heard about you. I feel quite certain that you are doing a great deal of good in my States. Continue to work as you have been doing. I will be very pleased to see you again and will protect you on whatever occasions may arise."

Those were the king's words which filled me with gratification beyond words, and were overheard by the Archbishop of Paris and all the lords present. They were amazed to see such a great king speak so gently and kindly to the most insignificant of all men.

Thereupon I went to say Mass at the Récollets. (189) Then I was invited to dinner with the almoners, (190) who received me with marked kindness and charity.

Write to all the superiors of our houses, in my name, telling them that I would like them to do three things: first, observe an octave of thanksgiving to Our Lord and his most holy Mother for the splendid success of this affair; secondly, (189). The convent of the Franciscan Récollets of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. (190). The title then given to the priests attached to the person of the king, a prince or a high ranking person. They had spiritual functions (worship, etc.) and temporal ones (distributing alms, etc.).

206 -

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

pray a great deal for the king and all the royal household, for the Bishops of Paris and Coutances; and thirdly, resolve henceforth to serve and love our most benign Savior and his very good Mother with more fervor than ever before, through the practice of the holy virtues.

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

207 -

TOWARD HIS MEETING WITH HIS GOD

John Eudes is a happy man when he returns to Caen, a few days after his audience with the king. But something happens during the journey which will dampen his spirits. "The coach shook so much on a very rocky road," that it gave him a hernia which, he comments, "made me suffer a great deal in my body, but much more mentally because it prevented me from working at the salvation of souls in the work of the missions."

A few months later, on October 9, 1679, a "small assembly" in Caen brings together the superiors of the houses of Coutances, Lisieux and Evreux. Acting on a proposal of the founder, the gathering gives him a vicar general, Jacques de Bonnefond. On the following November 14, Father Eudes draws up an agreement between the Eudists and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity clarifying the pending financial situation. (191)

(191). The founder kept precise accounts of the money he lent Our Lady of Charity (4,000 pounds in February, 1651, when the community was approved by the bishop; and more than 2,600 pounds advanced on several later occasions) as well as what the Sisters paid back (750 pounds), but the November 14th document absolves them of all debts. He adds that the Eudists and the Sisters "free each other, totally and without reservation, from whatever might be due to one party or the other". Evidence once again of Father Eudes' concern for all that might lead to financial litigation.

208-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

John Eudes must have noticed that his confreres were not happy with the appointment of the vicar general. He decides to call a general assembly. (192) It gets under way at Caen on June 26, 1680, and is composed of fourteen priests, Father Eudes included. The next day, it elects M. JeanJacques Blouet de Camilly superior general, and immediately John Eudes, in all simplicity, asks for his blessing and places himself at his disposal. (193)

July 25, 1680, Father Eudes writes in his Wmorial (diary): "Today, the twenty-fifth of July of the year 1680, God granted me the grace of finishing my book on The Admirable Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God." He adds the last verse of the hymns of the Feast of the Heart of Mary: Holy Trinity,

Source of eternal life,

Holiness of the Heart of Mary, Live in all our hearts. Amen.

These words, written in Latin, are the last Father Eudes wrote in his Wmorial. On that day, he wrote - or at least finished - the conclusion of The Admirable Heart, which is both his last message to his spiritual children and his last song of love and praise to the Heart of Mary. In wonderment over the blessings he has received from this Heart, John Eudes gives thanks, sings its praises and blesses it in (192) The Constitutions of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary foresaw a general assembly every three years. But the founder had never yet called one.

(193). In all likelihood John Eudes would have preferred Jacques de Bonnefond as his successor. However, knowing that appointing him as vicar general had created a malaise, he rallied to M. Blouet de Camilly who was the object of close to unanimous consent among the voters. During the preceding months, he suffered a great deal from the uncertainty and wrangling this kind of situation inevitably creates.

most vibrant words which bear witness to his immense capacity for thanksgiving. Then, he asks the Virgin for two favors: to watch over the Congregation of Jesus and Mary in a special way in order for his Son to establish his reign in it perfectly; to accompany him personally with her solicitude until his last breath.

In the days that follow, Father Eudes goes to Our Lady of Charity to bid farewell. A short time later, he takes to his bed, seriously ill. He is administered Viaticum which he insists on receiving "on his bare knees on the floor,(194) after having "begged for forgiveness from all the members of his Congregation". He suffers a great deal but accepts it willingly. He professes to the Lord, over and over again, as much as he can, his love and abandon, and to the Virgin Mary his trust. He receives one last visitor, Mme Blouet de Camilly, his "oldest daughter", whom he has been helping for fifty years and who herself has assisted and sustained him with generosity and discretion in his foundations and apostolic works.

Dying, he still finds the strength to address his sons gathered around him: "He talks to them about the joys of paradise and about eternity." "He urges them to maintain peace among them." "He commends them to God and puts them in the hands of the Virgin Mary." On Monday, August 19, (194). These words and all those in quotation marks in the rest of the text are borrowed from Pierre Costil, the ancient Eudist annalist who, around 1720, wrote the first account of the beginnings of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

210-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

around three in the afternoon, having received Extreme Unction", he dies peacefully in union with Jesus giving his life on the Cross out of love. (195)
(195). John Eudes was beatified by Pope Pius X, on April 25, 1909 and canonized by Pope Pius XI, on May 31, 1925.

BRIEF PORTRAIT OF SAINT JOHN EUDES

Saint John Eudes, as is evidence by these fifty letters, is a man of decision and action. He knows how to analyze a situation without neglecting its material and financial aspects. He rapidly sees what needs to be done and acts, without blundering precipitation but also without useless delays. He is an organizer and pursues his undertakings with uncommon perseverance. Knowing what he wants, he does not hesitate to propose his solutions to others, in both the spiritual and the material realms. If need be, he will try to impose his views. His natural inclination is to act, to create, running the double risk of placing himself at the center of his realizations, and seeing in others only eventual auxiliaries, appreciated according to the effectiveness of their collaboration.

But this man of action met God and opened wide the doors of his life for him. Like Saint Paul and so many saints, he has understood that nothing counts apart from Jesus Christ. He discovered the love of his Heart, which also lives to the fullest in the Heart of Mary. In communion of spirit and heart with them, he wants to seek in all things the will of God. All his energy, all his capacity for action, he offers willingly in the service of the Kingdom. Profoundly receptive to the grace of humility, he recognizes the ambiguity of his spirit of enterprise and decision. He steps back from his own spirit and his "own will". He becomes more attentive to others. He cringes less when setbacks and constrict

212-

IN ALL THINGS, THE WILL OF GOD

tions arise. He lets himself be molded by suffering in which he recognizes the Cross of Christ.

And God works marvels in this man of vigorous temperament who tries to make himself available.

Not that perfect harmony is ever achieved. John Eudes has trouble resisting the temptation to align heavy paragraphs to show that he is right, or simply to give advice which he means to be exhaustive. His perseverance sometimes turns to obstinacy. He is at times close to losing patience with the delays and dillydallying of his brothers and his sisters.

But, next to these shadows, what bright spots! Putting his talents resolutely at the service of Christ, John Eudes accomplishes a remarkable missionary task. He proclaims the Word of God everywhere he is called to do so, overcoming fatigue with inexhaustible energy, preaching in the open air if necessary, recalling, in season and out of season, the demands of the Gospel. To answer the crying needs he perceives, he founds the Order of Our Lady of Charity and the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, as well as the Society of the Children of the Heart of the Admirable Mother. During his lifetime, the development of these Institutes remains modest, but the founder's tenacity has armed them against adversity. Day after day, he battled to establish them and make them grow, sparing nothing that was humanly possible. What is amazing is that he succeeded in doing it with detachment, even serenity, endlessly refocusing his vision to adapt to God's will, stating a hundred times that he wanted divine will to be his sole guide. Abandoning himself to the Lord, he knew how to foresee certain human results which he wanted so much, such as approval by Rome of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, thus entering fully into the

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS 213 -

logic of the mysterious fecundity of the Cross. In each one of his realizations, he recognized a marvelous gift from the Heart of Jesus and Mary, acknowledged with immense gratitude.

Perhaps the most remarkable effect of God's action in his life is the profound conversion in his

attitude towards others. There was a great risk that his very acute sensitivity might be stifled by his unrelenting ambition to act, to leave his mark at all costs on human realizations. On the contrary, under the influence of charity, this sensitivity is purified and expands. John Eudes becomes more and more human in his relations with others. He treats them cordially, with tenderness, sympathizing deeply with their sorrows and their joys. Aware of his tendency to be authoritarian, he prays and has others pray that the Lord may grant him his gentleness. Many a time, he refuses to impose his views, wanting his collaborators to feel fully responsible. He warmly thanks all those who help him. Magnanimously he refuses to claim his due. Never do his words betray the least rancor. He forgives endlessly: better still, he sees as his greatest benefactors those who cause him to suffer.

This abandonment in God's hands and this charity are often the result of tough battles, traces of which are found in some of his letters. But John Eudes' battles and his partial failings are what make him close to us. In this man, at once solid and vulnerable, who humbly tries to open his life to the love of God and maintain one single ambition, namely: to do the will of God, we recognize an older brother. His life is like a living Word which God is addressing to us today, to press us also to open ourselves up to his love.

RECIPIENTS OF THE SELECTED LETTERS

Congregation of Jesus and Mary	Letter
Circular Letter to all the communities	38
The Community at Caen	5, 24
The Community at Coutances	14
The Community at Lisieux	19
The Community at Rouen	32
A Eudist	28
A Group of Eudists conducting a mission at Gatteville	10
A Group of Eudists conducting a mission at Honfleur	18
Jacques de Bonnefond	41, 42, 44, 45
Jean-Jacques Blouct de Camilly	21
Louis Faucon	46
Richard Dufour	50
Richard Le Mesle and Thomas Vigeon	7
Simon Mannoury	8, 9,
Thomas Manchon	11, 20

Our Lady of Charity

Community of Caen	12, 15
Marie Herson (Sister Marie de la Nativité)	46, 127
Mother Françoise-Marguerite Patin, Superior	17, 22, 23, 25, 29, 30, 33

SAINT JOHN EUDES THROUGH HIS LETTERS

215 -

Mother du Saint-Sacrement Pierre, Superior	35, 36
Renée de Taillefer (Sister Marie de l'Assomption)	6, 16

VARIOUS RECIPIENTS

A Benedictine Nun of Montmartre	47
Bishop de Maupas, Bishop of Evreux	34
Cardinal Grimaldi, Archbishop of Aix	31
Colbert, Minister of Louis XV	43
Ladies of Mercy of Rouen	4
Laurence de Budos, Benedictine Abbess of the Trinity of Caen	1, 2
Louis XV	49
Madame de Camilly	26, 27
Mother Saint-Gabriel, a Benedictine Nun of Montmartre	37, 48
Sister Marie de Taillepie, a Benedictine	

