

**Seeing the French School of Spirituality of the 17th Century in the Charism of the
Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary through the Letters of the Good
Father and Good Mother**



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The French School of Spirituality & the SS.CC. – The Seeds of Our Charism & Mission –
Some of the Main Players – the 16th through the 19th Centuries

- 1556 Birth of Madame Acarie (maiden name: Barbe Avrillot)(Paris, France)
- 1575 Birth of Pierre de Berulle (founder of the French School)(Troyes, France)
Foundation of the Oratory in Rome by Philip Neri
- 1588 Birth of Charles de Condren (Disciple of Berulle)(Soissons, France)
- 1591 Birth of Louise de Marillac
- 1599 Birth of Marie de l’Incarnation Guyart
- 1601 Birth of John Eudes (Disciple of Berulle)(Ri, Argentan, France)
- 1608 Birth of Jean-Jacques Olier (Disciple of Berulle)(Paris, France)
- 1618 Death of Madame Acarie
- 1620 Birth of Marguerite Bourgeoys (ministered in Montreal, Canada)
Foundation of a house of the Oratory in Poitiers, France
- 1629 Death of Pierre de Berulle
- 1641 Death of Charles de Condren
- 1651 Birth of John Baptist de la Salle
(a master of the French School)(Rheims, France)
- 1657 Death of Jean-Jacques Olier
- 1660 Death of Louise de Marillac
- 1672 Death of Marie de l’Incarnation Guyart
- 1673 Birth of Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (a master of the French School)
(Montfort-la-Cane, France)
- 1680 Death of John Eudes
- 1700 Death of Marguerite Bourgeoys (ministered in Montreal, Canada)
- 1716 Death of Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (Saint-Laurent-sur-Sevre, France)
- 1719 Death John Baptist de la Salle (Paris, France)
- 1767 Birth of Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie (co-founder of the SS.CC.)
(The “Good Mother”)(Saint-Georges-de-Noisne, France)
- 1768 Birth of Pierre Coudrin (co-founder of the SS.CC.)(The “Good
Father”)(Coussay-le-Bois, France)
- 1834 Death of Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie (Paris, France)
- 1837 Death of Pierre Coudrin (Paris, France)

The French School of Spirituality in the 17th and 18th Centuries and the SS.CC.
Charism/Mission in the 19th Century

The so-called “French School” of spirituality that flourished in France in the 17th century was a spiritual foundation of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary that missioned throughout the world in the 19th century. Our Founders, the Good Father, Pierre Coudrin, and the Good Mother, Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie, both were influenced by the spirituality of the French School. Let’s look at some of the more influential elements of the French School which influenced the families of both Pierre Coudrin and Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie and the charism and spirituality of the Sacred Hearts Congregation.

Pierre de Berulle and the French School of Spirituality



The characteristic themes of Pierre de Berulle’s (founder of the French School of Spirituality) and the French School’s teaching can be limited to four: the spirit of religion and theocentrism; mystical christocentrism; his keen awareness of the sovereignty of the Mother of God; and his exaltation of the priesthood.

All the leaders of the Berulle French School of Spirituality, following the example of St. Vincent de Paul, were to be parish missionaries, especially in rural areas.

Parish missions, which were to bear much fruit in 17th century France, had their origins in two sources: itinerant preaching and missions in Protestant countries.

Small communities were founded to organize and preach missions in regions other than Paris. A great number of secular priests devoted themselves to this ministry.

The religious reform movement in France in the 17th century was pastoral, missionary and spiritual, and, at the same time, mystical and apostolic. It was marked by renewal of parish life, catechetical organization, restoration of liturgical prayer, development and increasing influence of secondary and higher education, the multiplication of grade schools for poor children, the establishment of “exercises for those to be ordained”, and the establishment of seminaries. Also, the missionary movement toward Canada, the Near East and the Far East.

Men and women came together as much to pray and deepen their Christian life as to plan ecclesial renewal. Madame Acarie’s *salon* in Paris was a center of spirituality and a headquarters for Catholic reform and renewal. Groups would meet at her home to discuss monastic reform and the foundation of new religious orders, to study the painful problem of the reform of the secular clergy and determine the position to be taken regarding the religious policies of King Henry IV of France. Madame Acarie’s circle was only one of the outstanding signs of Christian fervor in Paris at the time. The Carthusian monastery, the Visitation monastery, the Benedictine monastery, along with the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, which brought together laypersons and priests, were all centers of spiritual renewal in Paris.

Tuesday Conferences also played a very important spiritual role during the 17th century. This Tuesday assembly was a meeting of churchmen who came together every week at the Priory of Saint-Lazare in Paris under the direction of Saint Vincent de Paul to discuss the virtues and responsibilities of their state of life. In 1633, Vincent de Paul drew up a rule of life for an association of priests. Before long, the elite of the clergy of Paris had become members. During St. Vincent’s lifetime, it is estimated that more than 250 priests attended these meetings regularly. The Tuesday group members also worked in missions in Paris.

The quest for the spiritual included a desire for prayer and a concern for evangelization. The spiritual life in France at the time included seeking a mystical union with God, the bonds of friendship between men and woman in religious life and networks of prayer and mutual support. Francis de Sales had a profound influence on Vincent de Paul at this time. So characteristic of the 17th century in France was the sense of God’s grandeur and the spirit of adoration.

The reform of the clergy was a big thing in France at the time. Some even said that all the troubles in the world could be attributed to priests. There was a great lack of formation of the clergy.

Berulle may have brought about a revolution in the realm of spirituality by putting God back into the center of the Christian life in place of the human person. He published the “Brief Discourse of Interior Abnegation” in 1597, in which he insisted on absolute detachment for union with God.

Berulle and Madame Acarie were introduced to the Rheno-Flemish mystics around this time and the transcendence, holiness and absolute nature of God on which these mystical writers insisted so strongly contributed in great part to Berulle’s sense of the grandeur of God and the spirit of adoration that characterized his faith. What is ordinarily called the *theocentrism* of Berulle (and of the French School) became the inspiration of a fundamental attitude of adoration and true religion: “We must, first and foremost, look at God and not at self. . . .”

After ordination, Berulle came to perceive the grandeur, the dignity and the responsibilities carried by “the priests of Jesus.” This intuition led him, later, to seek to “restore the priesthood” and to renew “the Order of Jesus Christ.” In the words of Berulle, “Through the sacrifice of Christ, we [priests] put on the person of Christ and we act in his name and in his place [*in persona Christi*]: thus, our person is taken up, in a wonderful manner, by Christ, so that we can accomplish Christ’s marvelous deeds.”

Berulle passed long hours in prayer and study. He wrote and published a book entitled, *Treatise on the Possessed*, following the case of a woman exorcised from diabolic possession by the Capuchins. For Berulle, diabolical possessions were a sort of blasphemous caricature that stood in opposition to God’s possession of the soul.

Berulle admired the Carthusians, Capuchins and Jesuits. His christocentrism can be expressed in his own words: “Jesus Christ alone is the end and the way to the end. . . . We ought to bind ourselves to him as the goal of our life and to make use of him as the means to the goal.”

Spiritual leaders in France had been fascinated by Spanish mysticism. The introduction of Carmel and the Carmelites into France was a response to the need and desire for renewal of religious life. A mystical Christocentrism developed as attention was drawn to the person of Jesus, the Incarnate Word. The Person of the Incarnate Word was to be at the heart of Berulle’s existence, his thought, his teaching and all his writings. Pope Urban VIII named Berulle the *apostle of the Incarnate Word*.

At the heart of Berulle's spiritual experience and of his mystical teaching was that the human person finds fulfillment only through union with God in adoration and love. It is Jesus alone who, through the unity of the two natures in his person is, by his very state, the perfect adorer. In Berulle's *Discourse on the State and Glories of Jesus* we see an adoring, loving contemplation of Jesus. God is man, and man is God. The Word is God through this divine essence and God is man through this humanity. Berulle adored the divinized humanity of Jesus.

The Christian life for Berulle consisted both in adoring Jesus in his states and mysteries, and in adhering to him in his interior attitudes. This calls for radical abnegation of one's very self. The Incarnation remained at the heart of Berulle's contemplation. The same can be said of the mystery of the infancy of Jesus. Berulle had a very deep devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Virgin Mary. Berulle invites us to adore Jesus, to draw his spirit within ourselves, so as to enter into communion with his dispositions and to act in this same Spirit.

Berulle was introduced to the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, after which he launched a movement whose aim was to renew "the state of perfection among the clergy, the Order of Jesus Christ." The Oratorians accepted the responsibility of secondary education and a vow of servitude to Jesus. The Oratory dedicated itself to every kind of ministry: preaching, confessions, catechetics, missions, teaching and the formation of priests. Berulle developed a mystical and ecclesial conviction regarding the glory and the dignity of Jesus' priests. Members of the Oratory vowed servitude to the Virgin Mary and to Jesus and his divinized humanity. Berulle preached on St. Mary Magdalene and wrote the *Elevation on St. Mary Magdalene*. At the request of the King of France, Pope Urban VIII named Berulle a cardinal.

What can be said of Berulle and the French School of Spirituality, that they were filled with the honor, adoration and other essential duties owed to the divine majesty through adoration of his grandeur and holiness. This sense of God, of adoration, of Berulle's "mystical christocentrism," along with his loving devotion to Mary and concern for the holiness of priests constituted the essence of the heritage that comes from the founder and leader of the French School.

In the thought of the French School, the mystery of the Incarnation should become the object of faith for all people, the anchor of their hope, the cause of their salvation and the fulfillment of the glory of God in the universe. Through this mystery, earth is a heaven. God

himself established a religion on earth. He saved it for the end times. This divine mystery is like the center of the created and uncreated world. It is the only place where God chose once and for all to contain and reduce to our level both the world and himself, that is, his own infiniteness and the immensity of the whole universe.

The three births of Jesus were: his birth in the womb of his Father in eternity, his birth in the womb of the Virgin Mary in time, and his birth in the tomb to immortality. God engenders and God is engendered. A Virgin gives birth and God becomes incarnate. A tomb becomes the source of life and a place of death becomes the source of life without end. The Incarnation: a divinely human and humanly divine life. Jesus possesses a new type of life, a life of glory and suffering! Mary, the Mother of God: while she lives for Jesus, He lives through her. He is in her as her son and her God, giving life to her as he receives life from her. In her he finds his peace, his paradise, his highest heaven, his temple, his mother. You should also make Mary Magdalene your apostle in your state of glory. You should make her an apostle not to the world, but to the very apostles of the world and to the universal pastors of your church because you are so pleased to highlight the honor and the love of her soul.

Charles de Condren



Charles de Condren, a major disciple of Berulle, made considerable contributions to the French School through spiritual conferences with many persons who consulted him for guidance. Between 1630 and 1640, he was the spiritual director of all the saints in Paris. Unlike Berulle, however, Condren wrote little. He was, however, a spiritual guide and a

community leader. Many of Condren's contemporaries praised his human qualities, his theological insight, and the excellence of his spiritual guidance. The essence of Condren's spiritual experience and teaching was that the grandeur of God can be glorified only through destruction of the creature. But, it should be understood through the context of the total sacrifice that leads to union with God and to the glory of God, by passing through death and the death of the Cross.

Condren was well ahead of his time. With his insight and with a love of the beauty of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God placed in Condren's mind two very different dispositions, one of which was to prevail over the other. The first was an incomparable esteem for the priesthood, with a conviction of his unworthiness to be admitted to it. The second was a brilliant light, by which he knew with certainty that God willed to give him this grace.

His conviction was that the purpose of the Oratory "was to work to reestablish an ecclesiastical spirit among the clergy." He undertook to free his priests from giving spiritual direction to religious, so that they might be more available for parish missions and seminaries. He showed a constant concern for the missions and maintained a voluminous correspondence. He had a strong devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. "Come Lord Jesus, and live in your servant" was a little prayer of his.

In Condren, we find the theocentrism of Berulle: God is the all-holy, infinitely transcendent in relation to the created world and to sinful humanity. But, for Condren, adoration is expressed through sacrifice, immolation, the victim state of the Host. He speaks frequently of annihilation. Where Berulle proposed "elevations" and invested adoration with enthusiastic praise, Condren places before us the total sacrifice of adoration, that is, consummation. For Condren, mystical christocentrism is found in the victim state. Nothing is worthy of God, except the one and only sacrifice of Jesus. That is why Condren speaks often of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Condren's doctrine has often been accused of pessimism. "You must desire to renounce your nature, to deny yourself, completely; we should be totally occupied with God alone." Condren's teaching is centered on adoration and on communion with Jesus Christ.

According to Condren, "the mysteries of the life of Christ have not yet reached their full perfection and completeness. They are not yet completed in you who are His members, nor in Holy Mother Church. His mystical Body is a maturity that will not be complete until the Day of Judgment. The Son of God plans to perfect and complete in you all His states and

mysteries. It is His design to complete in you the mystery of His Incarnation, birth and hidden life. This is the universal plan of the Son of God. The life you have here on earth was given to you only for the accomplishment of the infinite designs of Jesus Christ for humankind. Sacrifice is a response . . . to all that God is. It is an essential aspect of the duty of religion, just as religion towards God is the obligation of a spiritual creature who carries it inscribed in the depth of his being. Sacrifice was instituted to adore God, to acknowledge his grandeur, and to render homage to his divine perfections We must be entirely . . . for God.”

“We must annihilate ourselves and be pure members of Jesus Christ, offering what he offers and doing what he does as if we were no longer ourselves. Make an offering to the divine majesty in satisfaction for all your offenses so that you might receive in Jesus Christ the reparation due to His offended honor.”

The ideal of the Oratory was, initially, the restoration of the priesthood by enriching the spiritual life of priests.

John Eudes, one of the proponents of the French School of Spirituality, said, “Make me die to myself, that is, to my vices and passions and to all that displeases Thee. Consume me utterly in the sacred fire of Thy divine love, and grant that henceforth my whole life may be a continual sacrifice of praise, glory and love of Thy Father and Thyself.”

Jean-Jacques Olier



Jean-Jacques Olier founded the Society of Saint-Sulpice (Sulpicians), a society of priests, who have been involved in the formation of priests for over 300 years. Many of his books are filled with what seems like an excessive pessimism. Olier is considered one of the best representatives of the French School. He had a deep veneration for Francis de Sales. New

France (Quebec) in Canada was to hold a place of privilege in Olier's missionary concerns. He had a great desire for prayer and took up the ministry of parish preaching. He helped give missions throughout France as a means of renewing the Christian spirit. He was encouraged by a Dominican nun to true intimacy with Jesus in a kind of "mystical initiation". He founded a seminary in 1641. He worked for the reform of religious. He underwent an intense interior trial where he could see nothing in himself but self-love and his own arrogance. He was convinced that he was damned. In his teaching, he assigned first place in the Christian life to the Holy Spirit. He had a bent for mysticism. He was always concerned about proclaiming the Gospel to distant peoples.

At this time in France, priests were a major concern and topic of conversation everywhere. There were too many of them, without formation or spiritual life, totally absorbed in self-seeking. He was involved in the Tuesday Conferences in Paris. At Saint-Sulpice, which was now a seminary, he organized liturgical prayer, especially eucharistic devotion. In the space of ten years, he transformed a huge parish that was, for all practical purposes, nearly dead, into a center of Christian and apostolic life that was renowned in all of Paris. Nearly 50 priests served in his parish, which would today be equal in size to six or seven parishes. He undertook the renewal of the ministers and, at the seminary, he saw it as an "apostolic house", a community of priests and future priests, sharing the same life, in preparation for receiving or renewing the apostolic Spirit in their hearts. He saw the clergy as the source of holiness that must be brought to all people everywhere.

The disciples of Jean-Jacques Olier were first and foremost spiritual directors. It was Olier's wish that the priests who spent some time at the seminary would come "to realize who they are in God's Church and what is the grace of their state . . . so as to apply it faithfully in their holy ministry." In his plan for a diocesan seminary, Olier developed a theology of the bishop, father of his people, and of the priests; the notion of a seminary as an "apostolic house" composed of seminarians, their directors, priests seeking spiritual renewal and "missionaries" available for service as their bishop saw fit. At this time, also, John Eudes devoted himself to the service of priestly formation in France.

To this day, the principal mission of the Society of St. Sulpice throughout the world is to be "at the service of those ordained to the presbyteral ministry . . . with a concern for education to the 'interior life' and the formation of an 'apostolic spirit'". Olier offered himself as a missionary for work in the Far East. In 1654, he established the Community of Daughters of the Interior Life of Mary. Towards the end of his life, he dedicated much of his time to spiritual direction. He published several works on spirituality.

Olier's heritage includes not only a parish that was totally renewed, a flourishing seminary, and a society of priests actively engaged in many dioceses, but also a personal witness and a spiritual doctrine of highest quality. In Olier we find a mystic, a man of prayer who was totally abandoned to God, and a missionary, a "man of fire," wholly surrendered to the apostolic Spirit.

In the French School of Spirituality, Christian life is the Christian person living interiorly, through the operation of the Spirit, in the same way Jesus Christ lived. It is the priest who takes the place of Jesus Christ in order to make up what is lacking in the religion of men, and therefore to be the universal religious of the church, praying, praising, loving on behalf of everyone, accepting and fulfilling the duties of all, the one who makes amends for the omissions of all. The height of the Christian state consists in the participation and the blessed communion in Jesus Christ, our Lord, risen, ascended in heaven and consumed in God His Father. We must first pass through His first state of humiliation, which is that of mortification, suffering, the cross, humiliation and death to everything. In order for Christians to live their true vocation, which is to reproduce Jesus Christ in themselves, they must express all these holy states of humiliation in their life in the same order in which they occurred in Jesus Christ. Therefore, as our sacred model Jesus Christ first suffered all sorts of disgrace, scourgings and gibbets, then died and was buried before rising and entering into his glory. "It was necessary for the Christ to suffer and then enter into his glory (Lk 24:26)", in the same way Christians must bear in their lives all these states of humiliation before being able to share in his grandeur and state of exaltation. Christian life has two parts: death and life. The first is the foundation for the second. Death must always precede life. We must be aware of the differences between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit acts in us and establishes within us the virtues of fortitude, vigor and power and gives us a share in the perfections and attributes of God, which contain in themselves no abasement, then this divine Spirit is called the Spirit of God, because God as God has only grandeur and majesty in him. When this same Spirit produces in us the virtues of Jesus Christ, which are the Christian virtues containing abasement and humiliation, such as love of the cross, of humility, of poverty, of disdain, then this Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Holy mortification, which flows from an authentic practice of virtues, is the firm rock on which we should build and without which there can be no guarantee.

We are indebted to God for all the good that he does. We are overwhelmed with blessings. Through both grace and nature, he gives us everything we could think of and more than we can understand. We want to lose ourselves, plunging into the Spirit of Christ and thus

entering into His praise and thanksgiving to God. Since we know practically nothing of the gifts God gives us, and since we have nothing in us that is pleasing or acceptable to God, we need to approach Jesus and seek in Jesus what we need to satisfy God. Whenever God abandons us and we do not know which path to follow, we can become quite hindered in such a period if we are not sustained and directed by some holy method to guide us. An easy method consists in having our Lord before our eyes, in our heart and in our hands.

Christianity consists in three things, and the whole method of prayer is contained within them: to look at Jesus, to unite ourselves to Jesus and to act in Jesus. The first is called adoration, the second, communion, the third, cooperation. Let us remain reverent and respectful before such a holy and divine reality as our Lord. After our heart has expressed freely its love, praise and other duties, let us remain for a while in silence before him, with these same dispositions and religious sentiments in the depth of our soul. This is the essence of adoration. Let us also wish that his divine will may be accomplished in us. In pastors, the Lord is “the” Pastor; in priests, “the” Priest; in religious, “the” Religious; and in penitents, “the” Penitent. “Apostolic men [and women]”, like all apostles, are bearers of Jesus Christ.

We need to study how to renounce our inner core, how to condemn it and how to surrender it to God, so that He can imprint in us what he wants and insert in us his inclinations, his sentiments and even his dispositions. The most important humility is the interior one, which concerns primarily the spirit. We must wait upon his light and his orders with patience. We must wait with faith upon his guidance and his command. Our will is more affected by sin than the rest of us. Therefore, it is more haughty and arrogant. It is always ready to give orders and rarely disposed to obey. His love should rule over us and lead us smoothly toward those things that God desires. True and perfect interior humility consists in the submission of the will to God. Everything comes from God and depends on him and everything in us should be accomplished by him. To be aware that we are worth nothing, that we know nothing and that we can do nothing, and to take pleasure in this insight and knowledge, is the first point of humility.

John Eudes



John Eudes, of all the French School writers, is the easiest of all to read and understand. Many religious congregations claim him, directly or indirectly, as their founder: Eudists, Religious of Our Lady of Charity and of the Good Shepherd, Little Sisters of the Poor, Religious of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and the Religious of Parame; all continue his missionary action, engage in priestly formation and commit themselves to service of the poor. The masterpiece of his writing was *The Life and Kingdom of Jesus in Christian Souls*. He preached two or three missions a year. Each mission lasted from four to eight weeks and attracted large crowds up to over a thousand. The purpose of these missions was to give Christian instruction to those who had been baptized, to provide reconciliation for them through the Sacrament of Penance, and to encourage them to live a renewed Christian life. On average, 12 to 15 confessors were available for the Sacrament of Penance, but on occasion, there could be as many as 100 confessors.

Missions flourished everywhere throughout France at this time, with Jesuits, Capuchins, disciples of Condren and of Vincent de Paul preaching in nearly all the provinces, towns and cities of France. It is true to say that this “missionary invasion” could not be separated from a “mystical invasion”.

John Eudes excelled as a great preacher, but he also exercised a more hidden ministry of spiritual direction. He also offered guidance to women. He guided and offered counsel to congregations of women such as the Benedictines, Carmelites, Ursulines and Visitandines. This double ministry of parish missions and spiritual direction would lead John Eudes to

write many books. Some of the themes in his books were Christian holiness, communion with Jesus, the reign of Jesus in the Christian soul and professing Jesus Christ. He also gave attention to the “mystical marriage”, where the soul experiences itself as the spouse of God. John Eudes was explicitly Christocentric.

1641 marked the foundation of Our Lady of Refuge, which was to become the Institute of Our Lady of Charity. John Eudes had met a number of women and young girls who had become prostitutes. How could they be helped to get out of this life and lead a Christian one? Some efforts had already been made, with the creation of “refuges” here and there, in Nancy, Paris and Marseille. Members of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament devoted themselves to this work.

In 1643, at the age of 41, John Eudes decided to leave the Oratory to found a seminary. From 1641 on, John Eudes, like other Oratorian missionaries, had begun to hold several meetings during the course of each mission for the priests working with him. These were times for sharing and prayer, but also for true formation. Out of such experiences, John Eudes would later write several books: in 1644, *Les Avertissements aux Confesseurs Missionnaires*; in 1666, *Le Bon Confesseur*. Two other works were published after his death: in 1681, *Le Memorial de la Vie Ecclesiastique*, and in 1685, *Le Predicateur Apostolique*.

Formation centers were needed. “Seminaries” for children and youth were opened. Charles Borromeo organized retreats here and there for those to be ordained. Two types of seminaries were proposed: one for young men and one for advanced students. Formation communities were established. A few candidates for the priesthood and several priests were brought together in a “Mission.” They spent several weeks or months together. There was no academic program, but time was given to periods of spiritual retreat in preparation for ordination. There were also sessions in pastoral formation for preaching, celebration of the Sacraments, the study of cases of conscience and the like. Priests came to renew the spirit of their ordination and the exercise of their ministry. Thus, the Company, as it was called – later, the Society of Jesus and Mary, the Eudists – was born, founded for the work of seminaries and for missionary activity, especially parish “missions.” John Eudes himself often signed his letters *missionary priest*.

The Eudists were to take charge of seminaries in France. Like the Oratorians and the Sulpicians, the Eudists did not choose to be religious. Their founder was Jesus Christ. The Eudists perpetuated the concept of *devotion*, as taught by Francis de Sales. The goal was to

live in constant loving intimacy with Jesus and Mary and be filled with a desire for martyrdom. John Eudes composed prayers and liturgical offices such as “*Ave Cor*,” a salutation to the Heart of Jesus and Mary, written about 1640. He composed an Office in honor of Jesus the High Priest and all holy priests and Levites, to be celebrated around the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin, the day for renewal of priestly commitments. Previously, Eudes had composed a first office in honor of the Heart of Mary. Eudes would often quote the “elevation” he had learned at the Oratory: “O Heart of Jesus living in and through Mary! O Heart of Mary living in and for Jesus!” Where Olier spoke of the “interior of Mary” or the “interior of Jesus,” Eudes used the word *Heart* rather than “interior”, the “heart” of Jesus, the “heart” of Mary.

Devotion to the Heart of Mary spread throughout a number of monasteries, convents, and in certain dioceses, throughout France during the 17th century. Eudes later composed another office in honor of the Heart of Jesus. This liturgy was adopted by many religious communities in France with which John Eudes worked. And, since 1674, the Benedictines of Montmartre have celebrated a solemn feast in honor of the Sacred Heart. Eudes invited his fellow Eudists to celebrate the feast of the Heart of Jesus in their houses.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart grew and was given a new orientation by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and the preachers who popularized the devotion. Pope Pius XI called John Eudes the “Father, the Doctor, and the Apostle of liturgical devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.” Eudes insisted on the unity of the Heart of Jesus and of Mary. He centered his prayer and the prayer of his followers on the Heart of Jesus and Mary, through the use of one word, “Heart,” and a single symbol, the symbol of the heart, designed to awaken the love of Christians through contemplation of the love of Jesus and Mary.

Eudes included noonday prayers in his *spiritual teaching* – that is, short texts meant as guides for a brief moment of prayer in the middle of the day. They focused attention on God and on Jesus, and not on oneself. This was not meant to be a period for self-examination in view of correction; it was, rather, a time to look at Jesus, to adore and thank him, to ask his pardon and to give oneself to him so as to enter into his dispositions. This was the outline of prayer, as taught by Olier. And, according to the French School, it was the heart of the Christian Life.

Eudes suggested other “little practices” such as insistently raising our heart to Jesus at the beginning of our actions to say that we renounce ourselves and give ourselves to Him. But, Eudes insisted vehemently that we were not to become attached to these exercises

themselves.

Eudes encountered great opposition in his apostolic ministry from the Oratorians, the Jansenists and the authorities, who, in Caen, sealed the door of his seminary chapel. Beginning in 1660, defamatory accusations were circulated against him. Later, when he thought of establishing the Eudists in Paris, a still more violent campaign led to an official letter from the royal court expelling him from Paris and, indirectly, threatening his work. But, he continued to preach and finished writing his major work, *The Admirable Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God*. John Eudes motto was: to serve God and others, “*corde magno et animo volenti*” (“with a great heart and a magnanimous love. (2 Mac 1:3)”)

John Eudes’ own words echoed his beliefs and teachings: “We must continue and fulfill the life, religion and devotion which Jesus Christ had on earth. Jesus Christ must live in us. Jesus Christ has two kinds of body: His personal body and His mystical body. Christian life is a continuation and fulfillment of the life of Jesus.”

In one of his letters, Eudes writes “Our missionaries see people who have been waiting for a week without having been able to get to confession.” In another letter, he writes “What are all those doctors and bachelors of arts doing in Paris, while souls are perishing by the thousand for want of someone to offer them a hand to withdraw them from perdition and preserve them from everlasting fire? Certainly, if I dared, I should go straight to Paris and cry out in the Sorbonne and the other colleges: Fire! Fire! The flames of hell are consuming the whole universe! Come, you doctors, bachelors and parish priests, come, all you ecclesiastics, and help to extinguish them!”

In the words of John Eudes, “Let our whole lives be a continual sacrifice of praise and love of God.” For Eudes, there were three solemn vows that Jesus made: 1) To obey His Father, 2) To be in His Father’s service and 3) To become a host and victim entirely consecrated and immolated to His Father’s glory. For Eudes, we, ourselves, make three great, holy and divine vows: 1) To do God’s will, 2) To be of service of God and others, and 3) To become hosts and victims continually sacrificed to God’s glory.

According to Eudes, “We are obliged to glorify and love God with all the powers of our body and soul, to do everything possible to have him glorified and loved, to seek nothing in all our actions and in all things save his pure glory and love, and to live in such a way that our whole life be a ceaseless sacrifice of praise and love of him. Each one of us should be ready to be immolated, consumed and annihilated for his greater glory.” In a word: *Christian living is*

witnessing to the life of Christ.

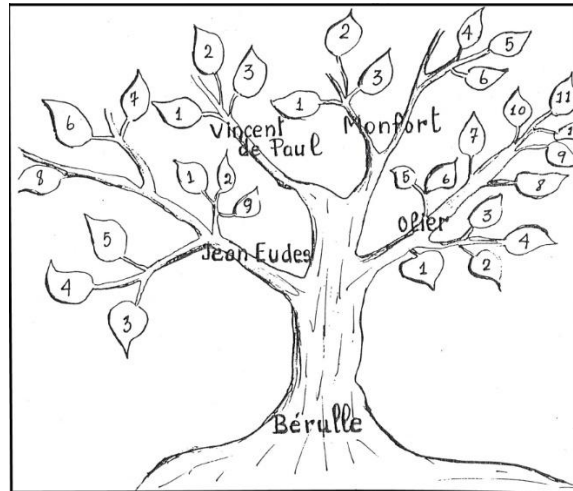
Writing to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, Eudes said, “There are four ways of increasing Mary’s joy and glory: 1) seek only the glory of her Son and the fulfillment of his most adorable will, in all your actions, mortifications and exercises; 2) be faithful and exact to your Rules and Constitutions, 3) love and cherish one another with a sincere, simple, tender and cordial love; and 4) desire with all your heart to realize the aim of your holy Institute. To the priests, Eudes wrote, “A priest is another Christ living and walking on earth.”

For the French School of Spirituality, the word *heart* had several meanings. In sacred Scripture, there are eight meanings of the word *heart*, which were used by the French School in its spirituality of the *heart*: 1) the material and bodily heart, 2) the memory, 3) meditation, 4) the free will, 5) contemplation, 6) the whole interior and spiritual life, 7) the divine Spirit and 8) the Son of God who is called the heart of the eternal Father. All these hearts are found in the Mother of love, Mary, the Mother of God, and make up a single heart in her. To better understand what is meant by the heart of the Blessed Virgin, one must know that just as we adore in God three hearts, they are in fact a single heart. These three hearts are: 1) the Son of God, 2) the Holy Spirit and 3) divine love. There are three hearts in Jesus: 1) his bodily heart, 2) his spiritual heart and 3) his divine heart, the Holy Spirit. There are three hearts in the Mother of God: 1) her bodily heart, 2) her spiritual heart and 3) the heart of Jesus that continuously watches over her. These three hearts of the Mother of God are but a single heart through the most holy and most intimate bond that ever existed or will exist, next to the hypostatic union between God the Father and God the Son.

According to the Eudists’ Lectionary, they, the Eudists, are to “honor and venerate Jesus Christ in the most sorrowful martyrdom suffered at the foot of the Cross by the Holy Mother of Jesus, Mary.” In the words of the Eudist Lectionary, “I offer and abandon myself, I vow and consecrate myself to you, my Lord Jesus, in the capacity of sacrifice and victim, that I may suffer in body and soul, according to your pleasure and with the help of your holy grace, all manner of pain and torments, even to shedding my blood and sacrificing my life for you through any death pleasing to you; and this, for your sole glory and for pure love of you. I solemnly promise, Oh my Lord Jesus, never to revoke, that is to say, never to make a formal act of disavowal of this my oblation, consecration and sacrifice of myself to the glory of your Divine Majesty. I make a vow and promise to you to confess, acknowledge, adore and glorify you in the presence of everyone, at the price of my blood, my life and all the martyrdoms and torments imaginable, and to suffer a thousand deaths, with all the tortures of earth and hell,

rather than to deny you or do anything serious that is contrary to your holy will. Grant, through your great mercy, that my whole life may be a perpetual sacrifice of love and praise for you.”

..... more on the French School of Spirituality



In the theology of the French School, it was thought that this new thinking would bring about renewal of the Christian life in all the faithful. The theology of the French School of Spirituality promoted God as absolute Being and the grandeur and holiness of God and that our response to this reality must be an attitude of adoration carried to the point of total consecration of oneself. The first thing was to look at God and not at oneself; to do nothing through self-consideration or self-seeking, but only through a gaze fixed purely and solely on God. To look at God means to give assent to God as one’s End and to long wholeheartedly for him. This is an attitude of love and acceptance as much as of veneration. Adoration is the ecstasy of love. It is loving adoration. For the French School, there were many Christians who loved God, but few who revered him.

For Berulle, the founder of the French School, the human being was a creature who belonged to God and who existed for God. It was a state of belonging to God and servitude to God. Adoration was the means by which this servitude was ratified. The soul must forget itself, lose itself, annihilate itself, become a “pure capacity for God,” and thus be filled by God. Berulle did not think of adoration or self-offering merely in terms of isolated acts, but also and above all as a *state* of adoration: offering and abandonment of the creature to honor God in the depth of one’s being, acceptance of the Creator’s possession of the creature’s very self. Let us not be attached to ourselves. This was expressed through the importance of adoration.

In the Christocentric theology of the French School of Spirituality, great importance was attached to the contemplation of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Thus, the loving contemplation of a Christian was to be directed toward the grace-bearing mysteries of the life of Jesus: devotion to the infancy of Jesus, to his hidden life, to his Passion, Resurrection, Ascension and to the Eucharist. French School devotees would speak of the “interior of Jesus” or would evoke the “threefold gaze” of Jesus: towards God the Father, towards himself and towards our souls. Adoration became love, desire, and then, “communion.”

Since Mary was the first and the most perfect Christian, “living in Jesus, through Jesus, and for Jesus,” prayer is addressed to “Jesus living in Mary.” Eucharistic communion is the means par excellence for communion with Jesus. Silent prayer and meditation are to be centered on Jesus. This life of Jesus in us is brought about by the Holy Spirit. A Christian is “one in whom the Spirit of Jesus is present. Surrender to the Holy Spirit of Jesus. Let the Spirit act in us.” The feast of Pentecost, the feast of the Holy Spirit, was very important to the French School.

The French School reaffirmed the value of the mystical vision of the Church. Our contemporary theology of the mystical body owes much to the French School of Spirituality. It was a large, profoundly mystical vision. It was a dramatic departure from the centralized concept of the Church that seemed to have prevailed in that era. Berulle and the French School insisted again and again on two aspects of the mystery of the Church: liturgical prayer and mission.

Berulle was haunted by concern for priestly perfection. Ministerial priesthood was meant to serve the *baptismal* priesthood of all Christians. He insisted on the priestly dimension of the Christian life and for priests to be “apostolic men.” A bishop was thought of as father of his church and of his priests. There was a great devotion to the Eucharist and to Mary.

For Berulle and the French School, Mary stood at the heart of the Christian mystery because the Word became incarnate in her, because she was perfectly docile to the Holy Spirit, and because she is, for all time, the queen and mother of all men and women. There was a vow of servitude to Mary, and through Mary, to Jesus. The Heart of Mary is Jesus. Mary was the queen of priests. She was the model for the clergy. The feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary on November 21 was a very important feast.

The prayer of the church in the liturgy played an important part in the French School theology. Particular liturgical offices were composed such as: the Office of Jesus, the Office of the Heart of Mary and of the Heart of Jesus, the Office of the Interior Life of Jesus and the Office of the Interior Life of Mary. Methods of prayer were proposed. Worship of the Word and the Eucharist was emphasized. The Bible was not only the principal source of the doctrine of the French School, but was also their prayer book. Olier, founder of the Sulpicians, every evening, in a Scripture Conference, commented on a passage of the Bible for the seminarians. In his mind, devotion to the Bible went hand-in-hand with devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Spiritual direction was a particular object of attention for the French School. In this spiritual direction there was emphasized the vows of servitude to Jesus and to Mary, of self-offering and of surrender.

But, all the devotions of the French School were only means to reach its one goal: to help women and men who seek to respond to the Lord's call in their lives. They were to surrender to the Spirit of Jesus, to renounce and deny themselves and to be filled with the Spirit. It was taught that one had to be united with Jesus and his looking at the Father in adoration and praise, his looking at others in love and service and his looking at oneself in forgetfulness and self-annihilation. The theology of the French School of Spirituality proclaimed that the life of the Risen Christ would invade the hearts and the lives of Christians who were renewed by the Spirit.

For the French School, our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to bring love and respect for his Father and to establish his reign and his religion. Jesus Christ understood that no worthy reparation had been offered to God for the sins committed against him. Christians were called for sacrifice, like Jesus. Jesus gave us his own Spirit. His soul and ours became one. We are to be true religious of the Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus is a divine capacity for souls, and He is the source of the life whereby we live in Him. If Jesus has a capacity for the divinity, He should have a capacity for creatures. There are three links: the link that binds the only Son to the eternal Father, the link that binds the Son to our nature and the link that binds this deified humanity, Jesus Christ, to the person of each of us. Humanity ascends to this deified flesh and to God, while God descends to the flesh and to us.

On the subject of priesthood, Berulle and the French School believed that the Church was divided into two parts and both of them were holy: one was the people and the other was the

clergy. One received holiness and the other brought it about. Three qualities important to priests were authority, holiness and doctrine. Priests should give ordinary people faith, hope and love. Descended from the tribe of Levi, priests should disseminate authority, holiness and doctrine to the people. The word “clergy”, in Greek, means “inheritance.” This is why we gather together, in order to reclaim our inheritance, to recover once again our rights, to enjoy our legitimate succession, to have the Son of God as our portion, to share in his Spirit, and through his Spirit to share in his light, holiness and authority, which are communicated to bishops by Jesus Christ and through them to priests. The priest must have a general, universal spirit of prayer, of religion, and of penance. The priest must pray for everyone. His heart must be open and large enough to embrace all. In him, the Spirit of God must be revealed and manifested. The priest’s heart must be as large as the Church. His duty is to pray for the whole Church.

On the topic of spiritual direction, Berulle said that this holy, divine and saving science is the daughter of prayer, the disciple of humility and the mother of discretion. In spiritual direction, one who thinks that they are a master is, in fact, a disciple.

Advice given by Olier to others included: “Anguish and aridity will afflict your soul if your heart and mind are taken up by concern for things that are not of God. How I hate self-love. Faith in everything. Sacrifice! Outside of Jesus, his faith and his love, take hold of nothing, take delight in nothing. Everyday read the Holy Scripture of Jesus Christ. Practice Christian virtue. I desire that everything superfluous be taken from you.”

John-Baptist de la Salle



John-Baptist de La Salle was the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and very

much influenced by Berulle and the French School of Spirituality. He was well-known in France for his work in teaching, particularly, for the lower classes. The structures and principles of the institute he founded were completely new for his era. His companions were laymen, religious and educators, living in community, sharing the life of their students. He introduced innovations such as the instruction of a number of pupils at one time, free education, the suppression of Latin as a requirement in beginner classes and the prohibition of compulsory manual work. The source of his community's apostolic zeal was a spirit of faith nourished by fervent prayer. He was also influenced by Francis de Sales and Teresa of Jesus (Teresa of Avila). An invocation that De La Salle's Brothers have repeated 20 times a day for the last three centuries is: "May Jesus live in our hearts." De La Salle had said, "In all things, I adore God's action in my life." Throughout his life his goal had been to respond faithfully to the invitations of the Holy Spirit. He tried to provide for the needs of the children of his day and to provide for the formation of his Brothers. The will of God, God's "action in his life," he accepted as his light and rule. One of De La Salle's rules gives us an insight into his personality: "It is a good rule of conduct to avoid making a distinction between matters proper to one's state and the matter of one's salvation and perfection. One must be convinced that one's salvation and perfection will never be better assured than by accomplishing the duties of one's state of life, provided they are fulfilled in keeping with God's plan. One must strive to keep this always in mind."

The formation of teachers became a consuming priority in De La Salle's life. In 1681 he invited eight or ten teachers, who already took their meals with him, to live in his house. The following year, he left his family home to live in poverty with these companions in a house close by. His ideal was to pursue a life of consecration in community and in service to the Christian education of poor children. He left everything, renouncing his status as canon and his patrimony. In 1687, he created a seminary for teachers in rural areas, a Teacher's Training College ahead of its time. Next to this center, he opened a novitiate for the young men who chose to join his community. His preoccupation with forming educators consumed him. Over a 12-year period, countless foundations were created by De La Salle in France and as far away as Rome. Continually, he encountered difficulties and contradiction. He created the most diversified kinds of instruction: free schools and professional schools, Sunday academies, boarding schools and special training schools for difficult or backward pupils. His two fundamental attitudes were the spirit of faith and apostolic zeal.

One of the main ideas of De La Salle was that the ministry of the Christian educator should continue the very ministry of the apostles. He wanted his Brothers to remain as laymen. He

said, “Those who instruct youth are *co-workers with Jesus Christ* for the salvation of souls.” De La Salle proposed daily prayers “in honor of and in union with” one or another mystery of Jesus. He was an austere ascetic who contemplated and adored Jesus. He prayed that Jesus “come and live in our hearts.” Prayer was the crucible where his spiritual and apostolic life came together, where he felt a deep experience of God, of the Cross of Jesus, and of the mystery of the Church. Great emphasis in De La Salle’s teaching on prayer was placed on the presence of God.

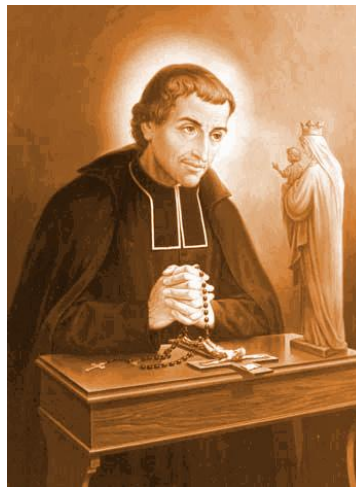
The stages of every spiritual life can be found in the various forms of prayer as presented by De La Salle: conversation through repeated reflections, through a single reflection extended in time and through simple attention. The *Meditations* of De La Salle have a clearly practical orientation. Each consideration is followed by one or two related questions or exhortations. He invites his Brothers to reflect on the demands of community life. “The duty of persons living in community is to endure the faults of their Brothers.” He stresses the presence of Jesus in the midst of the Brothers. His special gift was knowing how to adopt some of the great apostolic and spiritual orientations of the seventeenth century, and to adapt them perfectly to the needs of his day.

Regarding the student-teacher relationship, De La Salle said, “Students must be convinced that the truth of Jesus Christ comes from the mouth of their teacher and that it is only in his name that you teach, that he has given you authority over them.” The Spirit acts in you and by you through the power of Jesus Christ. Frequently give yourself to the Spirit of our Lord to act only under his influence and not through any self-seeking. This Holy Spirit will fill your students with Himself, and they will be able to possess fully the Christian spirit. In your apostolic prayer, constantly represent the needs of your disciples to Jesus Christ, explaining to him the difficulties you experience in guiding your students. See yourself as an instrument to be moved only by Him.” The words of Jesus are spirit and life, the true life, which is the life of the soul. In your prayer, ask God to grant you the grace to be humble, docile, submissive and obedient. In his *Meditations*, De La Salle writes, “May I share fully in your holy affection for poverty, mortification and sufferings; that I may love and practice them through motives of faith and the assistance of your grace. As a child of God, may I no longer live in myself and by myself, but in You and by You, so that you may act and live in me.”

On community life, De La Salle said, “It is not possible for many persons to live together without being a source of mutual suffering. Why you should support the defects of your Brothers is because God has made it an obligation. When he placed you in community, He

imposed on you a burden which is heavy to bear. And, what is this burden if not the defects of your Brothers. We must bear the burden of one another's failings. What we ought to ask of God in prayer is for fraternal union, to be closely united among ourselves, that there be one heart and one soul in all the company of believers. Since you are privileged to be called by God to live a community life, there is nothing you should pray for with greater insistence than union of heart and mind with your Brothers. Adore with all the elect Sacred Humanity and occupy yourself only with things of heaven."

Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort



Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort may be best known as the apostle of Mary, with his *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* and *The Secret of Mary*. He was, above all, a missionary, a passionate witness to the gospel, enamored of eternal Wisdom, working among the poor. He made a vow of slavery to Jesus through Mary. He is considered the "last master of the Berulle School," particularly on the subject of eternal Wisdom. He had a profound contemplation of the Wisdom of God, which is the person of the Incarnate Word. He would bring together young men who were considering priesthood and send them to visit the sick in hospitals. He lived a life of poverty and self-denial, dedicating several hours every day to prayer. He practiced exaggerated penances, and sometimes gave away his possessions and clothing to the poor he met on the street. Intellectual activities, times of prayer and apostolic service filled his days. His motto was "God alone." His teaching and prayer continually examined the states and mysteries of Jesus, the Incarnate Word. One of his themes was the "life of Jesus in Mary." He also insisted on the praying of the rosary. He mentions Jesus Christ as being captive as a slave in the womb of the divine Mary and his being dependent on her for everything.

The apostolic and missionary spirit filled Montfort and inspired him to volunteer to go to Canada. The primacy of God, contemplation of Jesus in his mysteries, particularly the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Cross, union with Mary and the apostolic spirit were all integrated into Montfort's life. His devotion to Mary was especially evident. Mary was to be permanently at the heart of Montfort's life and his missionary ministry. He was sent to Poitiers, France where he devoted himself to serving the sick in the General Hospital there where he became chaplain. There, thanks to several patients and a laywoman, he founded the very first community of the Daughters of Wisdom in 1703. The *poor* in the hospital were the beggars, the infirm, pregnant and unwed women, and other outcasts of society, all assigned to the hospital by King Louis XIV. After a brief stay in Paris, Montfort returned to Poitiers at the request of the poor themselves. Throughout his entire life, Montfort would have a special love for these people. In a letter to his mother, dated August 28, 1704, Montfort told her that he had renounced all things and had taken "Wisdom and the Cross as his spouse." The wisdom of the Incarnate Word found fulfillment in the foolishness of the gospel, in the Cross. The theme of wisdom was to stand at the center of Montfort's prayer and teaching.

Montfort's first book, *The Love of Eternal Wisdom*, demonstrated his deep and fervent prayer. For Montfort, the Wisdom of God was revealed in Jesus. But, Montfort insisted on two essential aspects of this revelation. First, he saw the tenderness of God, that is, the Wisdom that is God needed man in order to be happy. And, secondly, this Wisdom, which is the Incarnate Word, invites us to follow in submission to and dependency on Mary, with love for the Cross.

Montfort traversed the dioceses in the west of France, preaching missions and retreats. In 1706, he made a pilgrimage to Loretto and to Rome in Italy. He confided his aspirations to proclaim the gospel in distant lands to Pope Clement XI who confirmed his vocation as a missionary, but, *in France*: "You have a large enough field in France for the exercise of your zeal. Do not go anywhere else, and labor always in perfect submission to the bishops." At this time, the Pope bestowed on Montfort the title of "apostolic missionary." For 16 years, Montfort exercised a ministry that led him to travel thousands of miles, often on foot. He preached nearly 200 missions and retreats, including in the Diocese of Poitiers, where Pierre Coudrin was to found the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary almost a hundred years later.

During each of his missions, Montfort prepared his listeners to renew within themselves the

spirit of Christianity. Before administering absolution and communion to them, he required that they renew their baptismal commitments, their “covenantal contract with God.” He proposed a formula containing the following words: “I give myself entirely to JESUS CHRIST through the hands of MARY, to carry my cross after him all the days of my life.” This renewal took place within an imposing religious service marked by appropriate solemnity. The principal aspect of Montfort’s teaching was his emphasis on devotion to Mary and the proposal of holy slavery. The ultimate goal of all we do is the reign of Jesus in the world and in souls, but for Montfort, the way to the goal is Mary. Together with the Holy Spirit, Mary produced the greatest thing that ever was or ever will be: A God-Man. Why the Holy Spirit does not now work striking wonders in souls is that it fails to find in them a sufficiently close union with its faithful and inseparable spouse, Mary.

Montfort popularized the consecration to Mary. He was probably the one who developed the deepest theology of devotion to Mary in the Christian life for simple, humble people. Montfort is often represented as a high-strung, nervous ascetic, brandishing the cross and threatening sinners with hell-fire. Actually, he was a priest filled with tenderness and compassion, known as “good Father de Montfort” by the simple people who knew him. He himself acknowledged that God had given him “the grace to touch hearts.” He felt an overflowing love for Jesus, for Mary, and for the poor. The slavery proposed by Montfort was a pathway of liberty and love, leading to total union with God, in Jesus, through Mary. But, Montfort had a gentler side to his personality. His teaching on the demanding austerity of the Cross and annihilation was balanced by light and sweetness, by the love and the maternal presence of Mary. He desired to see an increase in the number “of loving slaves to Mary.”

Women in the French School of Spirituality

A number of women were influential in the French School of Spirituality such as Madame Acarie (Barbe Avrillot was her maiden name), Agnes de Langeac and Marie des Valleees, among others. Writing of this period in France, one historian has referred to the feminization of the church in France during the seventeenth century. There was a striking increase, at the beginning of the century, in the number of women consecrated to God in the religious life as such or in new forms – for example, those known as *secular daughters*, consecrated laywomen. This phenomenon was due, in part, to a change in the situation of women in this era, but also to renewal of the Christian life. There are noticeable similarities in this area between our day and the seventeenth century in France.

Women exercised a major influence and had an important role in society in the seventeenth century. The situation of women in the Catholic Church was able to assert significant influence. Widowhood was often presented as a state of life that promoted holiness. The devotions of women, however, were frequently scorned and criticized. A good number of Christian women emerged, blazing their own trail and initiating lasting accomplishments. Between Madame Acarie (1556-1618), the great spiritual leader responsible for bringing the Carmelites to France, and Madame Guyon (1648-1717), a rich constellation of great spiritual women appeared. In their relationships with countless laymen, men religious and other churchmen, they would help to make the seventeenth century in France a time of intense apostolic activity, marked by works of charity and education. And, the French School was a great Christological movement in France.

A good number of women, both lay and religious, were truly sources of inspiration for the French School. Agnes of Langeac, a contemplative Dominican; Marie Rousseau, a Parisian widow; Marie de Valence; Marie des Valleees, a mystic from Normandy; Madame d'Herculais; Madame Helyot; and women religious like the Carmelites, the Visitandines and the Ursulines were all influences on the French School in the seventeenth century. They played a role as innovators of movements or activities. In most of the great religious undertakings of the seventeenth century, we discover a woman's inspiration.

Another area where women must be acknowledged is that of the *devouts*, who lived and were active in the company of Berulle's disciples or followed other spiritual movements colored by the French School, either at the beginning of the seventeenth century or throughout the course of this era. There were also the *secular daughters* who lived in community, without cloister or solemn vows. They were women who lived their consecration at the heart of intense activity, in apostolic works of charity, in hospitals and schools.

Madame Acarie



Madame Acarie was a good example of what a Christian woman, living in the seventeenth century as a wife, a widow, and a religious, could bring to the Church of her day. She was indeed a woman who represented the French School of Spirituality. She experienced mystical graces, spiritual insight, and intuition, accompanied both by ecstasy and suffering. With the help of a Capuchin, she assembled a group of spiritual persons, both clergy and laity at the beginning of the seventeenth century in France. The group was directed by a Carthusian and their suggested readings were the Rheno-Flemish mystics and the writings of Teresa of Avila. This spiritual group was also a heart of apostolic service, and a center of preparation for renewal of the Christian life among the laity and in religious orders. Madame Acarie contributed to the reform and foundation of monasteries for women. But, her greatest claim to glory was her contribution to efforts to bring to France the Carmelite nuns of the reform of St. Teresa of Avila. Madame Acarie left no spiritual writings, yet she is still to be counted among the great spiritual leaders of seventeenth century France. She prepared the way for the French School. Her devotion to the person of Christ, nourished by the doctrine of St. Teresa of Avila, had only to be taken up and developed theologically.

Mother Madeleine de Saint-Joseph



Mother Madeleine de Saint-Joseph was the first French prioress of the first monastery of Discalced Carmelite nuns in France. Her spiritual doctrine was marked by the teachings of both Teresa of Avila and Berulle. It was through her that Berulle's doctrines of adoration, of mystical christocentrism through "adherence" to the states and mysteries of Jesus, and of particular devotion to the Mother of God were spread through the Carmelite monasteries in France. She exercised a major role as the innovator of mysticism in Carmel in seventeenth century France and later. In a letter addressed to Mother Madeleine, Berulle said, "Prefer the act of adoration to that of thanksgiving, because it is more extensive and it exposes us less to the danger of too much self-preoccupation even under the pretext of thanking God for the blessings he has given us, especially when they are unique to us. The respect toward the majesty of God that adoration creates in us moderates the excesses of sensibility many good souls experience easily in their devotional exercises. Not only is adoration imperfect without love, it does not even deserve to be called adoration, nor is it welcomed by God as such, if love is not its soul and its life. Love cannot be perfect unless it is accompanied by adoration."

Marie de l'Incarnation Guyart



Marie de l'Incarnation Guyart was an Ursuline nun from Tours, France and Quebec, Canada. She represents well one of the mystical-apostolic movements of the 17th century. She also stands fully at the heart of the spiritual and missionary renewal of the era marked by the dominance of the French School. She was a great mystic, called “the Teresa [of Avila] of the New World.” She was filled with a powerful missionary spirit. The witness of her life, her letters, and her autobiographical accounts are a living legacy that faithfully reflects seventeenth century France. She led a cloistered life within which she received a missionary vocation from God. This Spirit led her to Canada, the mission land toward which all eyes in France turned to at the time. There, she was known as an outstanding educator and is rightly considered one of the “mothers of the Church in Canada.” She had a pronounced christocentrism, a love for Scripture and an apostolic spirit. Her autobiography, *Relations*, is considered one of “the most perfect masterpieces of French mystical literature.” In her own words: “My body was in a monastery but my spirit, united to that of Jesus, could not remain shut up there. This apostolic spirit carried me in thought to the Indies, to Japan, to America, to the East and to the West, to parts of Canada, to the country of the Hurons, to every part of the inhabited world where there were human souls who belonged by right to Jesus Christ. I yearned for these poor souls. In spirit I roamed through the vast stretches of the Indies, of Japan and China, and kept company with those laboring to spread the Gospel there. I felt closely united to these workers because I felt that I was one with them in spirit.”

Louise de Marillac



Louise de Marillac was the co-foundress, with Vincent de Paul, of the Society of the Daughters of Charity. She was influenced by Berulle's thought and had a great devotion to the will of God. She was at home with words and ideas that belong strictly to the French School of Berulle: "honor" God and "Jesus in his mysteries," the "holy Humanity of Jesus" and other similar expressions. She had a great devotion to the feast of the Annunciation, the Incarnation of the Word, to the infancy of Christ, to the Eucharist and to the grace of Baptism. She considered the feast of Pentecost as one of the greatest of all feasts. As one of the *secular daughters* who lived without cloister or solemn vows, she was a model of that form of consecration known in the church today as the Societies of Apostolic Life. In her own words, "The grace of my God will accomplish in me whatever He wills."

Marguerite Bourgeoys



Marguerite Bourgeoys was known for having created in Montreal, Canada, a new form of religious life that had met with many difficulties in France. The first and primary model of this form of life was Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Two of the characteristics that mark Marguerite's thought are of particular importance: 1) her keen sense of intuition regarding a new form of consecrated life. Among the women disciples who followed Jesus, Bourgeoys recognized Mary Magdalene, the mother and model of cloistered religious; Martha, imitated by those in hospital services; and, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who continued her wayfaring life with the *secular daughters*. And, 2) the inspiration of Berulle and the French School in her spiritual thought. Marguerite's expressions and the influence of the French Sulpicians on her thought lead us to affirm that writings of the French School constituted the deepest roots of the Congregation of Notre Dame of Montreal, founded by Marguerite Bourgeoys. The apostolic spirit and devotion to Mary in her "life as a wayfarer, in conversation with the neighbor" are themes essential to the inspiration of Marguerite, as they had been for Berulle and the French School.

Many other Christian women in seventeenth century France who played a role in the French School were Catherine de Bor (known as Mother Mechtilde, foundress of the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament) and secular daughters or consecrated lay women, like Jeanne de Matel, who remained in her own way of life, but who founded the Religious of the Incarnate Word. The mysteries of the Incarnation, the Visitation and Pentecost were subjects of constant meditation during the seventeenth century. The Virgin Mary, during that era, it seemed, was the great inspiration for the devotion and the commitment of every woman.

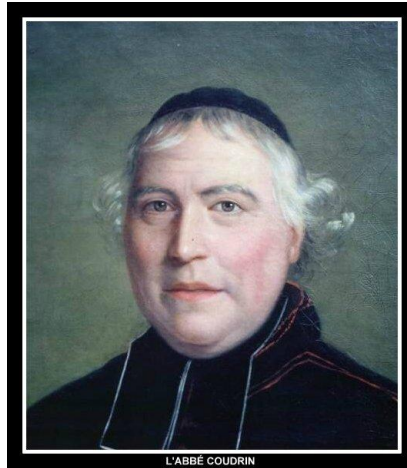
Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SS.CC.)



The spirituality of the French School is still very much alive in a number of priestly or religious families: Oratorians, Sulpicians, Eudists, Brothers of the Christian Schools, Daughters of Wisdom, Montfort priests and brothers and Vincentians. Also, in the Spiritans and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. One could also say that, to a large degree, the French School influenced the founders of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SS.CC.): Fr. Pierre Coudrin and Mother Henriette Aymer de Chevalerie.

Following Vatican II (1962-1965), religious families, including the Sacred Hearts (SS.CC.) and other religious families influenced by the French School, undertook and realized a tremendous work of *aggiornamento*, which was accompanied by a “return to the origins.” The study and renewal of the *charism* of the founders, requested by the conciliar documents, were faithfully implemented. Renewal in spirituality, apostolic service and community life was obvious. This renewal, adaptation and return to the origins found expression in new and carefully wrought texts of Constitutions or Rules of Life.

Marie-Joseph Pierre Coudrin



Marie-Joseph-Pierre Coudrin was born in 1768 at Coussay-les-Bois, near Poitiers, France. Towards the middle of the seventeenth century, the Coudrin family had settled in Coussay-les-Bois, a little village in the north of Vienne, about twenty kilometers to the east of Chatellerault. The family was first mentioned in the parish register of Coussay-les-Bois in 1659 on the occasion of the marriage of a Mathrin Coudrin, who was said to be of Irish origin. A century later, the Coudrins had a respectable position in the area. Pierre's father, Abraham, was not simply a farmer. He could read and write and he had the delicate task of "decimateur", which consisted of selling gifts in kind given to the local parish to convert them into cash. Pierre's godfather was his maternal uncle, the future Fr. Francois Rion. Guided by his mother, Pierre would often make his way to the church. Kneeling before the tabernacle, mother and child would pray: *"My God, I adore you, penetrated by your sovereign majesty; I am your child whom you have redeemed by your precious blood; I tremble in my misery; you are the Creator of heaven and earth, you are my end. I adore you with the angels and saints and I will declare your praise all my life."* No doubt, Pierre sometimes accompanied his father, who, once his tasks were finished, would spend long moments in the church praying the penitential psalms for his children. In the Coudrin's home, faith was not confined to pious practices; it was a way of life. Forgiving offenses was deeply rooted in the family tradition. Pierre learned lessons from his grandfather and would also take part in his father's generous and discreet actions to help neighbors in need.

Pierre's uncle, Francois Rion, became a parish priest in a neighboring village and would have been familiar with the French School of Spirituality. Pierre spent his vacations with his uncle

during the years of his, Pierre's, primary education, and his uncle prepared him for First Communion. In 1785, Pierre entered the University of Poitiers. As a student, Pierre joined his uncle, Fr. Francois, at Saint-Pierre-de-Maille, where Fr. Francois had been moved. Among those who lived in the rectory, Pierre got to know a friend of his uncle, Fr. Andre-Hubert Fournet, the founder, with Elisabeth Bichier des Ages, of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross. The atmosphere Pierre found in that rectory was particularly helpful in nurturing his vocation. The example and the advice of his uncle and of the future Saint Andre-Hubert Fournet would mark the young Pierre for life.

On Sunday, September 5, 1790, the parishioners of Coussay-les-Bois prepared, with a mixture of curiosity and pride, to listen to the first homily from a local boy, Sub-Deacon Pierre Coudrin. Pierre proclaimed in his first homily: *"All-powerful God, you who choose the weakest instruments to carry out the greatest miracles, deign to bless these first efforts of my zeal; deign to strengthen my faltering steps at the beginning of the career that you have destined me to follow. And you, my dear listeners, you whom in more ways than one I can call my brethren, I adjure you, not by the family links of blood which unite me to some of you, but by this sacred font where we have all been reborn on Jesus Christ, by the life-giving blood of the Redeemer which is reproduced daily on this altar. I beseech you to plead with the Father of lights that he pour forth on me his perfect gifts so that I may become a minister according to his Heart."* The theme of Coudrin's first homily, common at the time, reflects a religious sensibility more obsessed by the unworthiness of the sinner than by the *"merciful goodness of the Father"* and echoes the spirituality of the French School. However, the conventional style of Coudrin still allows his unfailing trust in the love of God to come through, as it did for adherents of the French School. This would be one of the essential features of Coudrin's spiritual life. He would have great need of a faith that was rooted in the love of a *"faithful God."*

After his priestly ordination and as he was beginning his priestly ministry, Coudrin had to hide because of the French Revolution. Through these trials, Coudrin had to rely on a faith rooted in the love of Christ, the Suffering Servant of God. From then on, the cross would be his life companion as he would hold up a sermon entitled *"The Blessedness of Suffering"* as his guide. This echoes much of the French School theology and spirituality of the 17th and 18th centuries. Coudrin would write: *"It is not enough to suffer for Jesus Christ, we must suffer with Jesus Christ, we must suffer like Jesus Christ. He alone is our leader, our guide, our model, and we can only walk in his footsteps by carrying his cross. We can only become his disciples by renouncing the habits of the old self. It is Jesus Christ who has given us the*

unique example of a tenderness which human feeling will never attain. We shall never reign with him if we do not suffer with him. We know certainly that we shall be saved without doubt if we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ suffering. Children of light, let us glory only in the cross of Christ. Oh cross of my Saviour, you will be henceforth my only resource. I will imprint you deep within my being.” It was Coudrin’s profession of faith. In 1827, Coudrin was still giving what he called his *”homily on suffering.”* In his own words, Coudrin stated that he had *”become a priest with the intention of suffering everything, of sacrificing myself for God and if necessary of dying in his service.”*

Coudrin met a wealthy lay woman, Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie who had had a vision to serve God while in prison for hiding priests during the French Revolution (1789-1799). In his hiding, Coudrin had had a vision himself of a group of men and women gathered around him to go out to the world and proclaim God’s love. Coudrin gathered around him a few companions to whom he communicated his hopes of spreading the love of God through the hearts of Jesus and Mary. After Pierre and Henriette made their first vows thus starting the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the new community soon started a college for the training of youths and a seminary. They also founded new schools for poor children and parish missions throughout Europe.

A special aim of the Congregation was to honor and imitate the four ages of our Lord: His infancy by the instruction of children and by the formation of youths for the priesthood; His hidden life by the exercise of Adoration; His public life by preaching and by missionary work; and His crucified life by works of Christian mortification. The fixed purpose of Coudrin’s life was to found an Order which would have a two-fold mission: *”to expiate the outrages of impiety, and to raise up again the true sacerdotal spirit of the sanctuary.”* The object of the Order was *Adoration*. Founded, as it was, in the very midst of the French Revolution, its founders intended the chief work to be to make reparation to God for the insults offered to Him and to religion during the French Revolutionary Commune.

Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie



Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie was born in the small castle of Aymer to an aristocratic family in St.-Georges-de-Noisne, near Poitiers, France. Her father died when she was eleven. Living in French society in the later years of the “Ancien Regime,” Henriette received an education in the religious values of the French tradition and the somewhat superficial formation considered appropriate for a woman. She joined the Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was founded in 1792 by Susanne Geoffroy and some companions. The Association was a group of women who gathered secretly to pray and to help priests who were living in hiding. Within the Association of the Sacred Heart, Henriette belonged to a small group called “The Solitaires.” This small group became more drawn to live a religious life. Henriette became superior of the group. It was there that she met the priest Pierre Coudrin and, together with him, founded the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Henriette showed gentleness and kindness to her Sisters and Brothers in the Congregation. She made more than twenty foundations of Sacred Hearts Sisters in different parts of France, attended to the Sisters’ formation, and supported the superiors that she appointed to local communities of Sisters. She directed the Sisters’ house at Picpus and also administered the neighboring house of the Brothers.

Henriette experienced intense interior suffering which led her to an encounter with herself and with God from which emerged her great capacity for interiorization and profound reflection. Charity was the first concern that awakened in her. Pierre Coudrin became her confessor. She wanted nothing more than an environment of prayer and the possibility of passing the day before the tabernacle. She was always there before the tabernacle, in the early days of the Congregation, concealed in the wall out of fear of the authorities, with needlework in her hand, her spirit absent and in silence.

In the late summer and early fall of 1800, the “Solitaires”, dressed in grey habits under their secular dresses, pronounced their first resolutions: “I consecrate myself in a special way to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. I take the resolution to live for one year in obedience, chastity and poverty, desiring to calm the anger of God by my fidelity in observing this means of perfection...” The “Solitaires” moved into a new house in Poitiers which they gave the name “Grande Maison.” The local Diocese of Poitiers granted them a secret approbation in which they said: “This association is so much in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ, with the precepts and counsels that it contains, that we are compelled to approve it with our whole heart and mind.” Pierre Coudrin was named the superior of the new community. In October of 1800, the Diocesan curia of Poitiers approved the formula of the vows and named Henriette Aymer a superior of the Sisters for life. Pierre Coudrin made his vows “as zealot of the love of the Sacred Hearts.” This fulfilled the vision of the “Good Father”, Pierre Coudrin, that he had in his place of hiding during the French Revolution for “a group of missionaries and a society of women to spread the gospel everywhere...”

As far as they could, the SS.CC. Sisters strived to imitate the crucified life of our Lord by practicing works of Christian mortification, and they endeavored to propagate with all their power, true devotion to the Sacred Hearts. Some of the Sisters (the Sisters involved in education and the Choir Sisters) recited daily the Office of the Blessed Virgin and the Little Offices of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and made an hour’s Adoration. Their interior spirit was one of humility, charity, evangelical simplicity and sacrifice.

..... and even more on the French School of Spirituality

There are important contributions from the French School that have been “incorporated” into the common patrimony of all Christians: 1) a spiritual life founded on the major realities of faith as found in St. John and St. Paul; 2) an interiorized liturgical life where the Christian liturgy was considered a continuation and an actualization of the praise and intercession of Jesus; 3) the sense of the Church as Mystery: the Body of Christ, Temple of the Spirit, and People of God, realized in a hierarchical society; 4) the call of all Christians – laity, religious and priest – to holiness, through personal union with Jesus at the heart of the church and in apostolic witness; and 5) the greatness and the responsibility of bishops and priests as they are called to the perfection of their ministry and of their state of life through communion with the prayer and charity of Christ.

One of the primary aspects of the message of the French School was *the witness of their own*

existence. “The French School stands at the heart of our needs or of our struggles.” *The sense of God*, that *religion* of loving adoration that characterized the French School, invites us to an authentic, interiorized recollection in the presence of the Trinity, and to a fully aware and active participation in liturgical prayer, a prayer that is truly theological and ecclesial. A *personal relationship with Jesus*, especially as understood and lived out by these mystics of the French School, can enable us to move beyond an *extrinsic* concept of the Christian life. This relationship is a communion with the sentiments, states and mysteries of Jesus Christ, centered in the Eucharist as the source of this profoundly *spiritual* communion; that Jesus Christ is the dynamic principle of our being: he lives, prays and loves in us. This speaks of a contemporary interest in Christological studies.

The *Holy Spirit* is the Spirit of the risen Jesus, according to the masters of the French School. It is the Spirit poured out at Pentecost, the Spirit received in Baptism. The insistence of Berulle and the French School on *the apostolic spirit* continues to be important to us today. It helps us better understand the concept of the Church in its mystery and its mission and the convictions of the French School regarding *apostolic men and women* as well as *priests*. The French School produced pray-ers, mystics and missionaries. It has given us the foundational elements of a theology and a spirituality of the Church and of mission. Inspired and impelled by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, missionaries bore Him everywhere they went. Apostolic ministry in the French School was both mystical and evangelizing. There was no separation between an authentic spiritual and mystical life and a total, unconditional apostolic commitment. In its theology, the French School did not separate Jesus from Mary. The two were intertwined. Jesus lived in her.

From *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, “The French School offers a powerful spiritual synthesis, blending profound mysticism with zeal and energy for reform. Rarely has such a deep sense of the communion with God in the Spirit of Jesus Christ been expressed and written not only for priests and religious but for the laity as well. It is a spirituality of profound transformation and exquisite adoration. It is lyrical, poetic, and passionate in its love for Jesus Christ and, through his Spirit, in its devotion to the Father.”

One could say the following about the spirituality of the French School: “We must move out of ourselves, we must ‘decentralize’ ourselves. We must move away from ourselves as the center of all things and center ourselves in Christ.”

One of the most frequent criticisms against the French School concerned the excessive pessimism expressed by its leaders regarding human nature. Some of its leaders insisted on the sinful condition and the nothingness of the human being as a creature. They highlighted renunciation in their spirituality and carrying one's cross in order to follow Jesus, that Jesus experienced a kind of annihilation. They insisted on the weakness and nothingness of human nature, "this cesspool of iniquity," as they called it. It is necessary to distinguish the problem of the French School's concept of human nature from its insistence on annihilation and death to self as a condition of life, even if the two realities are related. On the subject of this death-life dialectic: it is necessary to die, but what is essential is *life*. The life of Jesus cannot be established in us unless we are dead to ourselves. Jesus Christ, living in us, desires to appropriate everything that is ours, body and soul. To follow Jesus, we must immolate and annihilate ourselves. We must become a living victim. One must understand that, during the era of the French School, the period was dominated by Augustinianism and by a rigoristic spirit. However, the contempt of the world found at the time in Jansenism stood in direct opposition to the involvement "in the world" of Berulle and the French School for both clergy and laity. For the French School, interior trials led to apostolic zeal. And, the masters of the French School were true mystics.

The essential message of the French School of Spirituality was this: It is in Jesus alone that humanity is, at one and the same time, reconciled and recreated. *The goal of all things is total communion with Jesus*, but the path to this goal can be nothing other than total self-annihilation. The way of the Cross of Jesus is a path we are obliged to travel, for "without him, we can do *nothing*."

**The Spirituality of the Good Father and Good Mother, Founders of the Congregation of
the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SS.CC.), Through Their Personal Letters to
Members of the SS.CC.**

Good Father

I can only offer you all to the Good God asking him to grant you his holy peace and to keep you in his peace. On your part pray much so that we may all go to heaven.

If you have sorrows, offer them to God. You know very well that we are religious and that humility is the foundation of our holy state.

May Holy Love replenish you and consume you one and all!

Do not make any important decisions without having sought advice before the Blessed Sacrament.

Good Mother

My sincere wish is that you carry your cross courageously.

I do not wish you happiness, this word does not befit us. But I wish you peace, patience, kindness, meekness, charity.

I wish you a love of suffering, peace of soul and joy of the Holy Spirit.

So that you may not lack crosses, I send you a good sister.

Let us all be abandoned to God. In God alone shall we find peace to suffer and joy which is its consequence.

This Order will be established in spite of persecutions which try us all. This is God's plan.

We must get used to finding God much closer to ourselves.

Have peace with God and with yourselves, my dear friends. We are on a truly stormy sea; the winds are very often contrary.

All for God! All according to God! All should begin and, at least end there.

Think of all, be to all; then you will belong entirely to God.

We are very happy to share the cross of our Divine Master.

Do realize that we depend upon one another.

We ought to accustom ourselves to sense keenly that there is no true joy except in the practical exercise of our duties and of the most tender charity among us all.

Fear nothing; whatever the Good God keeps is well kept.

In all your actions have the spirit of the Good God and do nothing without his authorization.

All for God, nothing but for Him! No other support, no human assistance! Have courage, abandon yourself to God who will not abandon you.

All goes badly! Well, let us pray and hope all from God.

God wants us to have crosses, but all will be calm and peaceful. I have confidence and shall continue to ask God for it with all my heart.

Let us hope all from God, my children.

Accept everything as coming from God and I am sure that he will lighten the burden.

Have courage; be always in that state of Immolation, since God wills it!

If you have griefs and sorrows, remember well that our Good Master has promised to bear them with us. *Yes, let us have confidence, let us be united, let us suffer together until the moment when the only true happiness awaits us. Do not be afraid.*

You will all fill my heart with indescribable joy if you carry the yoke and the cross of the Lord in peace. *It is no longer the Blessed Virgin alone who wills our Order, but it seems to have become a need also for the Heart of Jesus, whose mercy towards us is so great.*

My good, charitable Master! I place all within your hands. *I share all your little sorrows, and I would like to be able to relieve you of them. At this price, I believe I can say that I would not desire any relief.*

Remember that we must not hope to be happy without willing what God wills.

May the good and charitable Jesus live in us all. May we live, and may we die with Him in order to live forever and ever. Amen. *God who sees all, who wills all, will arrange all! Yes, let us have confidence. Let us be but one. Let us suffer together until the moment when the only true happiness awaits us.*

I recommend to all of you courage and docility to the holy inspirations of grace.

Be happy to have given yourself to God. *My heart desires very much that you accomplish the will of God who wants you all to himself.*

Have the fear of the Lord always before you!

Watch, my children, and pray.

God who sees your sorrows and annoyances will come to your aid. He will help, console and sustain you.

*Our Lord seems to open his Heart to us and say:
“Come ye all to me” or “you are mine.”*

*Adoration is a continual honorable
amend.*

*Not courage above your strength, but patience
and resignation.*

*Let us then adore all the decrees of
Divine Providence. Let us take up
Courage and bless God.*

*Be assured that with perseverance it is
impossible for you not to do good.*

*You practice the vow of poverty strictly, but
then, since God so wills it, be poor with Jesus,
poor! May his Divine Heart be our support and
model.*

Pray for our poor missionaries.

*There is never a time when I do not wish to be
filled with love for the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and
Mary.*

*We must await all from time and above
all from him who disposes the events of
life as he pleases.*

*My wish is that you be happy, that is to say, that
you carry your cross courageously.*

*God is our all; and see how he tries us
like the saints. Let us then all have
courage; we shall have consolations.*

*True happiness is found in suffering accepted
with resignation.*

*God alone should fill all the faculties of your
soul, all the feelings of your heart, and all the
thoughts of your mind.*

Come, submerge yourself with love and pain.

This evening, Our Lord wanted me at his feet to suffer and adore. It seemed to me that I had all the instruments of the Passion in my heart, all except the cross.

We must all remain in God.

We must have recourse to Mary when God hides himself, in our sorrows, in our desolations, in our infidelities. She will pray for us if we invoke her instead of becoming disheartened.

A good servant of the Divine Heart should not expect to live without suffering.

I believe the Good God wills to relieve you of all your past sorrows.

Sustain humility, my dear daughter, and heaven will be your reward.

You know that I must suffer always. If my laxity at times makes demands deep within me, there remains, I believe, a little resignation. For nothing in the world would I wish to stop the hand which crucifies me.

I would prefer to suffer everything than to be for one instant in enmity with my dear Savior Jesus Christ.

Courage and again courage unto the end! All for God! Nothing but for him!

May the holy love of God sustain and strengthen you even on the cross. We cannot be happy except in loving it and attaching ourselves to it until the end of our life. Let us always carry the holy yoke of the Lord with love.

In the Divine Heart I greet you. In him, for him, and through him I wish you perfect resignation to his holy will.

God wills all that happens to us in order to keep us on the cross.

My poor heart is torn in all ways, but I feel that it is not torn enough.

Let us think of the crucified life that you and I must live.

May the courage of your Good Master on the cross be always with us all.

Love of the cross is a great good.

We have still other sufferings to endure before we die.... Let us accept them as coming from God.

Let us do all in a spirit of death to self; this is the way to enjoy true life.

I wish that there were more of that uprightness and self-abandonment which is indispensable for all who wish to be spouses of Jesus Christ and friends of his Heart.

Do not undertake anything that will make you lose the spirit of poverty.

The way to arrive at eternal happiness is to have nothing but sorrows and tribulations in this world. Let us love those whom he uses to make us suffer.

Let us abandon ourselves to suffering. Let us accept it.

Let us rejoice at the happiness we experience when we act always for the greater glory of God.

Let us not lose the fruit of so many tribulations by accepting them only half heartedly. Let us drink the chalice to the dregs.

May patience in contradictions, resignation in sufferings, love of God beneath the cross, be the daily food of your souls.

My desire is that you will be able to say more and more that his yoke is sweet and his burden light.

God will fill your heart with happiness if you never deny him any of the sacrifices required by your condition of victims and adorers of the Divine Heart of Jesus.

My dear children, your sorrows grieve me more than mine do! I understand clearly the will of God in all that befalls you. I desire for you the spirit of sacrifice and the consolations of heaven.

Nothing draws one closer to God than afflictions endured for his glory.

Suffering has left me an indescribable happiness.... Suffering increases happiness, and happiness increases suffering.

God always sends timely help to those who obey heartily and with humble submission.

The Lord wants us in his service in spite of all! Do not, then, be too unhappy for having embraced his cross.... Bear all sufferings with charity.

You are aware of the fact that we should submit ourselves to the holy will of God.

I would like you to experience all the consolations that resignation and hope can afford.

Be happy in your sufferings, and I shall forever bless God for having deigned to accept such an unworthy victim.

God wills that we have many crosses.

I do not know how to encourage you enough to give yourself entirely to God.

We are in this vale of tears.

It is in the furnace of love of the Heart of Jesus that I beg you to gather strength to carry your cross each moment of your life.

Cast yourself now and forever into the bleeding yet all-loving wound of the compassionate Heart of Jesus. There you will be shielded against all dangers.

Be always in a state of immolation since God wishes it so.

Each and every one of us should be always well disposed to suffer much.

I suffer on account of all that you lack.

Do everything in a spirit of death-to-self; this is the way to enjoy true life.

Let us love the cross, my dear, or at least, let us carry it courageously.

Be somewhat happy in your sufferings. Gladly am I the first to stretch myself upon the cross.

Suffering without peace is of no avail.

Let us pray much. Our ills are not over.

We need persons who make their sacrifice wholeheartedly or who can be disposed to do so.

We are children of the Divine Heart which has carried all crosses by attaching his sensible consolations to them for those who are devoted and sacrifice themselves.

Think always, my dear friends, that God who is all charity lives in us in order to save us. We must live to suffer and suffer while loving suffering.

Let us abandon ourselves to Providence.

Wisdom is so essential.

*We should have special devotion to Saint
Magdalen and like her remain at the feet of
Our Lord.*

*Let us abandon ourselves to Providence and
make of necessity a virtue.*

*Let no one cling too much to his own
views.*

*All is nothing except to love God. Let us
live for him alone, and let us die from
longing to please him. Therein lies true
happiness.*

*I recommend especially love of the cross;
obedience will then no longer cost you
anything.*

*Dear daughter, sustain humility, fervor,
and resignation; heaven will then be your
reward.*

*Our sufferings, when offered to God,
serve to efface those of Purgatory.*

*Let us pray without ceasing so that God may
have pity on us.*

*Our life should be hard and austere because it is
the interior life of Jesus that is the spirit of our
Order.*

*Abandon yourself entirely to God! There only will
you find peace, strength to suffer and the joy
which is its consequence.*

We must suffer in order to deserve being consoled.

Entrust yourself to God.

Let us pray and pray unceasingly.

All for God! All in God! All to God! Behold our true consoler.

The Lord is a thousand times too good to us.

Let us abandon ourselves to his Divine Providence.

This life is a long agony, but happiness is assured to those who live well beneath the cross.

Let all my friends remain near the crucifix since it is there alone that the sorrows of life are bearable and truly meritorious.

I greet you in the furnace of holy love of the cross. May it reign with us and over us if the Good Master so desires and wills.

May the same spirit, the same submission, the same obedience, attach us always to the center which is the Heart of our good Master Jesus Christ.

Let us all carry the cross cheerfully.

We must immolate all, sacrifice all for the sake of peace, and always, yes always carry our cross!

Resignation does not take away the feeling of pain.

Have courage and believe that God will assist you! I wish you courage, resignation, peace and consolation!

Carry your cross and do not drag it; believe me when I say that I would like to be able to soothe your sorrows.

How happy we are when we act only according to God and for God.

We must not expect to be happy unless we will what God wills.

Place all your sorrows at the Foot of the Cross and have confidence that you will succeed in all that you undertake for the glory of God.

My dear children, I could never encourage you too much to be wholeheartedly all to God.

The religious life is a life of sacrifice; to make up one's mind to live in it, one must say: all for God! Nothing but for him!

My dear child, we are very fortunate to have a share in the cross of our divine Master. At His feet and in the divine Heart of Jesus I am always, your most affectionate Father.

The will of God in everything.

The only way to soothe our sorrows is to accept them for God.

Accept and offer to our Good Master the many sacrifices inseparable from your state, and he will know how to match all trials with consolations.

Love of the Cross is a great good. My wish is that your crosses be of straw but that you preserve the strength to carry those of bronze.

I suffer all that you suffer.

Be well united in the wisdom of the Sacred Hearts.

The spirit of poverty requires that we always lack something. I beg our Brothers to remember that they have been under the pall, where all pleasures are surrendered.

The cross is the road which the saints have trod whenever they have undertaken any work for the glory of God.

How fearful we should be lest God become angry.

This life is an agony, but happiness is assured to those who live well beneath the cross.

Let us be entirely His and all will become very easy for us!

In Him I am all yours!

Carry your cross and do not drag it along.

In Him, for Him and by Him I wish you perfect resignation to His will.

We are living in times when Satan is working very hard but let us not be disturbed.

My heart is always united to that of a perfect adorer who never loses sight of her obligations of meekness, humility, obedience and poverty.

Let patience in contradictions, resignation in sufferings, love of God on the cross, be the daily nourishment of your souls.

May the cross reign with us and over us, if the Good master so desires and wills.

The miseries of life are viaticum for heaven.

Love your holy state, even though you may meet with contradictions. One finds them everywhere, and the Divine Heart of Jesus reserves, always and everywhere, a special share of the bitterness of the chalice for His friends.

Let us submit ourselves unreservedly and let us drink with long draughts the sweet nectar which flows from the wounds of this merciful and kind Savior.

My heart desires that you accomplish the will of God who wants you to be all to Himself.

Let us have patience. We shall suffer until eternity...courage and patience. We have many sorrows, particular worries, but we must place them all at the foot of the Cross. Let us then say a fervent Fiat.

Exact vigilance, sustained regularity, constant fidelity, continual death! Behold what a spouse of Jesus Christ undertakes when she gives herself to Him.

Ah! Let us not leave behind us the cross which is our happy life companion.

The Heart of Saint Joseph has been purified; the Heart of Mary has been divinized; and the Heart of Jesus has become humanized.

A good religious should bless God in adversity as well as in prosperity.

In the midst of your sufferings try to have courage, kindness, patience and pleasantness toward all. Carry each other's cross and do not let yourself be disheartened by your own.

Love more and more the bonds that unite you to Jesus Christ.

Let us all rally to the Cross and nothing will be able to disturb us.

Have courage and do not let yourself be cast down by the vicissitudes of this life of sorrows and tears.

Oh, how happy is the truly humble soul, who places all her confidence in God, who feels that God alone by His great mercy is responsible for the little good which she does.

Have the spirit of God in all you do and nothing without His permission.

We must suffer in this world, and the more we are abandoned to Providence, the more we are consoled.

With you, I retire into the adorable Heart of Jesus to ask for all the graces necessary for the accomplishment of His will.

All for God!

All is nothing except to love God! Let us then live for Him alone and let us die with the desire to please Him. This indeed is true happiness.

Remain close to the crucifix since it is there only that the sorrows of life become bearable and meritorious.

All for God! All else matters little. Courage, patience and hope.

The Good God sends us some crosses; it is a proof that He loves us. Let us try to correspond by our fidelity.

We have many sorrows, but a great reward awaits us.

Suffering and hope are the lot of Christians in this world.

We cannot be great doers unless it be by humility.

I would like very much to be able to help you carry the crosses that the Good God sends you. I share them. Discouragement does not come from God. Go to the foot of the cross and all will disappear.

Let us be patient and bear with courage the sufferings that God sends us.

Most of the sorrows that we experience in life have their source either in a lack of mutual forbearance or in a vain desire for happiness which is not found upon earth or still more in a powerless effort to withdraw from a thousand small annoyances.

In the religious state, all is death to nature, a desire for sufferings or rather a need of sufferings.

Have courage in your sufferings. The all-merciful God desires to open His Heart to you in order to console you.

God wants us to be saints. This demands all kinds of interior sufferings.

God tries us always. Let us never cease being submissive to Him.

Be well united in the wisdom of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Let us never forget that Christian humility is the guardian of the soul.

Live, live, live all of you, even if it means to suffer for a long time. Let it be always for Jesus Christ.

We must not ask for crosses in times of fervor because God often takes us at our word.

Our life should not be a sudden death, but rather a long martyrdom.

Remember that we are in this vale of tears to suffer and die therein, but also that a great reward awaits us.

God be blessed in all things! Let us love the cross, or at least, let us carry it courageously.

I am more convinced than ever that all is pain and suffering in this life.

With our sorrows, the Lord grants new consolations.

Let us often recall that we are vowed to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and to this precious profession is attached a sweet and holy bitterness inseparable from our vocation.

We must suffer in this world. The more we abandon of suffering, the more we are consoled.

My dear daughter, you will never be without trials, but in God and for God, we shall always be strong.

Let us all rally to the cross and nothing will be able to disturb us.

Yes, I am convinced that when one is troubled and in pain he should make acts of faith for the Heart of God pardons all.

In the religious state, life must be but a perpetual holocaust of one's whole being to God, and God alone.

Let your habitual place of refuge be in the heart of the most sweet holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

Let us bless Divine Providence who motivated us according to His will and who finds us always resigned to His decrees.

Have much courage! God loves us since He afflicts us so much!

To be holy, prayer is not sufficient. One must mortify and deprive himself, and, above all, chastise his body by not flattering it.

At every moment my poor heart receives new wounds. It is no longer I who carry the cross; it is rather the cross that carries me.

The Good God has given you the desire to become a saint. Alas, to reach that you must live a life of sacrifice.

We can ask for love of sufferings in this sense that we ask for that love which does not diminish pain but which makes us suffer in peace.

Have courage, confidence, patience, letting everyone else do and speak, and abandoning yourself entirely in Jesus Christ.

May the loving wound of the Heart of Jesus console you.

Before tending to union with God in meditation we must occupy ourselves for a long time with the pain caused by our sins and the means to correct ourselves.

Love of the Cross can and must sustain us for, let us not be deceived, we shall have much to suffer.

We beg you to remember our missionaries during your hours of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament so that the God of all charity will sustain them, preserve them from all danger and procure for them an abundant harvest.

We must seek refuge in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, clinging to it in such a way as never to leave it.

My dear child, later on you will be happy for having had contradictions and sorrows. Your submission and perseverance will be rewarded.

All for God; nothing but for Him.

All for God; nothing but for Him – no support, no human assistance. Bear this condition however painful it may be since the Good God wishes it.

Fervor and Christian resignation, sustained humility; heaven will be your reward.

I believe that God, in sending many sorrows, will know how to make us carry on His work. May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ sustain you!

Have courage; what afflicts you is useful since it forces you at least to be busy with yourself. When all is done for God, one finds much courage and greater strength.

Live, all of you live! Even if only to suffer longer and always for Jesus Christ.

We must carry the cross cheerfully, otherwise it will overwhelm us.

I bear all your sorrows and I would like to be the only one to feel their bitterness.

This life is a long agony, but happiness is assured to those who live well beneath the cross.

Let us always carry the Savior's blessed yoke lovingly and may the desire for the possession of celestial joys help us to vanquish the difficulties of this vale of tears.

We are all children of the suffering Heart of our Good Master. It is very just, therefore, that we should all have a small share of suffering.

Blessed is the cross that you carry, my dear daughter. But I suffer because you do not carry it with enough courage!

I desire your happiness and all the consolations which are found only at the foot of the cross.

I hope that your Purgatory will be made in this world.

I will all that You will!... Yes, my God, You know that I love you with all my heart and that I am ready to die if you so wish ... Yes! I want to love you always! My God! I give you my heart!

We must carry the cross cheerfully, otherwise it will crush us.

Let us renew our courage and abandon ourselves to suffering. Let us accept it in advance, and we shall be less crushed.

Exterior life is nothing; it is inner life, the life of the soul with God that constitutes the merit and happiness of religious life.

It seems that I shall not be able to prevent any misfortune unless I take it upon myself and experience all its pain.

Can children of the Cross expect anything but crosses and the sweetness of grace which will make them love their bitterness?

Place yourself in the hands of the Blessed Virgin and you will recover peace with God which is the only true happiness; peace with yourself; peace with your neighbor who loves and cherishes you.

God alone can soothe our sorrows; God alone without a doubt can console you! ... There are so many who are martyrs for the world and hardly any can be found for God.

It is very consoling to see that God loves us in spite of our infirmities.

Let us bless Divine Providence which causes us to move at its will and which finds us always resigned to its decrees.

Ah! More than ever, let us enter into the painful martyrdom which is the consolation of souls who follow the Spouse!

Stretch yourself generously on the cross and you will find it less heavy! Let us walk courageously in the footsteps of a God crucified!

I hope in the protection of our dear Queen of Peace, but, O God, we must be crucified in heart and mind.

Place all your sorrows at the foot of the cross. Have confidence that you will succeed in whatever you undertake for the glory of God.

God, who wishes to purify us daily, makes our crowns by distributing crosses.

God is our all!

Although one receives extraordinary graces one remains nevertheless an ordinary and weak individual.

More than ever, we ought to belong to God! More than ever, we ought to live only for Him!

We must suffer in order to deserve being consoled.

I became a priest with the intention of suffering everything, of sacrificing myself for the Good Lord and of dying if necessary in His service.

Let us do all for God and according to God.

Indeed God is good to us all! Let us, then, never offend Him willfully.

Let us reanimate our courage, and let us not lose the fruit of so many tribulations by accepting them half-heartedly.

God helps us when we do all for his glory.

I must accept all crosses, all sufferings, all contradictions which present themselves and say: "Still more, O Lord!" so that even in the minutest details of life I must not refuse things, even those indifferent in themselves, because they are opposed to my natural inclinations.

Provided that all be for the greater glory of God, what does the rest matter?"

Let us pray, and let us pray much.

More than ever we should belong to God! More than ever, we should live only for Him.

God be praised. We have no sorrow except that which God wills!

We have many sorrows, particular worries, but let us place them all at the foot of the Cross. Let us then say a sincere fiat.

I see plainly that God wills all that happens to us so as to keep us on the cross.

It is in the midst of sorrows and tribulations that we must reanimate our courage; mine, in spite of torture, is not yet conquered, but I suffer and suffer badly; herein lies my sorrow.

God never sends more crosses than we can bear, but He always sends enough to make us feel our weakness, and this state is terrible.

Do everything in a spirit of death-to-self; this is the way to enjoy true life.

God above all else! Put much modesty and abandonment into everything.

God alone will sustain you! All for God and nothing but to please Him.

Alas, how deficient is the human heart! In it we find nothing, absolutely nothing entirely for God!

I have dared, in spite of my unworthiness to offer myself as a victim for all.

All for God and he will help us!

God wants an order destined to adore his Heart, to repair the outrages he receives, to enter into the interior sorrows of this Heart, to retrace the four periods of his life. He wishes the Rule to be somewhat austere, in order that his crucified life may be imitated.

My children, cling to the cross!

In your anxieties, your sorrows, your perplexities, pray to God. He alone can help you.

May the daughters of the Divine Heart realize that they have entered religion only to die to themselves.

God wishes us to enter within ourselves several times a day, even if for only a moment, to adore Him because he dwells therein and he takes his delight there. By means of this fidelity in communing intimately with God, you will acquire the facility of remaining at his feet. There will no longer be room for worries. Distractions will annoy you at times but will never alarm you.

The Sisters' Branch is destined to adore and repair as much as possible by a life of immolation and sacrifice the outrages He has received.

There is not a single action of a priest done in virtue of his state which does not obtain grace for himself or for whomever the action is done.

How the French School of Spirituality still lives on in the Spirituality and Charism of the SS.CC.

In the French School of the 17th and 18th centuries, we see the seeds of the spirituality and charism of the SS.CC. So many similarities jump out at us that it would seem that the SS.CC. spirituality and charism was just a continuation of the French School's. From the above accounts, it is quite evident that much of the spiritual thought of Pierre Coudrin and Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie came from the leaders of the French School in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Some of the common elements are:

- The spirit of religion - religious fervor
- Theocentrism – God-centered
- Mystical Christocentrism – Christ-centered mysticism
- The sovereignty of the Mother of God
- Exaltation of the priesthood
- parish missionaries
- Parish missions & missionaries (preaching & missions)
- Communities formed (outside Paris)
- Religious reform in France:
 - o Pastoral
 - o Missionary
 - o Spiritual
 - o Mystical
 - o Apostolic
 - o Renewal of parish life
 - o Catechetics
 - o Liturgical prayer
 - o Secondary & higher education
 - o Primary schools for poor children
 - o Involvement in seminaries
 - o Missionary movement to North America, the Near East & the Far East

- Men & women came together to pray and deepen their Christian life
- Laypersons & priests were brought together in prayer groups
- Clergy assemblies & associations were in vogue.
- Prayer & evangelization
- A mystical union with God
- Bonds of friendship between men & women religious
- Networks of prayer & mutual support
- Sense of God's grandeur
- Spirit of Adoration
- The formation of clergy
- Absolute detachment from self for union with God
- The Person of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ (the Incarnation)
- Loving contemplation
- The love of God
- Adoring Jesus in his states & mysteries
- Radical abnegation of one's very self
- Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament
- Devotion to the Virgin Mary
- Stages of Jesus' life
- The Cross
- Sacrifice
- Renunciation
- Satisfaction
- Reparation
- Spiritual direction
- Interior life/Apostolic life
- Holy Spirit
- Retreats
- The Heart
- Devotion
- Liturgical Offices & Prayers
- God's Providence
- The Will of God
- Service
- Consecration

- Mortification
- LOVE
- Abandonment
- Holiness
- Through Mary to Jesus
- Eucharist
- Martyrdom
- Contemplation
- Communion
- Importance of the Bible/Scripture
- Suffering
- Community
- A loving God
- Role of women
- Laity
- Zeal

Comparing the spirituality of the French School with the spirituality of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SS.CC.) using the above elements, one can plainly see the similarities between the two.

***TO THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY!
HONOR AND GLORY!***

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