

Literal Translation
of the Decree of Canonization of
St. Madeleine Sophie Barat

French text

May 24, 1925

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Decree of our most holy Father, by Divine Providence, Pope Pius XI, concerning the solemn canonization of Blessed Madeleine Sophie Barat, Foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, {celebrated in the patriarchal basilica of the Vatican, on the 24th of May, of the Holy Year 1925.

Pius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, for the everlasting remembrance of this act.

Charity is the foundation of Christian religion. The truth of this assertion shines forth from the very redemption of mankind. For in it, we have a wonderful testimony of the infinite love of God for man. "For God has so loved the world that he gave His only Son." And the Redeemer Himself testified "He had come into the world in order to enkindle the love of men towards God and their neighbours." "I came to send fire on earth and what do I wish except it be enkindled." But from this love, as though from a most pure fount, springs the worship of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus which, already awakened by Saint Margaret Mary Alacogue, has been more widely spread throughout the world, by Blessed M. Sophie Barat, who spent her whole life (in order) to inflame by her words and deeds, the souls of the faithful Christians, with that love towards the Divine Heart, by which she herself was consumed.

When the fires of civil strife were madly burning through France, in the year seventeen hundred and seventy nine, on the thirteenth day of the month of December, at Joviniacus, (in the vulgar tongue "Joigny") a small town of the diocese of Sens in Burgundy, Blessed M. S. Barat was born.

from parents (humble indeed as to their station in the world, but illustrious) remarkable by their piety, whose names were Jacques and Madeleine Faufé, and on the same day, she was regenerated in the sacred waters of baptism, in the parochial church of Saint Ihibault. With good reason, all called in question, whether this little girl, just born, would quickly ^{finish} complete her life, since her mother, terrified by the fire of a neighboring house, had brought her to light by a premature birth. The result of this was that the young girl received from nature a weakly constitution, nevertheless her birth seemed to foretell the future fire of love, by which she afterwards (both) was consumed towards the Heart of Jesus and, eagerly devoting herself to the salvation of souls, gained to God, as many as possible of wandering (sinners). From the tenderest infancy of Madeleine, this is manifest: from (the envelope of) her slender body, such strength of will had sprung, such vehemence of affections, that she seemed, even then, to ^(show) ^(display) something extraordinary. When (she was) hardly six months old, as she used to relate to her Sisters, later on, possessing the use of reason, she was able to understand rightly all that was done and said around her, and the story of the fire, which was the cause of her untimely birth, stuck to the memory of the young girl in such a manner that, uttering her first words, she answered ^{with childlike grace and in a somewhat serious manner} to some one asking her who were her parents, that she had come forth from fire. Certainly, ^{enlightened} illumined by supernatural light, and foretelling her future destiny and ^{mission} ^{charge} ^{office}, she spoke of that fire, with which already, like Christ the Redeemer, she wished to recall men to mutual love and harmony.

Fully responding to the care of her parents, especially of her mother, who daily fed the souls of her three children with ardent love of God, righteousness of heart and goodness, the young girl took in very quickly these ^{lessons} {examples of virtues, and expressed them with special firmness of character, and also with natural dispositions to modesty, frequently pouring forth prayers to God from her soul in order to cultivate piety.

Not yet five years old, she determined to make a vow of virginity to God and to embrace religious life although she herself had never seen either monasteries or nuns, as she used afterwards to repeat to her companions in religion. And she confessed on the subject that she had come to this decision, although she had heard from a certain priest that two nuns carried away by anger, had, one day, exchanged loud threats: Madeleine Sophie had highly condemned this unworthy way of acting by these words: "I shall never embrace religious life in a cloister of this kind" --- Endowed with the rarest gifts of mind and especially with a keen ~~intellect~~ and a retentive memory, Madeleine had learned christian doctrine without any ^{trouble} difficulty and as she instantly begged to be admitted to the Holy Table, she was ^{submitted} {submitted to a severe examen on the christian catechism by the Vicar of the parish and after some difficulties proceeding from a defect of age, finally Sophie victorious and then ten years old, was ^{admitted} {received to the Sacrament of the Altar.

In the sanctuary of this little soul, what happened on the solemn day of her first communion with God, is hidden from us, and yet such effusion of mutual love must have taken place, that indeed ^{we} may certainly ^{consider} {think that between the creature and the Creator, even then this bond of charity was formed which, during everlasting life in heaven is most ^{spiritually} tightly bound.

Comforted by the eucharistic bread, under the guidance and the teaching of Louis, her most loving brother, she acquired habits of more solid piety. The latter, excelling ⁱⁿ by his integrity of life and his sure doctrine, upon the discovery that Madeleine, his ^{dearest} most sweet sister, was enriched with the most abundant gifts of grace and the most varied endowments of nature, did not spare any trouble to take her away from the puerile amusements ^{to which} of which she was extremely ^{addicted} if ~~addicted~~, on account of the liveliness of her temperament, and to apply her to the acquisition of virtues and the study of letters (literature).

Accordingly, with the consent of their parents, he imposed a rule of life ^{on} his sister, by which the young girl was most strictly bound to give the greater part of the day to the study of letters and sciences. This manner of living, originating only in the love of the brother, soon appeared too severe to her mother who entreated her son Louis, to moderate his rigor. Yet Sophie was never withdrawn from this austerity, nay more, following (in the footsteps of her brother, with always greater love, she daily endeavored to show him in a manifold manner, the feelings of her grateful soul.

In a short space of time, she became proficient in the Greek and Latin literatures, joining to these the knowledge of the Spanish and Italian languages, and she used the Latin tongue with such fluency and ease, that she excited the greatest admiration in these priests with whom, on account of her charge, she later ~~had~~ repeatedly to treat in Latin ^{on} of very many matters.

Madeleine had reached the fourteenth year of her age, and,

like the Infant Jesus, hidden in her home, she advanced in age, science and grace; when, in an unexpected manner, a severe tempest covered with darkness the serene sky of her life. In the year seventeen hundred and ninety three, everywhere throughout France, fury and slaughters were raging, and all things lay in ruins. Suddenly, it was imposed upon the priests to testify their loyalty by an oath to the civil constitution of the Clergy; by this, the Church of France, through an unjust decision, was taken from the immediate authority of the Holy See.

Louis, the most loving brother of Madeleine, as he was about to be ordained priest, yielding to the entreaties of his parents, ignorant of the gravity of the matter, took the oath in presence of the civil authorities, but when he soon realized he had sunk in a deep abyss, in order to avoid the ^{immediate} excommunication pronounced by the Pope Pius VI our Predecessor, ^{of happy memory}, he retracted his act. But, as the bloody terrorism against the faithful was daily raging, Louis went to Paris, in order to lead there an obscure life and to ^{set at naught} destroy the plans of the impious men. This hope was deceived and he was thrown in bonds from which it was not given to any one to be released, except for (going up to) the scaffold.

Who could express in words the bitter torment of his mother and of Sophie on account of the ^{great} misfortune of their most loving son and brother? For who cared to restore peace and (to) soothe {distracted ^{distracted} minds? It was only the assiduous effusion of their prayers to God who gives consolation to his children in their afflictions. And both, implored the help of God most earnestly, but besides this, Madeleine, redoubled her filial attentions, in order that her mother, refusing every food on account

of her grief and almost ^{about to lose} on the point of losing ^{her} (the light of) reason, would get over (from) such a state of prostration. And there was no delay: for God came to the help of his pious minister: the fierce Robespierre who, for a long time, had oppressed France with cruel tyranny, was thrown down from his power; from this it resulted that an end was put to the captivity of the condemned (to death).

In the month of February of the year seventeen hundred and ninety five, her brother Louis, upon his return to his native town, contemplated to remove Madeleine from the home of her parents and to prepare her to fulfill the divine plans, whatever these would be later on. The parents resisted: Louis alone, returned to Paris and there ~~he~~ was secretly ordained; he began to write a great many letters to his sister, by which he encouraged her to (the practice of) virtues and to the acquisition of self abnegation. After returning a second time to Jigny, he obtained that Madeleine would leave her family with a generous mind and would earnestly continue her studies in the city of Paris.

In the twentieth year of her age, the adolescent girl applied her mind to the study of philosophy and sacred subjects, under the guidance and teaching of Louis, from whom, two or three girls, eager to consecrate themselves to God by vows, daily heard instructions, nourishing the mind with the food of doctrine and strengthening the soul with solid piety.

How much the pious young girl had ^{profited by} advanced in this training school of study, work and prayer, is revealed ^{from} by its result. For many a time, she declared to her most zealous brother, whom she had chosen for her confessor, that she eagerly desired to give herself

entirely to God by vow in order to follow the road which leads to the summits of perfection; wherefore despising more and more the transient and false things of this world, she entered upon an austere kind of life, almost daily tormenting with disciplines, poins, fasts and watches her body already suffering ^{from} (of) natural weakness.

Longing with the greatest love for interior life, the delights of which she had tasted, she thought of ~~betting~~ ^{betting} herself among the daughters of Carmel, animated by a spirit of penance, in order to be able to attach herself to Jesus crucified by the stricter bonds of an everlasting sacrifice. But it was necessary for this evangelical mustard seed to grow, under the direction of God, into a great tree, in order that the love for the most Sacred Heart of Jesus might be increased, without which the foundations of religion and human civilization are immediately destroyed. And great praise is to be bestowed on Madeleine because she spread more widely, and with all the energy of her age (as will be shown ^{below} later on) the worship due to this Sacred Heart and divinely revealed to St. Margaret Alacoque.

Whilst Madeleine remained yet in the little home at Paris, as in a temple, adorning her life with virtues, a most esteemed man, whose name was Joseph Varin, of the illustrious Society of Jesus, discharging the duties of a master of piety and following the advice of Rev. Father de Courmely, (a priest renowned for his holiness, taken from among the living at the ^{early} more age of thirty,) had planned a new Congregation of women, which would be entirely devoted to the education of young girls, especially belonging to the upper class (of society). God came to the help of the work conceived by this zealous man, by permitting

him to enter upon friendly relations with Madeleine's brother and likewise to take notice of the virtues and gifts of the young girl. Soon R. Father Varin felt that Sophie was an aid and associate granted to him by God and immediately he clearly saw in her the divine instrument for the foundation of the Congregation which received under the name of the Heart of Jesus, could, through the apostolate of the young girls for the spreading of his worship, bring back (the) infirm society, (already ^{weakened} debilitated by the poisonous doctrine of the philosophers,) to the path of civil and christian virtues.

As yet Sophie ^{hesitated} either to give her name to the Institute of the Carmelite nuns, or to the apostolic work of the Missions (by the zeal of which she was consumed, all the time of her life (all her life long)), at length she embraced the will of God, yielded to the counsels of her brother and Father Varin, and uttered the word of her ^{consent} submission as ^{formerly} ^{once} the Virgin of Nazareth, placing ^{the same} such confidence in Him who is called the strength of the weak and the rest of the infirm.

Therefore Madeleine became the first corner stone of the Society to the great spiritual joy of her brother Louis and Rev. Father Varin, who quickly felt that her decision would bear fruits in due time, for when the mind of Sophie was made known to three or four companions of her studies and pious life, they wished most ardently to follow her example and in her footsteps. At the close of the year 1800, in a private chapel, before a picture of the Blessed Virgin receiving the Infant Jesus' ^{caresses} embrace, they all consecrated themselves for the first time to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; the most happy memory of this day was celebrated fifty years later, with the greatest joy by the whole congregation of the sisters.

As the number of (the) young girls increased, the house in Paris seemed too small & it was necessary to change its ^{seat} domicile somewhere else, so much the more that peace, under the rule of Napoleon the First, was gradually restored in all ^{France} Gaul. Taking advantage of this opportunity, R. P. Varin transferred the seat of the Society of the Sacred Heart to Amiens; but, before Madeleine went to this city, she revisited the home of her parents, (along) with her brother, in order to receive their blessing.

A little later, she herself and the first companions of her house, arrived at Amiens and immediately ~~adjoining~~ to other young girls, under the direction of a most pious woman, they were received in the Institute where the worthy Rev. Fath. Varin laid at last the ^{first} foundations of the Society, according to their desires.

In this hospitable abode, Madeleine, giving herself more completely to the meditation of heavenly things and the practice of virtues, not only discharged the most humble duties, but with great joy of mind, taught the young girls of the lower class.

But immediately the greatest difficulties arose, as well from the miserable conditions of the temporal, as from the difficult character of the Superior, evidently unfit for religious life. From day to day, domestic affairs going from bad to worse, Rev. Father Varin hastened to apply the proper remedy and, as all the religious turned their mind and wishes towards Madeleine who was already giving examples of all virtues he, using a kind of subterfuge, declared her superior of the house, although she was younger than the other sisters; for the young girl was in the twenty ^{first} (in reality third) year of her age.

Madeleine Sophie, revolving in her mind these words of Christ: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart," as she had always by far surpassed the others as to the virtue of humility, ^{as soon as she} scarcely perceiving she had been appointed to the charge of Superior, throwing herself on her knees, before her companions, shedding tears, she declared herself unequal to the heavy burden she was to carry and earnestly entreated that some other of the Sisters would be put in charge of such a function. But it was in vain; she could not in the least conquer the will of R. Father Varin and the religious, and she came very near losing her life out of grief, on account of an election of this kind - yet, though against her will, she took up the arduous task ^{through} out of obedience.

When the first nucleus of the daughters of the Sacred Heart was so remarkably formed, Madeleine, committing herself with filial confidence ^{to God}, in the discharge of her difficult duties, took care, with maternal charity that the work begun and sanctioned by God would advance without any obstacle. But knowing that those who are placed in authority, ought to be endowed with all the virtues she applied herself with burning zeal to the offices of piety, showing in herself a pattern of regular observance for her nuns, and she took good care that her Sisters would embrace humility, the foundation of all virtues. And this humility appeared in her, not only familiar, but even ^{inborn} imitate, and this meekest of mothers spoke in such a way, she acted in such a manner that she seemed ^{to be} the least of the Nuns, rather than the Foundress.

Wherefore, the feelings of ^{a more vehement} love towards her were enkindled in her sisters, and all, with a willing mind, rendered to their Superior that obedience which, by her eminent virtues, she herself, made most sweet and most easy.

To the first house, which was already ^{yielding} bearing the most abundant fruits in the city of Amiens, soon, through the cares and counsel of the most pious adviser, Joseph Varin, another was added in the Monastery, built near Grenoble, which people called of "Sainte Marie d'En Haut" from which, on account of the French Revolution, the nuns had been expelled and the monastery changed into a prison.

In the mean time, the Pious Congregation, which had sprung from a very humble beginning, was, by degrees, giving its flowers in a wonderful manner and its fame was spread so that many houses were joined to it, in various places, all of which were consecrated to the spreading of the honor and glory of the Heart of Jesus and to the fostering of education among girls; hence, the Sisters were despatched everywhere by the whole body of the bishops; from these facts, one may argue that this little Society was overwhelmed by the most abundant blessing of Grace, by God, so that, in the year eighteen hundred and forty, there were already forty houses, in which numbers of women were received, thirsting after the love of Christ and devoting themselves ^{conspicuously} with reason to the education of Christian girls. But the Society, the affairs of which were daily on the increase, required a Superior General ^{govern} who would keep all the houses, scattered on all sides, ^{and} held bound ^{only} by charity. With one voice and agreement of

N.B. (in reality she had only the majority by one vote, that of Sister Margaret) opinions, they placed Madeleine Sophie in charge of the whole Society, as a Superior, whom all the Sisters revered with filial love, ^{as remarkable} on account of her loyalty, prudence and wisdom, although she herself was unwilling and reluctant to fulfil the charge of Superior General; but, acquiescing to the divine will, ^{for} through nearly 70 (really 66) years she bore this most onerous burden with composed mind and in such a manner that she always won for herself the esteem and affection of all. Madeleine undertook a very great and arduous ^{work} task when she determined to found her order; the threatening perils and evils were not unknown to her, which were to be met on account of the perversity of her time(s). Yet a humble woman, in no way remarkable either by the nobility of her family or the greatness of her fortune, nay more, deprived (from ^{of}) all help, alone, achieved what requires a man powerful and rich, and, never stopped by obstacles, she pursued with strength and alacrity the work she had begun and exerted herself to bring it to a successful end.

Before looking to the ~~building~~ numerous houses, the first care of Madeleine was to submit the Constitutions and Rules (in the making of which she had been helped by the counsels of the most prudent Rev. Father Joseph Varin) to the Sovereign Pontiff. Leo XII our Predecessor who ratified them with his Apostolic authority and approved them. This decision gave such consolation to the soul of the Superior General, that she never forgot the favor received, during her whole life.

She wished that these rules of her Institute would be perfectly kept by her Sisters, chiefly those which concealed the secret of her love towards the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, from whom only the salvation of the corrupt human society may be expected.