THE CHILDREN OF FATIMA

AND OUR LADY'S MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

By
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IT WAS a cool spring morning in the year 1916 in which the three children, natives of the Portuguese village of Fatima, saw nothing unusual. As was their custom, they had arisen before dawn, eaten breakfast, then driven their parents' sheep to pasture. There had been the usual chatter along the road, the usual plans for games once the sheep were dispersed. And now it was raining, the chill drizzle that was to be expected in early spring.

"We mustn't get too wet," said six-year-old Jacinta. "Lucia, maybe we should go to the cave today."

"Of course we should!" cried her eight-year-old brother Francisco. "It would be easy to watch the sheep from there."

Their cousin, aged nine, surveyed the dreary landscape with a critical eye. This pasture where they had brought the sheep belonged to her parents. It

was only a small field with a few straggling rows of olive trees at one end, but there was also a little rise of ground nearby, surmounted by a windmill. In the side of this hill was the cave—assuredly the best shelter the place offered.

"All right," she said finally. "You carry the lunch boxes, Francisco, and see that they don't get wet. I guess the sheep will be all right by themselves for a while."

A bit breathless, the three finally reached the cave. It was dark inside, and rather cramped, but the young shepherds gave no thought to this. They were used to the place, for they frequently played here even on sunny days. Besides, the cave was dry and commanded a good view of the pasture. It would be easy to notice if the sheep began to stray.

For a while the children amused themselves with talk. Was it going to rain all day? Or would the sun come out so that they could play the Echo Game outside on the hill?

"I do hope the sun comes out," said Jacinta, shivering a little. "It's going to be dull if we have to stay in this place all day."

Francisco agreed, although he was not too interested in the Echo Game. Of course it was fun to stand on the hilltop and shout different words into the still country air, then hear them come back from the distance. But it was even better to hunt through the pasture for stones, drag them into place and then build a house.

"If it clears up, I'll build a really *big* house," he told the two girls. "It'll be the finest house you ever saw!"

Lucia laughed. Francisco was a year younger than she. Since he was a boy, he was a little inclined to think himself skilled at house-building. Yet he knew, and Jacinta knew, that it was really Lucia who was the leader. And why not? Wasn't she the oldest? And the only one of the three children who had made her First Communion?

"We can decide what we'll do later," she said. "Right now let's see what we have for lunch."

An hour later the children had finished the bread, fruit and cheese which their mothers had packed for them. Then, seeing that the rain was almost over, Francisco suggested that they go outside to play. But Lucia would not listen. It was noon, wasn't it? And they had finished their lunch? Very well. Now they must say the Rosary, as was the custom of country-folk for miles around.

Francisco sighed. He had never been very fond of the Rosary—or of going to church. Deep in his heart was the feeling that such things were meant for women and girls. Yet there was no use arguing with Lucia, and so he fumbled in a pocket and brought out a small wooden rosary.

"Hurry up, then," he said, "and as soon as we finish, I'm going to build the stone house. Just wait until you see how big and beautiful it is!"

For a few minutes all was peaceful in the cave as the three children told their beads. But a passerby would have been very much surprised at the manner in which the little shepherds honored the Mother of God. To save time, they said only the first two words of the *Our Father* on the large beads and

the first two words of the *Hail Mary* on the small ones, for long ago they had discovered that in this way an entire Rosary could be recited in the twinkling of an eye!

Presently their prayers were finished, and Francisco looked hopefully at Lucia. "Now we can go and play?"

"No. It's still raining."

"But just a little!"

Jacinta gave a quick glance outside the cave. "It's only a fine mist, Lucia."

"That doesn't matter."

"But the house! I want to start looking for stones!"

"You stay with me, Francisco. You, too, Jacinta. We can have a game in here."

Reluctantly the two children sat down again on the dirt floor of the cave. Lucia was the oldest, and long ago they had been told that they must obey her whenever they spent the day away from home. But as they sat, amusing one another with stories, a sudden gust of wind caused them to look up. Before they could worry as to whether or not a fresh storm was brewing, an amazing sight greeted them. Above the straggling olive trees at the far end of the field was a beautiful white light. It shone like the purest snow, the clearest crystal! But it was not still. It was moving—across the tops of the trees, across the open expanse of pasture, toward the cave!

The three children stared in awed silence as the strange glow approached, and they saw that in its very center stood a young man. He wore flowing white garments such as the three had noticed in pic-

tures of angels and saints in the parish church. But this was no picture. It was real!

"Fear not," said the stranger. "I am the Angel of Peace." Then, kneeling, he touched his forehead to the ground. "Pray with me," he said.

Scarcely knowing what they did, the little shepherds fell upon their knees and imitated the actions of the strange young man. When he spoke, they repeated his words:

> My God, I believe in Thee! I adore Thee! I hope in Thee, and I love Thee! I ask pardon of Thee for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love Thee.

Three times the Angel said this prayer, then arose. "Pray thus," he said to them. "The Hearts of Jesus and Mary will hear your petitions."

The next moment he was gone, leaving the children more awestruck than they had ever been in their lives. Indeed, when they returned to their homes that night, they could not bring themselves to speak of the day's great event to anyone. Somehow the Angel's visit was too holy and beautiful for words.

It was not until mid-summer that the Angel came again. "What are you doing?" he asked. "Pray! Pray a great deal," he told the children this time. "The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have merciful designs on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices continually to the Most High."

Lucia hesitated, wondering whether or not it was

proper to speak to an angel. Then a wave of courage swept through her. "How are we to make sacrifices?" she asked.

The heavenly visitor answered, "Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and as a petition for the conversion of sinners. Bring peace to your country in this way."

Jacinta and Francisco were silent. How could children convert sinners? Or end the terrible war that had been going on in Europe for two years?

The shining spirit seemed to read their thoughts. "I am the Guardian Angel of Portugal," he said. "Above all, accept and bear with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you."

With this he was gone, and suddenly the children found themselves with strangely heavy hearts. Why did the Angel have to leave them? Why couldn't he tell them more about how to convert sinners and when the war was going to end?

"Maybe he'll come again," suggested Francisco hopefully.

"And give us another message," added Jacinta.

Lucia nodded. "I think he will come," she said slowly, "but first we must pray and make sacrifices as he told us."

The Angel did come again in the fall of that same year, while the children were out in the fields with their sheep. But this time he bore a golden chalice in one hand and a Host in the other. Amazed, the children noted that drops of blood were falling from the Host into the chalice and that presently the Angel

left both suspended in mid-air and prostrated himself on the ground. Then came the beautiful voice they had learned to love:

> Most Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He is offended. And through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of poor sinners.

The Angel repeated these words three times. The children joined in this sublime prayer to the Holy Trinity as best they could, but their amazement knew no bounds when presently the Angel arose from the ground, took the Host in his hand, and beckoned to Lucia. He was going to give her Holy Communion as the priest did at Mass!

As they saw their cousin approach to receive the Host, the hearts of Francisco and Jacinta filled with longing. How wonderful if they could have this great privilege, too! But of course this was impossible. They were not like Lucia, who had finished the course of studies for First Communicants. Why, they knew only a very little of the catechism!

Suddenly the Angel looked at them over Lucia's bowed head. Taking the chalice from mid-air, he indicated that they should approach and kneel before him also.

THE HEARTS OF FRANCISCO AND JACINTA
FILLED WITH LONGING.

The little shepherds stared. Surely the Angel didn't mean. . . .

He spoke: "Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Repair their crimes and console your God." Then he reverently gave the contents of the chalice to Jacinta and Francisco to drink.

Once again the Angel prostrated himself and, with the children, repeated three times the prayer, "Most Holy Trinity. . . ." Then he disappeared.

THE CURÉ OF ARS

THE STORY OF SAINT JOHN VIANNEY PATRON SAINT OF PARISH PRIESTS

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CHAPTER ONE

SHEPHERD BOY

MY NAME is John, and I have been dead since August 4, 1859. How happy I am! For my soul is in Heaven. Yes, for eternity I am privileged to see God . . . For endless eternity I enjoy a happiness that is beyond the power of mere words to describe. And nothing can ever take this happiness from me! Or from my friends—the millions of men and women and boys and girls who are with me in Paradise! For the joy we have is everlasting. It is eternal. God has said so, and of course He cannot lie.

It was not easy to win this joy. When a soul comes into the world, the Devil tries very hard to drag it down to Hell. So it was with nearly everyone who is in Heaven today, the chief exceptions being those who died shortly after Baptism—babies and very small children. But I—well, my life on earth lasted

for more than seventy-three years, and many, many times during that period the Devil tried to discourage me in my efforts to please God and to win the place which He had prepared for me in Paradise.

Did he succeed? Of course not. And why? Because of the wonderful courage God gave me whenever I called upon Him. For in my day (even as in any day) whenever there was a temptation to do wrong, to go over to the Devil's side and give up the struggle to win Heaven, God was always ready with His grace. Since He wills that every soul in the world shall someday enjoy the good things of Heaven, naturally He does not withhold the means to obtain them. But what a pity that so few people understand this, and that when trials and temptations come they never think of asking God for the grace to remain true to Him. Because of such neglect, the struggle against the Devil is generally far harder than it needs to be. Many times, alas, it even ends in defeat—in Hell, with all its terrible darkness and misery and pain.

My struggle to outwit the Devil and to win Heaven (although it was some time before I really understood about such things) began on May 8, 1786, in Dardilly, a village not far from the city of Lyons, in France. My parents, Matthew Vianney and Maria Beluse, already had three children: Catherine, Jane and Francis. But they were delighted to have still another, and on the same day that I was born I was taken to the village church to be baptized. Here I was given two names: John, in honor of Saint John the Baptist, and Marie (the French form of Mary)

in honor of the Blessed Virgin.

"I wonder what little John Marie Vianney will be when he grows up?" some of the neighbors asked one another thoughtfully. "He seems to be a fine, strong boy."

"Why, he'll be a farmer like his father," was the general opinion.

The reply was certainly a natural one. For generations my people had tilled the soil. What was more likely than that I should follow in their footsteps? And follow in their footsteps I did, at least during the early years of my life. Of course my tasks were just simple ones at first, such as feeding the chickens, gathering the eggs, weeding the garden. But when I was seven years old my father made an important announcement.

"John, I think you're big enough now for real work," he said. "Tomorrow you may take the sheep to pasture."

How happy I was at this new responsibility! My brother Francis, two years older than I, had been in charge of the flocks for some time. Now I was considered trustworthy enough to take his place. Now I would be allowed to be away from home all day, seeing that the sheep found good grazing land, that they did not eat weeds which would make them sick, that they did not stray into neighbors' fields, that they came to no harm from other animals. And if I did my work well, nine-year-old Francis could be spared for still other duties on the farm.

So it was that I became a shepherd. Frequently my little sister Marguerite (who was seventeen

months younger than I and whose pet name was Gothon) accompanied me into the fields. Then, when the sheep were peacefully grazing, we played games with neighboring shepherd children who came to visit us. However, there were many days when the other children did not come. At such times Gothon and I played by ourselves or knitted stockings.

Perhaps to children in America it may seem strange that a boy should know how to knit. In my day this was not considered strange at all. Every country child was expected to make himself useful, even when he was quite small. And since we were very hard on our stockings, our mother taught us how to make new ones with the wool from our own sheep.

I had been born in 1786. Shortly afterwards, many political disturbances arose throughout France. In the year when I was given charge of my father's flocks, godless men had long been in control of the government. Churches and monasteries were closed. All priests and nuns who acknowledged the Pope as Head of the Church were hunted down as though they were wild beasts, and cruelly murdered. Finally, unless one were willing to pay with his life, it was no longer possible to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or to receive the Sacraments.

"Children, our country is being punished for its sins," said my mother sorrowfully. "Oh, what a dreadful thing it is to offend the good God! See what hardship and pain it brings, even to the innocent!"

I was just a seven-year-old boy, but my mother's words made a deep impression on me. And I was

even more grieved when I heard that there were priests who, to protect themselves, had sworn to uphold the new government. These continued to say Mass publicly, although of course no good Catholic would attend.

"There are many brave priests, though, who refuse to have anything to do with the wicked government," my mother told us. "They are in hiding."

"In hiding?" I asked curiously, not quite understanding what this phrase meant.

"Yes. They dress like farmers or peddlers or tramps. But they are priests just the same. Perhaps it will be possible for us to go to their Masses."

For several years we managed to do just that. Late at night (as though we were bent on committing some great crime) we would creep from our beds and walk the mile or more to the barn or farmhouse which had been selected as a meeting place. All of us children were sworn to the utmost secrecy, and never would we have dreamed of mentioning to any stranger what we were doing or where we were going at that hour of the night without so much as a candle or a lantern to guide us over the rough country road. We would rather have died than betray the whereabouts of a priest who had remained faithful to the Pope, and who that very night would hear Confessions, offer Mass and give Holy Communion to his little flock.

Of course I was all eyes and ears when we finally reached the makeshift church—especially for the priest, who was risking death to bring us farmer folk the consolations of our Holy Faith. What a brave

man he was! How wise! How holy! And yet in appearance he was just like anyone else . . .

"But he isn't just like anyone else," my mother whispered. "Even in Heaven he will be set apart from other men."

And then as best she could, she explained about the priesthood—how it is a supernatural state of life to which God calls certain men, so that they may become channels for His grace. Through these men, who take the place of Christ on earth, God pours forth His love and mercy. Through them He receives the greatest prayer the world can ever know—the Sacrifice of the Mass. Through them He takes away the stain of Original Sin in Baptism, in Confession forgives any sin it is possible for man to commit, in the Holy Eucharist gives Himself as food to struggling mankind, and in Confirmation sends the Holy Spirit to help souls profess and spread the Catholic Faith. Through priests He unites men and women in the holy partnership of marriage, prepares the souls of the dying to enter into eternity, and in Holy Orders gives the same powers to other men, so that the priesthood will last as long as the world itself.

I often thought about my mother's words. How wonderful to be chosen by God to be a priest! How fortunate were those boys who, having received the call, had the chance to study the many things necessary to fulfill this vocation! So carried away was I by such thoughts that before long an idea for a fine new game had presented itself. I, seven-year-old John Marie Vianney, would make believe that God was

WE PRETENDED THAT I WAS A PRIEST

calling me to be a priest. Even more. I would not be simply a student. I would be already ordained. I would have the right to preach and to conduct church services.

With a little coaxing, Gothon and the other shepherd children joined in the new pastime and agreed to be my congregation. Thus, each day while the sheep were peacefully grazing, we said the Rosary, sang hymns and marched in procession through the fields behind a makeshift cross. Later I preached a sermon—but only a short one, because my listeners were not partial to long speeches. Occasionally we also gathered before a little clay statue of the Blessed Virgin which I had made (I kept it hidden in a tree trunk near the brook) and decorated it with moss and wildflowers.

So the years passed—1793, 1794, 1795. Religious persecution still went on in France, and although certain loyal Catholic families managed to attend Mass, they still had to do so in secret. As a result, it was impossible for us younger country children to make our First Confessions, or to receive Holy Communion, since there was no way for us to have regular instructions from the various priests who moved from one village to another under constant threat of death. Indeed, I was eleven years old before I went to Confession, and thirteen years old before I received my First Communion.

Probably this great event would have been postponed even longer had I not been able to spend some months visiting Aunt Marguerite, my mother's sister, in the neighboring town of Ecully. Here lived

several priests (although a stranger would have taken one for a cook, another for a shoemaker, a third for a carpenter, so successfully had these servants of God disguised themselves in order to escape capture by the police). There were also two good women in Ecully who had been nuns in the Congregation of Saint Charles before the government had driven them into exile.

"My nephew John Marie has never been to school," Aunt Marguerite told these faithful souls. "Do you suppose you could teach him a little reading and writing? And something about the Catechism?"

Father Groboz (who worked as a cook) and Father Balley (who worked as a carpenter) agreed to do what they could for me. So did the two women who had been nuns.

"John Marie may join the First Communion class," they said. "There are fifteen other children already enrolled."

The time and place for the meetings of the First Communion class were as secret as those for the Holy Sacrifice, and the danger was as great for both teachers and pupils. For instance, what would happen if the police came when we were studying our Catechism? How could we explain why we were gathered there? Suppose we became excited and let slip some information about the priests and nuns who were our teachers? Yet the weeks passed, no police came, and finally the beautiful day of First Communion arrived.

How happy I was to receive Our Lord! What did it

matter that there were no white dresses for the girls, no new suits for the boys? That the great event was not taking place in a flower-decked church but in a farmhouse with wagonloads of hay drawn up before the windows so that no godless stranger could tell what was going on inside? I did not think of any of these things. All that mattered was that at last Our Lord had come—He, who could make my soul clean and pleasing to Him . . .Who could help me to do my work well . . .

"I love You, dear Lord," I said. "But I know that I can love You still more if only You will show me how. Will You? Please?"

THE
LITTLE FLOWER

THE STORY OF SAINT THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS

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CHAPTER 1

THE BABY OF THE MARTIN FAMILY

PAPA was a watchmaker and had a rather long name—Louis Joseph Aloysius Stanislaus Martin. Mama's was much shorter—Zelie Marie Guerin. They were married on July 13, 1858, in the church of Notre Dame in Alencon, France. Papa was about thirty-five years old at the time, Mama twenty-six. A few people were afraid that the marriage was a mistake. You see, they were remembering those days long ago when Papa thought he had a vocation to be a monk. They also remembered that Mama once tried to enter the religious life, too—as a Sister of Saint Vincent de Paul.

"Louis Martin and Zelie Guerin are far too holy to live in the world," these people told one another. "Each would be better off in some monastery."

But this was not so. God did not want Papa or Mama to live in the cloister. He wanted them to live in the world. He wanted them to have many children and to teach these little ones the beauties of the Catholic faith. So it was that they married each other, that thirteenth day of July in the year 1858, and settled down to a quiet life in Alencon.

The first child God sent my parents was a girl. She was called Marie Louise in Baptism, although from the start Papa just called her Marie—which is the French form for Mary.

"We'll give each of our little ones the first name of Marie," he said. "Even the boys. In this way they'll all be consecrated to the Blessed Virgin."

It was a fine thought, and one with which Mama readily agreed. She had a very high opinion of Papa, and not a day passed that she did not thank God for giving her such a fine husband. How kind he was! And how hard he worked at his watchmaking so that she might have a comfortable home! Truly, there was no better man in Alencon, in all France, than Louis Joseph Aloysius Stanislaus Martin!

As time passed, my parents prayed very hard that God would send them a little boy. They were anxious to have a son to give to the priesthood. But the next three babies were all girls: Marie Pauline, Marie Leonie, Marie Helen. It did seem as though the many prayers for a son, "a little missionary," would never be answered. Then one fine day Marie Joseph Louis came to gladden the hearts of all.

"Here's our priest!" said Papa delightedly.

Alas! The new baby lived only five months. Then God called him to Heaven. The same thing happened with Marie Joseph John Baptist—the sixth child to come into our home. This little brother lived to be eight months old. Then he died, too.

Poor Papa! Poor Mama! They were deeply afflicted at the loss of their two little sons. But they loved God in a really honest way, which means that they loved His Will and trusted it more than their own. Therefore, they did not grieve long. Besides, faith told them that they had given new saints to love God in Heaven.

"The boys will pray for us," Papa said. "Just think! They went to God without one sin on their souls!"

Presently another girl was born in our house—Marie Celine. The next year came one more—Marie Melanie Therese. This little one lived only a short time. Then death came again as God called to Himself the fourth child in our family: five-year-old Marie Helen.

The neighbors were shocked at all the sorrow which came to our house. "Four children dead out of eight!" they said, sadly shaking their heads. "Really, it would be better if these little ones had never been born. Then their parents would have been spared a good deal of pain."

"No, no!" Mama would protest. "My children are not lost to me. Life is short. We shall meet again in Heaven."

"And we still have Marie, Pauline, Leonie and Celine to cheer us up," Papa would put in, comfortingly. "My business is prospering, too. Why should we complain?"

Everyone marveled at the wonderful way in which Papa and Mama accepted these fresh trials. Death had called four times in twelve years, yet the Martin house was still a cheerful place. So was the shop where Papa worked at his trade of watchmaker and jeweler. It was a pleasure to visit either one.

Time passed, and presently it was the year 1873. Marie and Pauline, students at the Visitation convent in Le Mans, were home in Alencon for their Christmas vacation. Late on the night of January 2, Papa went upstairs to the little room where they were sleeping.

"Wake up, children!" he cried excitedly. "I have some news for you!"

The girls sat up with a start, blinking at the light from Papa's lamp. What had happened? Why was their father standing in the doorway with such a big smile on his face?

"What is it, Papa?" asked Marie anxiously. "Mama's not sick again?"

A dozen questions were on Pauline's tongue, but Papa gave her no chance to ask them.

"No, Marie. Mama's all right. And you have a new sister now—a beautiful little girl!"

Yes—it was January 2, 1873, and God had sent me to earth at last—to the wonderful Christian home of Louis Martin, watchmaker of Alencon!

"PAPA, WHAT'S THE BABY'S NAME?"

Of course Marie and Pauline found it hard to go to sleep after Papa's visit. They asked each other many questions about me. For instance, was I a healthy baby? Would I stay with them or go to Heaven like the other little sisters and brothers? What would Papa and Mama call me? When would I be baptized? Who would be my godmother?

"Marie, I think you'll be chosen," said Pauline suddenly. "After all, you're the oldest—thirteen next month. I'm only eleven."

Marie smiled. To be godmother of the new little sister! That would be wonderful!

"Oh, I hope so," she said softly. "I've never been a godmother in my whole life."

So it came to pass that on January 4, when I was two days old, a little procession set out from our house and made its way through the snowy streets to the church of Notre Dame. Our maid, Louise, carried me in her arms, well wrapped in blankets. Then came Papa, with Marie and Pauline each hanging on an arm. There were also some neighbors and friends.

"Papa, tell us again what the baby is going to be called," said Marie. "I'm so excited about being her godmother that I'm not just sure."

Papa laughed heartily. "Her name is a nice one, child. Marie Frances Therese." Then the happy light died out of his eyes as he gave a quick glance at the wintery sky.

"Dear God, please leave this child with us!" he whispered. "In the Name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ!"

There was good reason for Papa to be anxious about me. In the days following my Baptism, I fell ill and it seemed likely that God soon would take me to Himself in Heaven.

"The only way that this child can be saved is to give her to a good nurse," said the doctor. "One who lives in the country. Perhaps with proper food and plenty of fresh air and sunshine, the baby will get strength enough to live."

Poor Mama! She did not want to be parted from me, yet she agreed to do whatever the doctor thought best. There was a farm woman she knew, Rose Taillé, who might take care of me for a few months. She had been very successful in nursing other sick children. Perhaps she could help me, too.

Rose Taillé wasn't sure about this. The day Mama brought her into Alencon to have a look at me, the good-natured woman gave a great sigh. She had never seen such a poor little scrap of humanity. Why, I was nothing but skin and bones! And so pale!

"I'll do my best," she told Mama. "But I can promise you nothing, Madame. Ah, what a sickly little mite we have here! Only prayers will save her, I'm thinking."

Mama nodded. There would be plenty of prayers—to Saint Joseph, to the Blessed Virgin, to all the Saints. Oh, how she would pray for me! And Papa, too.

So Rose took me out into the country, pausing frequently on the journey to see if I was still alive. She was a little worried about this new responsibility. She

had four children of her own to care for, and it was necessary to help her husband with the farm work, too. Perhaps she shouldn't have taken me with her. If I died, people might blame her.

But I did not die. God heard the fervent prayers which Papa and Mama offered for my recovery, and at Rose's house I became a totally different child. This was not because the good woman had any luxuries to give me. On the contrary, she had very little time to spend on my care. Because there was no proper carriage, she would put me in a wheelbarrow filled with hay and take me out to where she and her husband were working. Sometimes I was left alone under a tree. At others, Rose put the wheelbarrow in the sun.

"The little one is too pale," she said. "Maybe the sunshine will help her to grow strong."

I did grow strong and brown. In a few months there was no longer any danger that I would die. Rose was very proud, and one May day she took me home to show Mama how I had grown. Why, I weighed fourteen pounds!

"Therese is going to be all right, Madame," she said thankfully. "And I think I can leave her with you, now that she's nearly five months old."

Mama was so happy. "Rose, how can I thank you?" she cried. "You saved my little girl's life!"

Rose smiled shyly as she put me into Mama's arms. "I have to go to the market now," she said. "It's the day for selling butter, and I'm late."

Of course I could not understand what Rose was saying, but it did not take long for me to realize that she had left me in a stranger's arms. At once I started to cry. Nothing could make me stop. As time passed Mama became frightened. She tried to comfort me, to sing little songs, to rock me to sleep. I wasn't interested. I wanted Rose, no one else. Finally Mama called the maid.

"Louise, what am I going to do? Therese will make herself sick with all this crying!"

Louise peered down at me. I was screaming at the top of my lungs, and my face was a deep and angry red.

"Do you really want my opinion, Madame?"

"In Heaven's name, yes! None of my other children ever acted like this."

Louise smiled. "It's simple, Madame. The child wants Rose. She won't stop crying unless we take her to her."

"But Rose is selling butter at the market!"

"She could still look after the baby, Madame. And she'd be pleased if we told her how the little one misses her."

Poor Mama! She didn't want to let go of me but there was nothing else to do. "All right," she said sadly. "Take Therese down to the market, Louise. But if she still keeps on crying, what shall we do then?"

There was no need for Mama to worry about this. As soon as Louise and I arrived at the market, where

women from the farms outside Alencon were selling their butter, I began to smile. Then I laughed and laughed, for my eyes had caught sight of Rose. I stretched out my arms happily. This was what I had wanted all the time—*my mother!*

I stayed at the market until noon, happy and contented as Rose and her friends sold their butter. A few people asked questions about me as I lay quietly in my good friend's arms.

"Rose, I didn't know you had such a little girl as this one," they remarked. "And she has fair hair. I thought all your children were dark."

Rose laughed. "Oh, the child isn't mine," she said.

"Then whose is she?"

"She belongs to the Martin family, Lord bless her! And good as gold she is, too — at least when I'm looking after her!"

PATRON SAINT OF FIRST COMMUNICANTS

THE STORY OF BLESSED IMELDA LAMBERTINI

By
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Illustrated by
Gedge Harmon

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CHAPTER ONE

A Child Is Born

 HE blind basket-maker knew someone had stopped outside his door. His ears were very sharp and not a sound that echoed through the busy streets ever escaped him. Sometimes people felt that he really saw, so keen was his hearing, so dependable his memory. Then there were his baskets, shelves of them, deftly woven of colored reeds. It was hard to believe that they came from the hands of a man who could not see.

"It's the baker," he called out cheerfully. "Why don't you come inside, John?"

There was a deep laugh and the baker entered, a great hulk of a man, squeezing his way through the narrow entrance with difficulty.

"Some day I'll come so quietly that you'll never guess I'm here, Peter. But not today. Today I couldn't be quiet if I tried."

The blind man looked up curiously, while his thin fingers stopped their accustomed task of weaving reeds. "You sound as though you had good news, old friend. What is it?"

The baker put two loaves of bread on a nearby table, then clapped the blind man on the back. "My boy came home last night, Peter! What do you think of that?"

"*Philip came home?*"

"That's right. You know how we've all thought him dead these past five years. Well, he's not dead, Peter. He's very much alive. And he's made a tidy little fortune as a merchant in Algiers. Ah, if you only knew what it means to have him back again!"

The blind man smiled. He understood how his old friend had suffered. Young Philip, a boy of daring and rash spirits, had run away from home five years ago. No word had ever been heard of him since, and those in the city of Bologna who knew the baker were convinced the lad had come to no good.

"I'm very glad for you," said Peter simply. "I have no family but I can understand how you love Philip. And I'm quite sure. . . ."

"Yes?"

"That Philip is back only because of prayer."

A blank look struck the baker's face and he made a devout Sign of the Cross. "May God forgive me that I forgot to thank Him!" he murmured. "Of course, Peter. What else but prayer brought Philip back? Yours and mine. And perhaps there were others who thought of me in my trouble."

The blind man nodded. "Many others. It isn't for nothing that you give away bread to the poor, old friend. Be sure of that."

The baker shifted restlessly, his eyes upon a crucifix over the basket-maker's head. "I . . . I think I'll go to church a minute," he said lamely. "It seems only right that before the Blessed Sacrament I should make some kind of thanksgiving."

Peter laughed at the sudden concern in his friend's voice. "Are you afraid God will take your boy away again because you forgot to thank Him? Ah, John, yours is a common failing. We pray when we want something. We pray very hard indeed. But when our wish is granted, what do we do? Very little usually. And no one knows this better than I, who have so often failed my Maker. But come along. If you're going to church, I'll go with you. It's almost noon and I generally pay a visit at this time."

So the two men set out together down the narrow street—the one tall and strong, full of high spirits,

the other stooped and grey, but with a face strongly marked with the peace of Christ. Their destination was the Dominican church a few blocks away, where the holy founder of the Dominican Order had been buried for over a hundred years.

"I can't stay very long," the baker whispered as they mounted the stone steps and approached the open door. "There's no one to watch my shop. But I want you to come tonight for supper, Peter. We're arranging a little celebration for Philip. You will be there, won't you?"

Peter smiled. "I'll be there. It's been many a day since I saw your boy."

Time passed. Far up the aisle, near the main altar, Peter arose from his knees and put away his rosary. He sensed that he was now alone in the church, and for a moment he considered whether he should not stay a little longer. Was it courteous to leave the King of Heaven without a single adorer? But presently a rustle of silk told him that some pious woman was about to take his place. Even now she was walking slowly up the aisle.

Peter gripped his cane in firm fingers and made his way to the door. The warm noon sunlight struck his face as he stepped outside, and he smiled at the pleasant feeling of warmth. June! It was a beautiful month. Always it was kind to the poor who must

lodge in miserable quarters. It did not seek them out with the cruel fingers of frost.

With only slight hesitation, the blind man came down the church steps into the sunny street. As he turned resolutely to the right, away from his own shop, his mind was busy with a beautiful thought. It concerned the mercy of God the Father, Who allows sorrow to strike His children only for their own good. Sorrow, reflected Peter, is a powerful means to make souls remember that earth is not their true home. Sorrow, bravely borne, is nothing more than a key to the wonders of heaven.

"In heaven, my good friend John will be happier than he is at his son's return," thought Peter. "Even I, a blind man, will be able to see beautiful things."

Slowly the basket-maker walked through the June sunshine, his cane beating out a gentle rhythm on the cobblestones. Sometimes a familiar voice greeted him, and he stopped for a brief chat with an old friend. But he heeded no invitation to rest himself, to stop for food and drink. He was interested in only one thing. He wanted to reach the palace of the Captain General of Bologna. Egano Lambertini might be a wealthy man, powerful in government circles, but he was not proud. He always had time for the poor. And it was the same with his wife, Donna Castora. The two were Christians in the real sense.

"Perhaps I'm wrong," thought Peter, as he tapped his way slowly along the street, "but I have a feeling that Donna Castora has much to do with Philip's return. It was only a few months ago that she came to my shop and bought a few baskets. I told her then of John's sorrow and she promised to pray for his boy. Now it seems only right that someone should go to her and say that her prayer is answered."

As the blind man turned into the spacious avenue leading toward the Lambertini castle, the air was suddenly filled with the pealing of bells. It was a joyous sound, and Peter looked up curiously. The bells were not church bells. They were those of the castle. He could almost see them swinging in the grey stone towers.

"What's happened?" cried an excited voice from a shop door.

The question was immediately taken up by others —merchants, children, beggars, wives who had been busy in their kitchens. Of a sudden the street was a beehive of excitement as people rushed out to gaze at the grey castle on the hill where flocks of startled pigeons were circling through the air.

"It's good news of some sort!" someone cried. "Maybe Donna Castora has had a son!"

"A son for the Captain General!" put in another voice. "God be praised!"

THEY SURGED UP THE BROAD AVENUE.

As though a signal had been given, a flood of men and women began to surge up the broad avenue. Prominent in the motley procession were beggars, dozens of them, roused from their usual corners by the clamor of the bells. If it were true that Egano Lambertini now had a son, he would be more generous than ever with his alms. Perhaps a jug of wine to each man who wished the child well? Or a loaf of fine white bread?

"Out of the way, blind man!" someone shouted. "I want to reach the castle first."

To escape being trampled, Peter hastily moved into the recess of a deserted doorway. To some the blind basket-maker might present a pitiable sight, shabby and frail and forgotten, but Peter was far from feeling sad. Egano Lambertini, the Captain General of Bologna, Ambassador to the Republic of Venice, had been given a son and heir!

"He deserves good fortune," the blind man thought. "He and his wife have always been kind to everyone."

For half an hour Peter stood in the doorway, waiting for his sharp ears to tell him that the crowd had thinned and that now he might make his own way safely to the castle. When the moment finally arrived, he moved slowly into the street. The bells were still pealing joyfully and his heart sang with

them. He had started this trip in order to speak briefly to Donna Castora, to thank her for her prayers on behalf of the baker's missing boy. Such news, he felt, would make the good woman happy. But now his little errand was hardly necessary. Donna Castora was having her own moment of triumph. The news of Philip's return must be told at some other time.

"I'll go to the castle anyway," thought Peter. "Not that I am needed. No one would miss me if I stayed away. But it will be good to have some little part in the merrymaking."

The basket-maker had just turned into the road that ran by the back of the castle when he heard a group of people approaching. They were in high spirits and apparently carried away with them a goodly supply of food and drink from the celebration.

"I say it's a shame!" cried one man, taking no notice of Peter. "Who started the story that the Captain General had a son?"

"Who cares?" sang out a companion. "I say a girl is as good as a boy when she brings us presents like these!"

"You lie, friend! Daughters only cause a man trouble. Believe me, I ought to know. Haven't I six of them?"

Puzzled, the blind man stepped back to let the

noisy group pass. So it was a baby girl who had come to grace the Lambertini household instead of a boy! Then why were the bells pealing so loud and long? This was a custom usually reserved for the first-born son of a noble family.

"I'll go and see," Peter told himself. But as he hurried along the road, his trusty cane finding the smoothest part, he could not agree with the speaker who had just passed. Whether boy or girl, Donna Castora's child possessed a soul that the saving waters of Baptism soon would render spotless and beautiful. This soul could never die. It would live forever.

"Father in heaven, bless this little newcomer!" said Peter fervently. "Help her to be Your faithful servant."

Soon he had reached the rear courtyard, filled now to overflowing with the poor of Bologna. Here long tables had been hastily set up, and servants were busy bringing forth food and drink. At one side a few musicians, in festive attire of red and gold, tuned their strings.

"This way, friend," said a servant woman's kindly voice. "Hurry, or you'll not find a place."

Peter nodded and let himself be taken by the arm. As he sat down at one of the tables, a great shout of applause went up from the happy crowd.

"Long live the Captain General!" cried the assembly. "Long live his wife and child!"

The basket-maker turned his sightless eyes toward the front of the courtyard. It was evident that Egano Lambertini had arrived to greet his guests and bid them have their fill. Probably he would soon announce the day of Baptism, when another celebration would be in order for Bologna's poor. Happily Peter settled himself to listen, to learn by what name the little one would be called, to pledge his prayers for her health and happiness.

ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT

THE STORY OF OUR LADY'S SLAVE, ST. LOUIS MARY GRIGNION DE MONTFORT

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Paul A. Grout

TAN Books
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CHAPTER 1

A FOOL OR A SAINT?

THE Bishop of Poitiers peered through his study window at the shabbily dressed young priest striding briskly toward the front gate in the pale sunlight of the late November afternoon. Then, shivering at the whistle of the chill wind through the leafless trees, he turned, and, leaning heavily on a cane, moved toward the open hearth where a fire was burning.

"Father Louis Mary Grignion," he muttered wearily, shaking his head as he warmed himself over the leaping flames. "That young man is either a fool or a saint."

For several minutes the Bishop gazed moodily into the fire, heedless of the fact that there had been a knock at the door and that now his secretary stood waiting in respectful silence on the threshold. Then slowly he came to himself.

"Yes, Monsignor? What is it?"

The newcomer, a tall, severe-looking man in his middle forties, bowed stiffly. "I brought the papers, Your Lordship. The ones you wanted about Father Grignion. But shall we go over them now? After all, it's nearly supper time. . . . "

The Bishop hesitated, then hobbled painfully across the room to his desk. "Of course we'll go over them now. Father Grignion's case is most important. Besides, it'll take only a few minutes."

The Monsignor bowed again, then placed a sheaf of papers before his superior.

"Very well, Your Lordship. But I'm afraid you'll find everything as it was last month. For instance, on this first page is the personal information about Father Grignion. Birth: January 31, 1673, at Montfort-la-Cane, in Brittany, the second of eighteen children of John Baptist Grignion and Joan Robert. Education: seven years at the Jesuit college in Rennes, seven years with the Sulpicians in Paris. Ordination to the holy priesthood last year on June 5, 1700, aged twenty-seven. After that, a few retreats and missions under Father Lévêque at Nantes. . . . "

The Bishop listened in moody silence. Then suddenly he shifted impatiently. "Yes, yes, Monsignor. I know all this. But the letters from his former superiors in Paris. Surely there are some new ones by now? What have they to say? That's what I want to hear."

The Monsignor smiled wryly. "There's been nothing new, Your Lordship."

"Not even from Father Leschassier? Or Father Brenier? Or Father de la Chétardie?"

"No, Your Lordship. None of these men will recommend Father Grignion for any work—let alone what you've just given him to do here in Poitiers at the poorhouse."

A hard light shone in the Bishop's eyes. "But what have they got against the boy?" he demanded sharply. "Hasn't he always been at the top of his classes in the Seminary? Hasn't he even had to do outside work to pay his tuition? Hasn't he been prayerful, mortified, obedient, all through his student years?"

"Yes, Your Lordship."

"Well, go on. What is it, then?"

"His . . . his professors say he's too different, Your Lordship."

"Different! How different?"

"Well, for one thing, his clothes. He just doesn't seem to care what they look like, Your Lordship. Why, he won't even wear a hat!"

The Bishop shrugged. "A hat! What has wearing a hat got to do with being a good priest?"

"Nothing, Your Lordship. But still, when all other priests wear hats. . . . "

"Go on. What else is wrong with Father Grignion?"

The Monsignor hesitated. He had no wish to become involved in an argument with the Bishop. But he could not help feeling slightly suspicious of the young priest (at present a missionary in Nantes), who only a few minutes before had been in this very room. Not only had his clothes been disgracefully shabby; he had not even seemed to care that they were. Nor had he been a bit impressed with all the elegance around him—the rich carpets, the hangings, the furniture. The approaching interview with the Bishop seemed to have produced in him none of the anxiety which the Monsignor ordinarily observed in other visitors.

Even more. When the time came, he had found Father Louis Mary Grignion, not sitting timidly in a chair, or pacing nervously about the waiting room, but on his knees in prayer. And here he had received the Monsignor's announcement that the Bishop awaited him quite simply, without apology or sign of embarrassment.

"Well, Monsignor? As you were saying. . . ?"

The latter swallowed hard. "Really, Your Lordship, I haven't a thing against Father Grignion. I'm sure that he's very holy. And that he'll do good work at the poorhouse."

Gradually the Bishop's eyes softened. "I'm glad to hear you say that. The place is in a dreadful state." Then, after a moment: "But you really don't think he'll stay, do you?"

"Frankly, no, Your Lordship."

"Why not?"

The Monsignor felt slightly suspicious.

With a gesture of despair, the Monsignor threw caution to the winds. "Because he's not prudent! He's bound to make enemies among the staff! Mark my words, this very night he'll be preaching a sermon on the Blessed Virgin and trying to get members for that society of his!"

"Society?"

"Yes, the one that's mentioned here in these papers. He began it when he was only a student at the Seminary. And what an unfortunate title he chose—'The Slaves of Mary'!"

"The Slaves of Jesus *in* Mary," corrected the Bishop.

"Very well. Even so, the word 'slaves' is repulsive, Your Lordship. It has nothing to do with holiness. Why, such a group could do real harm to the Church!"

The Bishop nodded thoughtfully. "Yes, if it were misunderstood. But let's hope that doesn't happen here in Poitiers, Monsignor. In fact, let's pray that Father Grignion's work at the poorhouse will be blessed with real success."

Quickly remorseful over his outburst, the Monsignor smiled awkwardly. "Well, of course that would be the charitable thing to do. But on the other hand. . . ."

"Good. After all, who knows? Perhaps someday our only claim to God's mercy will be that we helped one of His chosen workers through a difficult time. Now," with a gesture toward the papers scattered on his desk, "since it's after five o'clock. . . . "

With a feeling of genuine relief the Monsignor hastily collected the papers, then helped the Bishop to his feet. What a difficult afternoon this had been! And what a blessing that it was almost time for supper!

Saint Thomas Aquinas

The Story of "The Dumb Ox"

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Sister Mary Jean Dorcy, O.P.

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

Chapter One

I Go to School

MY NAME is Thomas, and I was born in a castle in Italy in the year 1225. My father was a rich man, the Count of Aquin, and I was his third son. Poor Father! He was a good soul and he made great plans for me. When I was six years old, he sent me to school at the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino. He told my teachers I was to be a priest.

"My two oldest boys will be soldiers like myself," he said. "I think Thomas should go into the service of the Church."

I went off to school with my future clearly mapped out for me. I was to be a monk. More than that. My father said that when I was older I was to be Abbot of Monte Cassino, a position held for some years by his own brother. My mother, whose name was Theodora, agreed with him.

"I'm so proud of you, Thomas!" she often said. "Someday you'll be in charge of that wonderful Abbey. Everyone will look up to you as long as you live!"

What could I say? I loved my parents and had been brought up to obey them. When I finally saw my uncle, the Abbot of Monte Cassino (he was a white-haired old man in a black robe, with a gold cross around his neck and a handsome ring on his finger) I began to wonder. What kind of an Abbot would I make? My hair was not white. I didn't know how to

read. And I had a feeling that I could never spend my whole life in one place, even in such a beautiful place as the Abbey. There were other difficu ties, too. Suppose the monks did not want me for their leader when I was grown up? Suppose some other boy would make a better Abbot?

"Don't worry about such things," my father said. "If I wish my son Thomas to be head of the Abbey, he'll be head of it. Never fear. Am I not Count Landulph of Aquin? Am I not a nephew of the great Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa?"

"Yes, Father," I answered meekly. But I had a strange feeling as I said these words. I, Thomas of Aquin, would never be a Benedictine Abbot. Although I was only a six-year-old boy, I felt quite sure that some other kind of life would be mine.

I liked going to school at Monte Cassino, however. The rugged mountain where Saint Benedict and his monks had settled seven hundred years before was really beautiful. The other boys and I often watched the monks laboring in the field . We went into the work rooms, too, and saw cloth being woven from wool, old manuscripts being copied in the library. Always there was a lot of activity going on at Monte Cassino, for long ago, when Saint Benedict had first founded his colonies of monks, he had insisted upon two things. The monks should work with their hands many hours every day. They should also spend themselves in praising God by the chanting of Psalms and other prayers. Nothing was to be preferred to this latter work.

So it was that Monte Cassino resembled a very busy but a very holy town. The monks grew every-

I was to be a monk, too.

thing that was necessary to feed themselves as well as the boys who studied in their school. Then, at certain hours, they went to their chapel to sing the praises of God. Sometimes, as I listened to these holy men chanting the ancient Psalms, I wondered if it might not be good to spend my life at Monte Cassino.

Everything was so orderly and peaceful.

But as soon as such thoughts came, a strange little voice inside me would start to laugh.

"You're not going to stay here, Thomas. Someone else will be Abbot."

"Why?"

"Because it's God's Will."

"How do you know?"

"I just know. And don't keep asking me questions."

I wondered who was right, my father or the little voice. It seemed as though I would stay forever at the Abbey. But when five years had passed, a great thing happened. I was sent home to Rocca Secca, to the great castle where I had been born. I was eleven years old now, and it was good to see my family once more—Father, Mother, my sisters and brothers. Mother cried a little when she saw me first but soon she was all smiles.

"Oh, Thomas! How I've missed you! And how big you've grown! Look, Landulph, he's really very tall for eleven!"

My father made funny noises in his throat, but his eyes were kind as he looked me up and down.

"Not bad, not bad at all," he murmured. "The monks seem to have treated you very well."

"Yes, Father. The Abbey is a wonderful place."

"And what have you learned, son?"

"To read and write in Latin. And a little of many other things, Father. When am I going back?"

A peculiar look came over Father's face. "You're not going back, Thomas. Instead you're going to go to school in Naples. At the University."

Naples! The University! I could hardly believe my ears. What had made Father change his mind? Something must be wrong. Perhaps my teachers at Monte Cassino hadn't been pleased with the way I did my lessons.

"Thomas," said Mother very gently, "the monks tell us you're a good student and should have every advantage. They think that in Naples . . ."

"They think you've learned everything they can teach you," my father interrupted. "Ah, lad, we're proud of you! Going to the University at eleven! When you get your degree you'll be the most learned Abbot Monte Cassino ever had!"

So my little voice had been wrong! I was going back to Monte Cassino someday to rule the monks, to live far away from the noise and bustle of towns and cities. But first there was to be a course of studies at the University.

"Son, you look tired," said Mother presently. "We mustn't have that. Why not go to your room for a while?"

I nodded. I was tired. And puzzled, too. It seemed too much to believe that my school days at the Abbey were over. But I could see Father smiling to himself as I left the room. He, at least, was at ease about my future. He looked just the way he did when his soldiers came back from winning an important battle.

My sisters, Marietta and Theodora, were just as

excited as anyone else over the news that I was going away to the University.

"It must be wonderful to be a boy and go places!" sighed Marietta. "Thomas, do you suppose we could go with you to Naples?"

"I'd love living in a big city," put in Theodora wistfully. "Mother, could we go with Thomas?"

"Nonsense!" said Mother. "Girls like you have no reason to live in Naples. You'd just get foolish ideas there."

Theodora laughed. "Maybe we could find ourselves husbands," she suggested. "Probably there are many nice young men in Naples who haven't picked out a wife yet."

"Thomas will meet lots of them at the University," said Marietta. "Oh, it would be just wonderful if we could go!"

Mother shook her head. "Naples is a wicked city. Perhaps even Thomas shouldn't be going there, when he's so young. But as for you two . . ."

The girls stopped their teasing. It was all a joke anyway, for they were too young to be thinking of marriage. But their excitement about my leaving home continued to increase. The whole summer I was at Rocca Secca they could talk of nothing else.

"You'll study hard and make yourself famous, won't you?" Marietta asked one night. "Father and Mother are so proud of you, Thomas. It would break their hearts if you were lazy."

"Father has always said you would grow up to be Abbot of Monte Cassino," Theodora added. "You mustn't disappoint him."

I thought of the little voice that continued to tell

me my life would never be spent at the Abbey, but there was no use in saying anything to the girls.

"Of course I'll work hard," I promised. "Never fear. And you be good and see that Father and Mother aren't disappointed in you!"

Marietta and Theodora laughed. "We can't be anything but good in this poky old castle," they said. "You ought to know that, Thomas."

My brothers, Landulph and Raynald (who were much bigger than I and very good at horseback riding and fighting with swords), treated me like one of themselves during the last few weeks I spent at home.

"So our little Thomas is going away to the big city," said Raynald one day. "That's what happens to a boy when he's good at books. Thomas, you're a lucky little beggar to get such a chance!"

"Father never sent us to the University," put in Landulph, pretending to be jealous. "A fine time we might have had there, too."

I could not help smiling. No one hated books and study as much as these two older brothers of mine. Father had trained them to be soldiers. They would have been bored to death at the University. They knew it. And so did I.

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

THE STORY OF THE GIRL WHO SAW SAINTS IN THE SKY

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Helen Louise Beccard

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

SAINTS IN THE SKY

THERE WAS once a good man named Jacopo, who made a living at a strange business. He was a dyer, that is, he took cloths of plain colors and turned them into all the shades of the rainbow. When rich people saw Jacopo's purple silk, his scarlets and blues and yellows, they usually decided on some new clothes right away and bought yards and yards of the wonderful material. In such a way Jacopo became quite wealthy and built a nice house for his wife and family.

Now, Jacopo's house was a big place. In it lived Jacopo's numerous children, his wife, his servants and the men and boys who helped around the shop and sold goods to customers. Very seldom was there a quiet moment in Jacopo's house. Something was always going on, either a banquet, a business deal, a wedding or a visit from the neighbors. There was always food cooking in the kitchen, too, for it took a lot to feed all the people who lived with Jacopo or who came to visit him. It was a busy place, Jacopo's house. His children loved it, and when any of the sons got married they always brought their brides

home to live. In fact, as years went by, Jacopo's house became more and more crowded, so that one wondered how it could ever hold any more people.

One day in the year 1347 Jacopo and his wife Lapa, who lived in the Italian city of Siena and already had twenty-three children, were blessed by God with twin baby girls.

"Goodness!" cried the neighbors. "Where will they put any more children?"

"There was never a house like Jacopo's house," said the relations. "They will find room somehow."

And Jacopo and Lapa did, although as it turned out only one of the new little girls lived. They named her Catherine.

"I hope she grows up to be beautiful!" sighed Jacopo's wife. "Then she can marry a rich man and we can enlarge the shop."

Jacopo nodded. "Her hair is the color of red gold," he said dreamily. As he looked at his little daughter in her cradle, he began to think of making up a new color for some new silks which had just come in from the East.

Catherine grew up in her father's big house, amid all the noise and clatter of so many people. It was easy to see she would never be beautiful. Only her golden hair set her apart from other little girls in the town. It was really lovely, so long and soft and curly.

"Will you stand still?" cried her mother one morning, as she tried to comb the pretty locks. "Why are you so fidgety?"

"Because I hate having my hair fixed," said the little girl. "I want to go out and play in the yard."

"Well, you can't play in the yard," said her mother. "I have a package I want taken to your sister Bonaventura. And I want you to look nice when you go to her house. So stand still and let me fix you."

Catherine's brown eyes shone. Bonaventura, her favorite sister, was married and lived not far away. It was always such fun to go and see her because Bonaventura understood that little girls liked presents. And good things to eat.

"Can I go alone, Mother?" she cried. "It would be so nice to go visiting by myself just for once!"

"Nonsense!" cried her mother, who was suddenly remembering that twelve people were coming to dinner. "Your brother Stefano will go with you. And remember—go straight to Bonaventura's. No stopping to play on the way, or to visit in church. You are too young to be out by yourselves for long."

"But I am six years old," Catherine started to say, then changed her mind. Company for dinner always upset her mother, who was inclined to be cross on such days.

Soon Catherine and Stefano, who was a bit older, were on their way to their married sister's house. The sun was shining brightly. The streets were crowded with people. Ox carts jolted up and down. A group of wandering musicians had stopped to play and sing near the great fountain in the square. "Oh, let's listen to them!" cried Stefano, running ahead. "They have a

dancing bear and a monkey!" But Catherine remembered her mother's words and shook her head.

"No, we must go straight to Bonaventura's," she said, and took Stefano's hand firmly in hers.

They stayed at Bonaventura's house for an hour only, and then started home with a package for their mother. This time they did not come through the crowded streets of the town but took a short cut through an open field. There were many flowers growing along the way, and Catherine and Stefano picked a few as they walked along. Back of the Dominican church, which stood over towards the town, they were even more plentiful.

"Let's go and get some daisies," said Stefano. "There are loads of them over near the church."

"Mother said to come right back . . ." said Catherine, and then suddenly her heart skipped a beat.

Above the Dominican church, right in the middle of the blue sky, right above the fields of white daisies, were people. They were standing in the sky as though it were the most natural thing to do, and some were kneeling before a great white throne. A King was seated on the throne, and He seemed pleased with the people about Him. He even seemed pleased with Catherine, for He turned in her direction and smiled at her.

"Oh!" cried the little girl, falling to her knees. "How beautiful it all is!"

Stefano stared. "What's the matter?" he cried.

"NO, WE MUST GO STRAIGHT TO BONAVENTURA'S."

"What are you kneeling down for?"

But Catherine did not hear. Her eyes were fixed on the sky, on the wonderful people in shining robes, on the King. She knew, without being told, that the King was really Our Lord, and when He raised His Hand to bless her, she could hardly believe it.

Stefano looked at the blue sky over the church, but there was nothing there except a white cloud, a very ordinary cloud. Certainly that was nothing to make Catherine's face so happy, to cause her to kneel down in the field as though she were praying.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked. "Mother will be cross if we are late with this parcel."

And then, since Catherine still did not answer, he began to be angry.

"Will—you—come—on?" he said.

Awakened from her vision, Catherine turned to Stefano, and her eyes were shining.

"Oh, if you could see what I see, you would not bother me! Look, Stefano, at the wonderful people in the air! They are saints, I am sure. And that is Our Lord, sitting on the throne and smiling at us."

Stefano looked to where Catherine pointed. "Silly!" he laughed. "There are no people in the air. How could there be? And Our Lord is in the church, not over it. You know that."

Catherine's smile faded. Even as Stefano was speaking she saw that the wonderful vision had gone. There were no longer any saints in the sky. And Our Lord was gone, too.

HER EYES WERE FIXED ON THE SKY, ON THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE IN SHINING ROBES.

"Well, are you coming?"

Catherine nodded. "I'm coming," she said, but her heart was sad. The saints and Our Lord had been so beautiful. Now the sky seemed empty without them.

"You shouldn't make up stories and tell them as though they were true," Stefano said presently. "It isn't right."

"But I didn't make up a story!" replied Catherine quickly. "There were saints in the sky, Stefano. And I could have been looking at them yet, if you hadn't bothered me."

The little boy shrugged his shoulders. What could you do with girls? They talked and talked and always wanted to be in the right. They would never admit they could make a mistake.

There was a great deal of confusion in Jacopo's house as the two children neared the gate. Strange bearded men, whom they knew to be cloth merhants from the East, were standing in the courtyard. Piled high in the workrooms were great bales of silk and wool. Vats of dye simmered on the fire and young men stood over them, stirring them with large wooden ladles. It was a busy day for Jacopo, the dyer.

"There's my cat!" cried Stefano. "Let's make a daisy chain for her neck with these flowers!"

But Catherine shook her head. She was thinking about the strange people in the sky over the Dominican church, the strange people who must be saints. She was sure one of them had been Saint John, the cousin of Our Lord, and two others, Saint

STRANGE BEARDED MEN,
CLOTH MERCHANTS FROM THE EAST,
WERE STANDING IN THE COURTYARD.

Peter and Saint Paul. There were pictures of these great men all through the town. But why had they been in the sky? And why had she, a little girl, seen them?

"I never saw a saint before," she thought. "They seemed awfully nice."

And then an idea came into Catherine's head, as she stood watching Stefano playing with his cat. Why couldn't she be a saint, too? Why couldn't she be holy and love Our Lord as Saint Peter and Saint Paul and Saint John had loved Him? Why couldn't she be up in the sky over the Dominican church, and very close to Our Lord on His throne?

"I guess I couldn't be a saint at home," she said. "There is too much noise and there are too many people. But if I could go away . . . if I could have a nice quiet place where Our Lord could tell me how to be good . . ."

"Catherine!" called a woman's voice suddenly. "Come here at once!"

Recognizing her mother's voice, Catherine went into the house. Her golden curls were tangled from the wind and would have to be combed again. Her hands were dirty from picking flowers. But what did anything matter? She had seen a vision. She had seen a most wonderful vision in the sky. And soon she would be a saint, too, a saint with wonderful shiny robes like Saint Peter and Saint Paul and Saint John.

SAINT HYACINTH OF POLAND

THE STORY OF THE APOSTLE OF THE NORTH

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
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TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

FOUR APOSTLES

IT WAS Ash Wednesday in the year 1220, but the city of Rome was far from being in a Lenten mood. A spirit of exhilaration was abroad that did not correspond to sackcloth or ashes. Indeed, one might have thought it already Easter, especially if one looked at the joyful countenance of Stephen Cardinal Orsini. The old man was radiant.

"Napoleon! My young nephew Napoleon!" he kept repeating every few minutes. "A little while ago the lad was dead, but now he lives!"

Nicholas, the Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum, smiled. He had been present that morning at the Monastery of Saint Sixtus when the news had been brought that Napoleon had been thrown from his horse and killed. Others had been present, too, for this was a great day in the Eternal City. Several communities of nuns, heretofore living without cloister, had agreed to band together at the Monastery of Saint Sixtus under the Rule drawn up for them by the holy Spanish preacher Dominic de Guzman. All had been assembled for Mass and the

solemn ceremony of inclosure when the messenger had rushed in.

Recalling all these things now, the Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum looked closely at his old friend. "If I live for a hundred years, I'll never forget this morning's miracle!" he declared. "Your nephew was really dead, Stephen. Anyone could see that. But this Spanish friar. . .this Father Dominic. . . why, he was not at all alarmed. He comforted you a little, of course—but even I could tell that his thoughts were far away from the tragedy."

Cardinal Stephen nodded. "Yes, I know. Instead of being distracted, like the rest of us, he went ahead and offered the Holy Sacrifice. When all was over, he came to where Napoleon's body was stretched on the floor. Then—oh, Nicholas! What wonderful words he spoke!"

Cardinal Nicholas was silent for a moment, remembering how the Spanish friar had knelt beside the broken body of the young man and arranged the shattered limbs; how finally he had arisen, made the Sign of the Cross, then looked heavenwards and cried out joyfully:

"Young man, I say to you, in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, arise!"

Nicholas stretched out a reassuring hand to his old friend. "It has been a wonderful day," he murmured. "And one to remember forever, Stephen. For we have seen a saint at prayer and at work."

In a large house at some blocks' distance from where the two Italian Cardinals sat talking, other men were also discussing the morning's miracle.

These men were of a different build and coloring from the Cardinals, however—tall and muscular, with the fair hair and blue eyes that bespoke their Polish birth. The oldest, Ivo Odrowatz, wore the scarlet robes of a Bishop. He was seated in a large chair, with writing materials spread out on a table before him, while at his side stood two young priests, Hyacinth and Ceslaus, his nephews.

"We must try to see this Father Dominic before we go back to Poland," remarked the Bishop. "Oh, my sons! Pray, pray very hard that God will grant us the grace to speak with a man who can raise the dead to life!"

A soft glow stole into Hyacinth's eyes. "Maybe we should also pray for another favor," he suggested. "What do you think, Uncle Ivo? Could you use some of Father Dominic's friars in Cracow?"

"Of course we could use them!" put in Ceslaus eagerly. "What a wonderful idea!"

The Bishop's eyes turned from one young face to the other, and a little smile flickered on his lips. "Would you joke at such a time?" he asked. "If I thought that there was the least chance. . ."

"Put it in the letter, Uncle Ivo. Ask Father Dominic to give us some of his friars, so that northern Europe may be converted. Ask him this now—at the same time you ask for the privilege of an interview."

There was a respectful insistence in Hyacinth's voice, and the Bishop smiled in spite of himself. Here was a young man born to be a leader.

"Very well," he said. "I'll put it in the letter. But

tell me—do you really think the good friar can spare us any workers for Poland?"

Ceslaus nodded eagerly. "Oh, yes, Uncle Ivo. I'm quite sure he can. Why, just yesterday I heard it said that in France alone Father Dominic has converted hundreds from heresy. Surely all this couldn't have been done without many helpers?"

There was logic in these words, and the Bishop completed his letter to Father Dominic in a happy frame of mind. But an hour or so later, when he retired for the night, it was not to sleep. Tired though he was, he could not seem to relax. Again and again he kept seeing the holy friar who had presided that morning at the solemn inclosure of the nuns at Saint Sixtus, who had offered Mass and then raised a dead youth to life. Dominic de Guzman! What a remarkable man this was! And how wonderful if he and his followers could come as missionaries to Poland, even to Prussia and Lithuania and other pagan lands along the Baltic Sea.

"Our Northland needs preachers so much," he thought sadly. "We have priests, it is true—but how many are truly holy, truly wise? Oh, dear Lord, please send us many of these white-clad friars, these well-trained sons of the Spanish saint!"

Alas for the Bishop's hopes that the newly founded Friars Preachers could come to Poland! Ceslaus had spoken of them with more zeal than knowledge, and when the little group of northerners arrived at the Monastery of Santa Sabina for their interview with Dominic, an explanation was in order.

"Your Lordship, I have only a very few sons," said Dominic gently. "Some are in Spain, others in France—a mere handful here in Italy. So you see it would be quite impossible to send even one friar to your country just now."

The Bishop's face fell. "We do need priests so much," he faltered, "especially in the cities. I was hoping, and my nephews were hoping. . . but of course we understand, Father Dominic. You have work to do here in the South. Our wish is that God may bless your labors a hundredfold."

To this Hyacinth and Ceslaus added a fervent "Amen," and for a moment all was quiet in the room. Then Dominic approached the two brothers, looking long and earnestly into their eyes.

"Perhaps all is not lost," he said kindly. "Your Lordship, why not give me some of these young men who have accompanied you here to Rome? In just a little while I would return them to you as true apostles."

The Bishop stared. Hyacinth, a friar? Ceslaus? But before he could form a reply, Hyacinth was on his knees. His hands were clasped, his face shining. "Do you mean it, Father Dominic? You would really have me in your Order?"

"Yes, my son. And in due course you would return to your north country. You would preach God's Truth there and convert many."

"You will have me as your son, too, Father?" whispered Ceslaus anxiously. "I am older than Hyacinth, yet without his learning. Still, I give you my word that I would do my best to follow instructions;

that not a day would pass. . ."

Dominic looked at the Bishop. "I think this young man speaks too humbly of himself, Your Lordship. Perhaps you would tell me the truth about him?"

Now Ivo Odrowatz, who had come to Rome for one purpose only: to be confirmed in his new post as Bishop of Cracow, was somewhat stunned at the sudden turn of events. Could it be that these nephews whom he had trained and encouraged for years in God's service were being rather too hasty in their decision to follow the Spanish friar?

"Ceslaus has degrees in theology and law from the University of Bologna," he said slowly. "He's been a priest at the Cathedral in Cracow for about five years. . ."

"And this younger brother? What of him?"

The Bishop gazed fondly at Hyacinth. "He, too, has a good education, Father Dominic. First at the University of Prague, then at Bologna. Like Ceslaus, he is now a canon of the Cathedral in Cracow. But do you really think. . .?"

Dominic smiled—understandingly, affectionately. "Do I really think that men who are already priests can take to living as simple friars without a struggle? Oh, Your Lordship, have no fear! You have asked for workers, for apostles in the North. Soon you will have them. And not only in Hyacinth and Ceslaus. There are others in your retinue whom God intends for His service."

The Bishop stared. "*Others*, Father Dominic?"

"Yes. I see one now—standing by the window.

"YOU WILL HAVE ME IN YOUR ORDER, FATHER DOMINIC?"

And a second, by the door. Come here, my sons. Tell me if it is not true that God has suddenly touched your hearts with His grace—that now you are both convinced you must give yourselves to Him completely."

All eyes turned to where Dominic pointed, and the Bishop gasped. Advancing toward the Spanish friar were two of his lay attendants—Herman, who hailed from Germany, and a young Czech named Henry. They were good souls, honest and hard-working, but never had the Bishop suspected that they might be interested in the religious life. Indeed, until this very moment they had seemed quite content to spend their days as servants in the episcopal household.

Dominic was smiling. "Well, Herman? Well, Henry? What do you ask?"

With one accord the two fell upon their knees. Yes, they also wished to be clothed in the habit of the Friars Preachers. Of course they were not priests like Ceslaus and Hyacinth. They had little book learning. But they would do their best to be of use in other ways if Father Dominic could find room for them in his religious family.

The friar nodded understandingly. "Room, my children? There is always room in a good work for men who are willing to start in the lowest place."

Suddenly a lay Brother appeared in the doorway. There was an approving smile on Dominic's face as he observed that the newcomer had with him a number of white woolen habits. Quickly turning to the four young men before him, he indicated that

they should prostrate themselves on the ground in token of their unworthiness to serve God as religious. Then, as a second lay Brother approached with a lighted candle and Holy Water, he began to pray in a clear and fervent voice:

> "Stretch forth, O Lord, unto these Thy servants, the right hand of Thy heavenly assistance, that they may seek Thee with all their hearts, and obtain what they fittingly ask. . ."

Bishop Ivo watched the little scene with a fast-beating heart. What an amazing day this was! He had come to beg for missionaries from Father Dominic de Guzman. Instead, the holy man had claimed both nephews and servants for his preaching Order. Yet even as he thought on this, reassuring words echoed in Ivo's ears:

"Why not give me some of these young men who have accompanied you here to Rome? In just a little while I would return them to you as true apostles."

Apostles! Apostles for Poland! God willing, the holy friar was right, thought the Bishop. Ceslaus and Hyacinth, even Herman and Henry, would do great things in the cause of Christ. . .

SAINT MARTIN DE PORRES

THE STORY OF THE LITTLE DOCTOR OF LIMA, PERU

By
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Illustrated by
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TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

A BOY AND A BEGGAR

THE ROYAL city of Lima, in the far-away country of Peru, lay shining like a jewel under a burning sun. The streets of the city were silent, for it was the hour of the noon-day siesta, when every house and shop closed its shutters against the burning heat.

But in the narrow street of Espiritu Santo, a young colored woman stood staring out of her open door. She had no time to rest. That was only for the wealthy folk, for grand *Señoras* who could ride about the city in golden carriages, and dress in the best of silk and lace.

"Oh, how I wish I could be a great lady!" she thought. "Then I wouldn't have to scrub and cook and wear old clothes. And my children could have a chance in life. But this way. . . ."

Poor Anna Velasquez! She was very unhappy in her small house, and even her little son and daughter brought her no pleasure. When she looked at Martin and Jane, playing together on the floor with their poor toys, she could have cried. What future

was there in the world for Negro children? In Lima the rich people said they were only fit to be servants.

"I'd rather be dead than live like this!" Anna often told herself. "If only I were white, and my babies white, then their father would never have left me. He would have been glad to stay here with us and build us a fine house."

The children's father, Don Juan de Porres, did not live with Anna. He was a very rich and powerful soldier, a Spanish gentleman with a fair complexion. He was also very proud and very handsome, and it pleased him that the King of Spain looked favorably upon him. The city of Lima belonged to Spain, as well as most of South America, and there were plenty of fine positions to be had for a man who remained in the King's favor. So now Don Juan looked at little Martin and Jane, and there was a shadow of disgust on his face. How could a knight in the King's service ever claim black-skinned children for his son and daughter? What a terrible blow it was that they resembled Anna instead of himself!

"I am going away on business," he told their mother presently. "I don't know when I shall be back. Here's some money for you and the children!" And throwing a small bag of golden coins on the table, and with a fling of his grand scarlet cape, he was gone—whistling a lively tune as he went down the street to where his horse stood waiting.

Time passed. For many days Anna just stayed in her small house and cried. It seemed that Don Juan

was ashamed of his own children! And what was Anna going to do when the money he had left her was used up?

Soon the little pile of golden coins had disappeared. There was nothing for Anna to do, if she did not wish to starve, but to get some work. And so, heartbroken and lonely, the young Negro mother finally decided to take in washing. It was the only kind of work she knew how to do. And as she scrubbed and scrubbed on the clothes, dreadful thoughts crept into her mind. She began to think it was a pity that Martin and Jane had ever been born.

"It's all their fault!" she thought. "If they had only been white children, like their father wished, he would never have left me to this awful life." And so, when little Martin or Jane came running to tell her that the Viceroy's golden carriage was coming down the street, or that there was going to be a great bonfire in the Plaza that night, Anna would only scowl.

"Go away, you little black brats! Can't you see I'm busy? Don't you know I haven't time for carriages or bonfires? It's all your fault we're so poor!"

It always made Martin sad to see his mother angry. Poor little boy, he could not understand what was so terrible about having black skin. There were all kinds of Negroes in Lima, and some of them very nice. And there were many nice Indians, too, whose skin was not a bit white. It was true, of course, that only the white or Spanish people in

Lima had money, but Martin did not believe that the noble Spanish ladies and gentlemen, whose carriages rolled so grandly past his mother's door, were really better than anyone else. Had he not heard the priest at the church say that God had made everyone in the world in His own image? That all men should be brothers? That Heaven was a place where Christians of all nations would be happy together?

"Mother has made a mistake," Martin told Jane one day. "It isn't the color of our skin that matters. It's the color of our souls. Jane, if we have white souls, if we do everything we can to please God, there's no need to feel sorry that we are only poor Negroes and that our father went away and left us."

Jane nodded. Martin was only a little older than she, but he was far more clever. He could speak so well, and everyone liked him. Even the dogs and cats that roamed the streets were his friends, and there was not one of them, even the wildest, that would not come when he called.

"I guess you're right, Martin. But it would be lovely to have a father who cared for us, and a nice house, and some nice clothes. Oh, Martin! I don't think I'd ever be unhappy again if I could have just one nice dress! A white silk dress, with some little red shoes to go with it!"

Martin and Jane grew quickly, even though many times they did not get enough to eat. They helped their mother around the house and it was always their job to take the clean laundry to the different

houses. One warm day Anna called Martin to her. She had three small silver coins in one hand and a large empty basket in the other. She was very tired and hot, for she had been scrubbing since early morning. Now she looked closely at eight-year-old Martin.

"Can I trust you to go to the market and get something for dinner?" she asked. "You see, I know you, Martin. You'd give away every cent I make to beggars if I didn't watch you. But remember what happened the last time you tried that?"

Martin nodded gravely. A week ago his mother had been furious when he had put a silver coin into an old beggar's hat. On his return, without the loaves of bread she had sent him for, she had beaten him with a heavy stick. His body was still sore from the blows, but his mind had not forgotten the smile on the old beggar's face. It was the first time in a week, the old man had said, that anyone had given him an alms.

"I'll try not to give away any more money, Mother. Only it's hard to see poor old people hungry and not try to do something about it."

"Humph!" said Anna. "Let them work for a living, just as I do, if they want to eat. Now, take these three coins and do the best you can with them at the market. I want some bread, some beans and some fruit. Don't let anyone cheat you, and hurry home as fast as you can."

Martin smiled. He liked to be of use to his mother. "I'll run all the way," he said, and with the empty basket slung over one arm and the three

silver coins clutched tightly in his hand, he ran out the door.

The sky was dull this morning, and the narrow street of Espiritu Santo crowded with people. Martin thought, as he ran, that the street was twice as full as it seemed, for every person in it, Negro or Indian or Spaniard, had a beautiful guardian angel at his side.

"How lovely it must look!" he thought, and if he had not been in such a hurry to reach the market, he would have gone into his favorite church of Santo Domingo and turned over this idea in his mind. But his mother was in a hurry for the food. He would put away the little thought he had just had and think about it some other time.

So on he ran, dodging peddlers with their wares, Indians with their donkeys, children with their dogs, until at last he reached the great Plaza de Armas. Upon this public square, that marked the center of the city, fronted the Cathedral and the palace of the Archbishop. Tall green palms grew here, and masses of colorful flowers. Here in the Plaza one could hear all the news and gossip of the day, for here rich men mingled with poor, discussing in loud voices all manner of topics.

The Plaza was an interesting place indeed, but Martin did not stop today. He had already passed on, his face flushed from running, when a pitiful voice sounded in his ear and a hand clutched his arm.

"An alms, child!" whined an old beggar woman, crouching on the rough stone sidewalk. "I have not eaten in three days. . . ."

Martin's heart sank as he looked at the ragged creature. A beggar had found him, and he with three little coins in his hand!

"I am poor, my child . . . in God's Name . . . something for bread!"

Martin looked at the pitiful sight and shivered. Never had he seen such a tragic creature as this, a ragged shawl over her head, her eyes all but lost in the wrinkles of her face. He knew that his mother would all but kill him if he returned without the things she wished. But what could he do, when someone far poorer than himself was in need? He smiled a faint little smile and squared his shoulders.

"Here," he said, reaching for the old woman's bony hand, "take these three coins. And may God bless you!"

Then, so he would not hear the beggar woman's mumbled thanks, he turned and ran as swiftly as he could toward the church of Santo Domingo. Because he had not gone all the way to the market, he felt he could spare the time for a short visit. Before the tabernacle he would tell Our Lord that he had disobeyed his mother once more.

The church was cool and quiet. Two lay Brothers, in white habits with long black scapulars down the front and back, were sweeping one of the aisles. Martin went slowly toward the main altar and knelt down. He joined his hands and looked straight in front of him. He would tell his story just the way it had happened. And he would explain, too, how much he dreaded his mother's anger.

"TAKE THESE THREE COINS.
AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU!"

"She works so hard for her money, and I am always giving it away to beggars." he said softly. "Dear Lord, teach me always what is the right thing to do. And let me have a white soul, even if I am black on the outside. And bring my father back some day soon. And let me be brave when I tell Mother what I did with the three little coins. Amen."

Saint Rose of Lima

The Story of the First Canonized Saint of the New World

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Sister Mary Jean, O.P.

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

Chapter 1

What's in a Name?

IT WAS a July day in the city of Lima, with the sun hiding behind the thick blanket of mist which generally covers the coasts of Peru and Chile from June until September. Maria de Oliva Flores shivered as she went out into the large garden behind her house. Such days as these, with no sunlight, did not please her. The air was heavy and damp. She felt like sleeping all the time.

"Marianna! Are you out here?"

From the other end of the garden, out of sight among the trees and flower , came a girl's voice. "*Sí, señora*. I am with little Isabel."

Maria de Oliva turned into a narrow path, bending her head as she passed under a spreading fig tree. She might have known. Marianna, the Indian servant girl, always came out here after lunch with the baby of the Flores family. Three-month-old Isabel was definitely Marianna's favorite. Now Maria quickened her steps as she came to where Marianna was sitting beside the child's cradle. There was a proud smile on her face as she lifted the lace covering and looked down at her youngest child.

"Marianna, I've had many children, but I believe Isabel is the sweetest of all. Such pretty dark hair

and eyes! And those little pink cheeks. . . ."

The young Indian girl smiled, her white teeth flashing in the bronze of her face. "Isabel is like a flowe , *señora*. And so good! I've never seen such a lovely baby."

"Like a flowe , Marianna? What flower?

"A rose, señora. A beautiful pink rose. Just look at her now, smiling at us as though she knew what we were saying!"

Maria de Oliva was quiet a moment. This child had been born three months ago—on April 30, the feast of Saint Catherine of Siena. On May 25 she had been baptized by Father Anthony Polanco at the Church of San Sebastián and given the name Isabel. This had been to please her grandmother, Isabel de Herrera, Maria de Oliva's own mother. But did that name really suit the child? Wouldn't it be better to call her Rose, after the flower she resembled so mu h?

Marianna busied herself with her mending. The Flores family was not wealthy. With several children to feed and clothe, Gaspar Flores could afford only one servant. That meant Marianna had little free time. But she did not mind; now that little Isabel had come, it was especially good to be part of the Flores household.

"When this baby grows up, she will be the prettiest girl in Lima," said Marianna. "She will bring us good luck."

"We can use it," sighed Maria. "Sometimes it's a very hard struggle to make ends meet. Let's hope that Rose marries a wealthy man."

"Rose, *señora*?"

"That's right. I'm not going to call her Isabel any more. Rose suits her better. I know her grandmother won't mind if we change it."

Isabel de Herrera did mind, however. Her pride had been greatly flattered when Maria de Oliva had named her pretty little daughter after her, and she refused to hear of a change.

"She was called Isabel in Baptism, Maria. Why do you want to alter things now?"

"Because I think the name of Rose is better suited to her. Mother, please don't make things difficult for me!"

Isabel de Herrera had a hot temper. "*Difficult?* What are you talking about? The child's name is Isabel. That's all there is to it!"

"It's Rose!"

"It's Isabel!"

"Rose, I tell you!"

"Isabel!"

Sometimes Gaspar Flores lost patience with his wife and mother-in-law. "Call the child anything you like," he pleaded, "only let a man have some peace in his own house. *Please!*"

One year passed, two years, four years, and still the small Flores child was the center of a bitter struggle.

"It's certainly very foolish," said the neighbors.

"That poor little girl is afraid to answer to Rose because it displeases her grandmother. And she doesn't know what to do when anyone calls her Isabel because then her mother is angry. Why doesn't Gaspar put his foot down?"

But Gaspar Flores felt powerless. He felt that he could do little with his wife, much less with his mother-in-law.

"God help us all!" he often prayed.

One day Maria de Oliva, who was given to sudden fits of energy, decided to teach her little girl to read and write.

"Rose, you're nearly five years old. I think you could learn the alphabet. Look—this is the letter A. This one is B. And here is C. It's really very simple."

Rose found a piece of paper and some colored chalk. This was going to be nice! Bernardina, her oldest sister, knew all about reading and writing. So did Jane and Andrew and Anthony and Matthew. Even seven-year-old Ferdinand could write his name quite well. Perhaps, thought Rose, she could catch up with her brothers and sisters if she worked hard.

After half an hour of copying letters, however, Rose's small fingers grew stif .

"I'm tired and so are you," announced Maria de Oliva. "We'll have another lesson tomorrow. Now I want you to promise me something."

"Yes, Mother?"

"You're not to answer to any other name but Rose. No—it doesn't matter if your grandmother is cross. Your name is Rose Flores and nothing else. Understand?"

Rose nodded. The trouble about her name had always made her sad. She hated to see people quarreling, particularly her mother and grandmother. Ever since she could remember, however, there had been arguments between the two. Even though Maria

insisted that she had once had a vision in which she saw a beautiful pink rose floating over Rose's cradle, Isabel de Herrera would not believe it.

"That rose was a sign from Heaven telling me to change the child's name." said Maria de Oliva. "I'm absolutely convinced of it."

"A sign from Heaven, indeed!" the older woman cried out. "It was nothing but your own imagination!"

Maria soon grew tired of teaching her small daughter to read and write. She didn't have much patience, even at the best of times. And there was no one else to be interested in the child's great desire to learn.

"You're only a very little girl," Marianna comforted her one day. "There's plenty of time for you to learn reading and writing. As far as that goes, people can be quite happy without knowing how to do either of them. There's just one thing that's really important."

"What?" asked Rose eagerly.

"Knowing what is good and doing it. You'll never have any real trouble if you remember that, my child."

Marianna's words pleased Rose and she often turned them over in her mind. God was good. The more one thought about Him, the better one came to know Him. After that, being good and dying good were the simplest things in the world. Still, though, it would be nice to know a few things so that one might be useful to other people.

"I'm going to pray," the little girl told herself. "Since no one has time to teach me things, I'm going to ask God to do it. He can do anything, can't He?"

Maria de Oliva had a statue of the Christ Child in

her room. As was the Peruvian custom, the statue had a robe of its very own. This one was of red velvet with gold trimmings. Every day Rose knelt down before the little statue and said a prayer.

"Lord, help me to know and love You," she said very softly. "And please teach me to read and write!"

Maria de Oliva didn't know about these little prayers of Rose's. She had a lot to do to run her big house, and sometimes the work made her tired and cross.

"It won't always be like this," she thought. "Someday the children will marry, perhaps quite well. Then I'll be able to take things easier."

One morning Maria was baking bread. The kitchen was hot and steamy, and she was not in the mood to talk to anyone.

"Don't bother me now," she said, as Rose pushed open the door. "Go and play with Ferdinand until dinner time."

"But Mother! Don't you want to hear something wonderful? I know how to read and write!"

Maria de Oliva pounded the big mound of dough before her. "You mustn't make up stories." she said. "You're not a baby anymore. You ought to know that to tell a lie is a sin."

"I'm not telling a lie, Mother. I know how to read and write! Really and truly! Look!"

Maria glanced at the paper which Rose held out to her. It was covered with words, neatly written in a large round hand. For a five-yea -old child, the writing was very good.

"Someone's been helping you!" she said, a little

"Mother, I know how to read and write!"

sharply. "Your father or your grandmother."

Rose shook her head. "Nobody helped me, Mother. Only the little Christ Child. You're always so busy I didn't want to bother you, so I just asked Him to help me. And He did!"

Some of the flush faded from Maria's heated face. "Go and bring me a book," she ordered sternly. "Any book. We'll soon see if you're telling the truth."

In a few minutes Rose was back with a big green volume. "Look, Mother, there are four words in gold letters on the cover. I can read every one of them."

Maria de Oliva stared. If this child of hers was really telling the truth. . . .

"Well? What are those four words?"

Rose smiled. This was a wonderful day. She would remember it as long as she lived. The four golden words on the cover of the green book were Saint Catherine Of Siena. Inside there were many more words, telling the life story of the great Italian saint upon whose feast day she had been born. And she could read every one of them!

THE CHILDREN OF LA SALETTE

by
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Gedge Harmon

CHAPTER ONE

IT WAS eleven o'clock in the morning of Friday, September 18, 1846, but fourteen-year-old Melanie Mathieu was scarcely interested in that. At the moment she was feeling peevish. A strange shepherd boy and his dog had just crept up behind her in a most startling way as she sat watching her master's four cows on the slopes of the French Alps near the hamlet of Ablandins. And they had caught her "talking to the flower ," a game she had liked to play since she was a small child, but one which all the other young shepherds thought silly.

"Go away, boy," she said crossly. "This isn't your field "

But the newcomer, his dark eyes sparkling with mischief, only laughed. "It's all right, little girl. I'm

Maximin Giraud and this is my dog Loulou. We've come to play with you. You see, we're from Corps, too."

Melanie jumped to her feet. What if this stupid boy (whom she had seen yesterday for the first time) did come from her own town? That was no reason to startle a person or make fun of her.

"Didn't you hear me?" she exclaimed impatiently. "I want to be left alone!" Then, as Maximin did not budge, she hurried resolutely up the steep slope to find another resting place. But she had gone only a few yards when Maximin came running after her—breathless but cheerful—accompanied by the faithful Loulou.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "My master told me to come and watch his four cows and my goat in your field "

Melanie scowled. "Your master?"

"Yes, Peter Selme. See? He's down there on the mountain mowing hay. I've been working for him since Monday because his little girl is sick and he can't find anyone else to atch the cows."

Melanie shaded her eyes from the warm September sun. Sure enough. Peter Selme, whose fiel adjoined that of Baptiste Pra, her own master, was busy with his scythe far down the mountainside. But surely he hadn't told this wretched boy to bother her! Like everyone else in the neighborhood, he knew that Melanie Mathieu seldom played with other children. In fact, he probably agreed with them that she was queer and was best left to herself.

"Go away, boy," she repeated firml . "I told you I want to be alone." And picking up her shepherd's staff, she sped still farther up the mountainside. Only when it seemed evident that Maximin and his dog were not going to follow did she come to a halt. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she sat down on the grassy turf and began talking to the flowers again—pretending that they were kind people who were her friends.

However, in just a few minutes Maximin had crept up quietly behind her and seated himself a short distance away, Loulou at his feet.

"Why don't you want to play with me?" he asked plaintively. "I promise to be very good."

Exasperated beyond words, Melanie started up the mountainside again. Yet this time Maximin followed at her heels, pleading his cause so earnestly (he had never been a shepherd before, it seemed, and was very lonely), that Melanie finally let herself be persuaded. Yes, he might stay with her—and Loulou, too—but only on certain conditions.

"You'll have to be very quiet."

"Oh, yes!"

"You mustn't make fun when I talk to the flower ."

"Of course not."

"All right, then. Sit down. But keep your eyes on the cows so they don't fall down that ravine over there."

For a while all went well. Melanie gathered daisies and other wildflowers and arranged them in colorful patterns on the grass. But when she began to talk to

"GO AWAY, BOY. I WANT TO BE ALONE."

them as though they were real people, Maximin burst out laughing.

"Silly! Flowers haven't any ears," he said. "Come on—let's play a real game."

"Maximin! You promised to be quiet!"

"I know. But I'm tired of sitting still. Besides, I want to show you some good tricks."

But Melanie was not interested in tricks. Or in games either, although she did agree to listen to Maximin's account of himself: that he was eleven years old, the son of a poor man in Corps who made wheels for wagons; that his own mother had died when he was a baby, and that his stepmother was not too kind to him; that he had never been away from home before, and that only with the greatest reluctance had his father allowed him to come to Ablandins to help Peter Selme until Sunday while the latter's little daughter was ill. In fact, he had insisted the boy take along the family dog and goat, and that he receive not only his regular wage but a goodly supply of butter and cheese as well.

"Papa thinks I'm not to be trusted," laughed Maximin, "that I'll forget to watch the cows, or else fall down the mountain and break my neck. That's why he didn't want to hire me out. But so far I've done all right."

"Well, it's not Sunday yet," observed Melanie dryly. "Don't brag too much." Then, after a moment: "What'll you do when you go back to Corps?"

"Nothing. Just amuse myself."

"Amuse yourself! But why don't you go to school if you live in town?"

"Oh, no! Papa sent me a few times, but I never stayed. You see, I hate books—and sitting still."

"You go to church, though?"

"Sometimes. But I don't like that much either. Or Catechism class with the priest."

"You know your prayers?"

"Just the Our Father and the Hail Mary."

Melanie stared at the boy beside her. How strange he was! How thin and small! Why, he seemed more like eight than eleven! And yet there was something appealing about him, too, despite his restlessness and mischievous ways. . . .

"Go on," she said, with unexpected interest. "Tell me more." But Maximin only laughed. "No, it's your turn now. What about yourself and your own family?"

A bit hesitantly Melanie consented to tell a little about herself. Her home was also in Corps (some six miles from Ablandins), but she had spent a good deal of time away from there. In fact, from the age of ten she had cared for the sheep and cattle of various farmers in the neighborhood—first at Quet, then at Sainte-Luce, and now for Baptiste Pra at Ablandins. There were two older brothers who sometimes worked away from home, too, and several younger brothers and sisters. Since the family was poor, the absence of one or more children meant a considerable saving on food bills. Then, their wages were also a help. But she herself always returned home for the

winter, since it was too cold then to take an animal to pasture in the mountains.

"It's September 18 now," said Maximin. "You'll be going back to Corps in a few weeks."

"Yes, in November."

"Then what?"

"Why, I suppose I'll stay home until March."

For a moment the boy was silent. But just as he was on the point of asking more questions, there came the melodious chime of bells from the parish church of La Salette in the valley below.

"Sssh!" said Melanie quickly. "That's the noon Angelus. Take off your hat, Maximin, and raise your heart to God."

The boy obediently uncovered his head and was quiet for a little while. However, his lively spirits promptly returned when Melanie invited him to share her lunch. And he was all eagerness when she brought out a small, round loaf from her knapsack. But when she took a knife and traced a cross on the loaf, then punched a tiny hole in the center of the cross, saying: "Devil, if you are in there, come out; Lord, if You are in there, stay in!", at the same time quickly covering the hole, he burst out laughing.

"Melanie, what a silly girl you are!" he cried. "As though the Devil, or God, could be in a little loaf like that!"

Melanie was strangely silent. Nor did she argue or complain when the loaf slipped from her hands, and a mischievous kick from Maximin sent it rolling

down the grassy slopes of the mountain into a deep ravine. Instead, she produced another loaf, cut a cross on it, prayed, then offered a generous portion to her companion.

"I've some cheese, too," she said, with a certain dignity.

Unabashed, and still laughing, Maximin devoured both bread and cheese with gusto. Then, at Melanie's suggestion, he climbed a short distance up the mountain and returned with his hat filled with wild fruit and berries.

"We'll eat these and then playa game," he said.

But Melanie shook her head. No, they had already played and talked enough. Now they must find their eight cows and Maximin's goat and take them to drink at the spring.

SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE

THE STORY OF THE
APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Paul A. Grout

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

THE PRIDE OF SAUL

IT WAS a well-armed troop of men that marched briskly through the streets of Jerusalem one bright morning in the year A.D. 34. Their destination was the city of Damascus, 150 miles away. Unless something unforeseen occurred, they would reach there within a week's time. Then woe betide the men and women they sought . . . those betrayers of the Law of Moses and the Prophets, who declared that the Messias had already come in the person of a poor carpenter from Nazareth.

"Death to every one of them!" muttered the leader of the troop, Saul—a small, wiry man in his early thirties, whose dark eyes flashed vengefully. Yes, death to all who followed the Nazarene. And before death—imprisonment, torture, starvation . . .

"Look, sir!" cried a young soldier suddenly, pressing forward on Saul's right as the group passed through the Damascus Gate at the north end of the city. "Over there, by the side of the road!"

Saul shaded his eyes from the brilliant sunshine, and for an instant a satisfied smile played about his mouth. Plainly visible in the open countryside was a freshly turned mound of earth. At this place a few days ago a raging mob had stoned to death a young man who persisted in declaring that the Nazarene, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, was the Promised One of Israel.

"One fool less, isn't it, sir?"

Saul's eyes were grim. "There are still plenty left, especially in Damascus."

The young soldier smiled confidently. "But we'll stone them, too, sir. And bury them all in a common grave. Then our troubles will be over."

Saul laughed harshly and pointed to a black leather lash curled like a snake about his arm. "You make it too easy. The ones we take prisoner at Damascus must have a slower death than stoning. They must be flogged before friends and neighbors, then marched in chains to Jerusalem for sentence."

"In chains, sir?"

"Yes."

"Men and women alike?"

"Men and women alike."

In spite of himself the young soldier fell back a few paces, looking with awe at the young leader. What a man of iron Saul was! Although in one sense he was a foreigner, a Roman citizen born in Tarsus, in Cilicia, he was as filled with zeal for the Law and the Prophets as the most learned rabbi at the Temple. He seemed to have only one purpose in life—to destroy the followers of the Nazarene. No wonder the Sanhedrin (the Great Council in Jerusalem) had given him full powers to arrest and punish traitors to the Jewish religion. It would be hard to find a more loyal and devoted son of Israel anywhere.

There was no one in the company who did not share these sentiments. Yet as they journeyed on, doubts arose whether Saul's methods in dealing with the Damascus Nazarenes would be successful. If the wretches were to be flogged, then chained together and made to walk, under a hot sun, the 150 miles to the council chambers of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem . . .

"The majority will drop in their tracks after the first day," was the general opinion. "Particularly the women."

"Yes, we'll have only a handful of prisoners to show for our efforts when we reach Jerusalem."

"Why not save the floggings until later?"

"That's right. And then our trip won't have been for nothing."

Saul paid little attention to such talk. Why should he? Elsewhere his treatment of the Nazarenes had been thoroughly successful. No other man could equal his record for rooting out the traitors and bringing them before the authorities for speedy judgment.

"It will be the same this time," he assured himself. "In spite of what we do to them, there'll be plenty of traitors to bring to Jerusalem."

At the thought of the role he was playing in ridding the country of those who would defy the Law of Moses, Saul's heart glowed with a righteous pride. A conscientious Pharisee, he himself would rather die than disobey even one of the ancient teachings. Since childhood, when he had been made to memorize the hundreds of "do's" and "don'ts" of the Law, there had been no other rule of life for him. And now the Nazarenes declared that the Old Law had served its purpose! That it was supplanted by a New Law, taught by a common laborer from Nazareth!

"The fools!" he muttered savagely. "The ignorant,

blaspheming fools!"

Day after day, as he and his companions moved steadily northwards toward Damascus, Saul's fury against his intended victims mounted. Oh, what he would do to the stupid wretches, the vile traitors, once they were in his hands! How they would cry out for mercy under the lash! And how quickly they would cast aside their miserable new beliefs when that mercy was not forthcoming!

Very soon, however, there was no need for colorful imaginings. At noon of the eighth day out of Jerusalem, Saul's eager eyes glimpsed the city of Damascus—white and shimmering under the rays of the Syrian sun. Half consciously he uncoiled the leather whip about his arm.

"Traitors!" he shouted. "In just a little while now . . . an hour . . . two hours . . ."

Suddenly a flash of light cut through the sky, a light so intense that every man stumbled and fell to the ground. And then, as Saul lay sprawled among the others, dazed and helpless with shock, a voice spoke in his ears:

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?"

Saul lay as though in a trance. "Who are You, Lord?" he gasped.

Swift and clear came the reply: "I am Jesus, whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the goad."

Dazed and trembling, Saul roused himself to speak again:

"Lord, what will You have me do?"

"Rise up, and go into the city," was the answer. "There you shall be told what you must do."

Slowly Saul came to himself, struggling to regain his feet. But as he raised himself painfully to his knees,

fear clutched his heart. Everything was dark!

"I'm blind!" he cried, stretching out his hands in terror.

Confused and shaken, his companions hastened to assist him. All had seen the flash of light and been thrown to the ground; all had heard the voice; but not one of them had understood what was said.

"What was it, sir?" the men asked fearfully. "What happened?"

But Saul could explain nothing. His strength and pride were gone. He, the terror of the Nazarenes, was now as helpless as a little child. He could scarcely stand.

"Come, sir, we'd better lead you into the city," urged his terrified followers. "Just give us your hands . . ."

Silently Saul stretched out his hands. And as he did so, an aching numbness fell upon him. *The Messias had already come! And he, Saul, had been persecuting His followers!*

SAINT BENEDICT

THE STORY OF THE FATHER OF THE WESTERN MONKS

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Donald Walpole, O.S.B.
MONK OF ST. MEINRAD'S ABBEY

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

Chapter 1

THE BOY WHO RAN AWAY

CYRILLA was worried. Young Master Benedict, whose parents had sent him to study in the schools of Rome, was losing interest in his work. Only last night he had said that he didn't want to be a leader in law or politics. He only wanted to be a hermit in a cave.

"The foolish boy!" thought Cyrilla, as she set about getting supper for Benedict and herself. "If he really wants to lead a holy life, why can't he enter a monastery? There are plenty of them here in Rome."

Cyrilla sat down before the open fireplace and scowled at a kettle of water that was almost ready to boil. She was a woman in her middle fifties, short and plump, with her dark hair already streaked with grey. For many years she had been with Benedict's family. First it had been just as a simple maid. Later, when Benedict and his twin sister were born, she had been chosen to be their nurse.

"I was happy then," she thought. "I liked living in that little town of Nursia. But here in Rome things are so different. So much noise and dirt!"

There was a sudden sound of footsteps outside. The door opened and Cyrilla looked up. Young Master Benedict stood on the threshold. Eagerly, she scanned his face.

"Well?" she asked hopefully, but her heart sank even as she spoke. There was the same light in the boy's dark eyes. It was easy to see that he had not given up the idea of being a hermit.

"I told the schoolmaster I wouldn't be coming back any more. Please don't be cross, Cyrilla. There wasn't anything else I could do."

The woman got to her feet. "But Master Benedict! Your father's going to be so angry if you don't finish your education! After all, he's made so many fine plans. Why can't you wait until you're older before taking any such step as this?"

Benedict smiled. "I'm seventeen," he said gently. "Boys that age are old enough to go to war. Even to marry. But I . . . I just want to serve God. Surely you can understand that?"

The woman shook her head wearily. "I'll be blamed for all this," she murmured. "Just wait and see. Your father sent me here to Rome to be your housekeeper. What will he say when he hears I've let you run away from school? Ah, Master Benedict, you're going to break my heart!"

There was no doubt about the way Cyrilla felt. Benedict looked at her uneasily. He didn't want to hurt anyone, much less this kindly woman who had been his nurse since childhood. Yet what could he do? Rome, the great city where so many people spent their days trying to be rich and powerful,

was not to his liking. He himself longed for the quiet of the countryside, for some small cave where he could spend his days in prayer.

"Don't worry," he said kindly. "I've heard that a hermit's life is really very healthy. Lots of fresh air, sunshine, simple food . . ."

"And cold winds, rain and snow! Master Benedict, you know you're not used to such things. Why, you'd die of the hardship within a month!"

"Not unless it was the Will of God, Cyrilla. Remember how He looks after everyone on this earth, even the birds and the flowers in the fields?"

Cyrilla sniffed. "If you're going off to be a hermit, it won't be by yourself," she declared. "I'll go with you and see that you don't starve to death."

The boy laughed. "But a hermit has to live alone, Cyrrilla, even if it is hard! That's the whole point to the life. A hermit cuts himself off from the world, from friends and all the usual comforts, so he can belong more wholly to God."

The kettle was boiling furiously now. Cyrilla went over and removed it from the fire. "You're going to be a different kind of hermit," she said firmly. "You're going to have someone to cook your meals and mend your clothes."

It was a few days later that Benedict and Cyrilla left Rome and headed eastward into the hill country. They had no real destination, save that the boy still had his mind set on living in a cave. When they had gone far enough, he said, they would surely come across some such place.

"I still think it's a foolish idea, going off like this

"THEY HAD NO REAL DESTINATION, SAVE THAT THE BOY STILL HAD HIS MIND SET ON LIVING IN A CAVE."

into the wilderness," muttered Cyrilla. "How do you know there aren't wild beasts in these woods? Or even thieves and murderers?"

Benedict smiled and shaded his eyes against the burning sun. "If there are, God will protect us from them," he said simply. "All we have to do is trust in Him."

Of course trust in God was built on faith in Him. Faith! The boy liked the sound of that word. It was something that all the saints possessed in abundance. It enabled one to "see" beyond this world to the things of God. Once he was a hermit, he would try to increase his faith. He would try very hard to pray well, to find God in his own soul, to honor and love Him for all His goodness.

"It's going to be a wonderful life!" he thought. "I won't have to worry about being a success in the world, only about getting to Heaven and praying that all my friends and relatives get there, too."

But as the hours passed, Benedict became a bit worried. Cyrilla did not complain, but he could see she was growing tired.

"We'll stop for a while," he suggested kindly. "After all, we don't have to find a cave today, Cyrilla. It may take quite a while before we come across the right place."

The woman shook her head. "Let's keep on going, Master Benedict. This is such a dreadfully wild looking country."

Time passed, and the sun began to sink behind the hills. The sky turned from rosy pink to lavender, then to a deep purple. Presently it was night, with

a million bright stars winking down on the lonely mountain road. Fireflies glittered among the trees. A soft wind stirred the tall grass, and somewhere in the distance a nightingale began to sing.

Benedict smiled. Cyrilla was too tired to care about the loveliness of the scene before them. She could scarcely drag one foot after the other.

"We'll spend the night under that big pine tree," the boy thought. "Surely no harm will come to us."

As he finished preparing a place for the two of them, he saw that Cyrilla was nearly asleep, her head heavy upon the little satchel of belongings she had brought. He smiled again as he settled down to keep watch over his faithful companion. In a way it was good to be adrift like this. It gave one a chance to rely completely on the providence of God.

The next day was clear and cloudless and Benedict and Cyrilla were up very early. The boy was still confident that he wanted to lead a hermit's life, but he could not help feeling worried about his companion. Cyrilla was not a young woman. Walking so many miles yesterday had been too much for her, and Benedict realized that something would have to be done. Either they would have to find a cave very soon or else make their way to some village.

"I don't want to be a nuisance," Cyrilla muttered, "but I can't keep on much longer, Master Benedict. My feet are so sore!"

The boy nodded. "All right. We'll go slowly for the rest of the morning. By the time night comes, I'm

pretty sure we'll have found some good place to stay."

Benedict was right. Late that afternoon they glimpsed the spire of a little church. There were houses, too, and other signs that people were living in the neighborhood.

"Thanks be to God!" cried Cyrilla, as she stopped to gaze at a thin line of smoke rising from a chimney. "Master Benedict, you've no idea how glad I am to see this place!"

SAINT MARGARET MARY

AND THE PROMISES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Paul A. Grout

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

A TROUBLED HOUSEHOLD

THE PLUMP, good-natured face of Father Anthony Alacoque wore a worried frown as he trudged through the fields from his parish church at Verosvres to the neighboring farm of Lhautecour. True, the crops were splendid in this year of Our Lord 1660, and he himself in excellent health. Parish finances were satisfactory, too. But things were far different at Lhautecour for his widowed sister-in-law, Madame Philiberte Alacoque, and her poor little invalid daughter Margaret.

"It's a shame the way my own sisters are treating those two," mumbled the priest, pausing for a moment to survey the fertile countryside. "A shame and a disgrace. Today I must give Benedicta and Catherine a good talking-to."

But even as he neared Lhautecour and started purposefully toward the smaller of the two stone farmhouses, a woman's shrill voice echoed angrily from the kitchen.

"Philiberte, you clumsy fool! You've broken another dish! What in heaven's name is the matter with you?"

There was a moment's silence, then a burst of uncontrolled sobbing.

"But I couldn't help it, Benedicta! Truly I couldn't . . ."

"That's a likely story! You'll go without your dinner for this, my fine lady. Mark my words. Now, clean up that mess at once, do you hear? At once!"

"But I don't feel well—"

"Listen, stupid, if you don't do what I say . . ."

There was another burst of tears. Then, after a moment: "All right, Benedicta, I'm sorry. I'll pick up the pieces. Only please don't be angry with me! It was all just an accident. Truly it was!"

Father Anthony sighed and shook his head. Poor Philiberte! Her lot in life had certainly changed for the worse since the death of her beloved Claude five years ago. Before that she had been undisputed mistress of Lhautecour, and Claude the best and most generous of husbands.

Too generous, reflected Father Anthony ruefully, picking his way past the bedraggled geese, chickens and ducks aimlessly scratching in the courtyard. Now if Claude had only been a bit more careful with his money, a bit more insistent that his law clients pay their bills and that the servants should not waste their time, Lhautecour would certainly never have gone to rack and ruin. Then sharp-tongued Benedicta Delaroche and her husband Toussaint would not have had to try to save the place from bankruptcy. Or ill-tempered Catherine either. As for Grandmother, Toussaint's crotchety old mother who had also come to live at the farm—

"Well, may the Will of God be done," murmured the priest, bracing himself for the ordeal that lay ahead. "Lord, give me the right words to say to my sisters—and to Philiberte, too."

There was good need for such a prayer. As Father Anthony pushed open the kitchen door, a frail, black-clad matron of some thirty-eight years immediately abandoned the bits of crockery which she had been trying to sweep into a pile and rushed tearfully toward him.

"Oh, Father! Thank God you've come! I . . . I'm so miserable I could die!"

The priest managed a reassuring smile. "There, there, my dear, what's the trouble? Surely you and Benedicta haven't been quarreling again!"

Across the room Benedicta Delaroche, a gaunt woman of forty-two, drew herself up to her full height. "Quarreling!" she burst out. "Anthony, if you weren't a priest of God and my own brother, I'd send you packing this very minute. As it is, will you tell Philiberte to go upstairs at once? It's high time you and I had an understanding about some things."

"Yes, and I want a few words with you, too," put in a second querulous voice. "I may not have a husband, but surely I ought to have some rights around this wretched place."

Father Anthony turned. His youngest sister Catherine, shabbily dressed and looking far older than her forty years, had followed him in from outside and now was fixing him with a suspicious glance.

"Why, Catherine! I never heard you come in."

"Of course you didn't, Anthony. I never intended that you should. Now, if you'll just send Philiberte about her business . . ."

Madame Alacoque dabbed at her reddened eyes. "Father, I don't have to go, do I? There's *so* much I want to tell you! And Margaret will want to talk to you, too, and to have your blessing. Poor little lamb,

"OH FATHER, I'M SO MISERABLE . . ."

she's dying by inches, Father, and not a soul to care for her but me . . ."

"That's a lie, Philiberte, and you know it!" snapped Benedicta Delaroche. "Margaret has had the best of treatment ever since she took sick four years ago. And who's paid for her food and medicine all that time? Who's kept a roof over her head, and yours? Why, if it weren't for all the hard work my husband and I have put in here at Lhautecour . . ."

Catherine Alacoque's thin lips trembled. "Don't forget that I've worked hard, too, Benedicta. Up early every morning, rain or shine. Scrubbing, cleaning, cooking, mending. And for what, I ask you? Oh, when I think of all that might have been . . ."

Father Anthony squirmed. Poor Catherine! An unfortunate love affair several years ago had completely soured a disposition none too cheerful by nature. Now, unless he were careful, she would begin to recount the whole miserable story for the thousandth time.

"Philiberte, I do think you'd better leave us for a while," he said hastily.

"But Father—"

"It's all right, my dear. We'll have a good visit together later on. I give you my word."

"And Margaret?"

"I'll see her, too. Never fear."

Slowly Madame Alacoque turned toward the door. "Very well," she said heavily. "I'll go."

SAINT DOMINIC

PREACHER OF THE ROSARY AND
FOUNDER OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Gedge Harmon

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

THE EARLY YEARS

IT WAS AUTUMN of the year 1190, and a blistering heat hung low over northern Spain like a breath from Hell. Throughout the kingdoms of Castile and Leon the crops failed. Burgos, Palencia, Valladolid—these and other cities were in the grip of the worst famine in years. People were dropping in the streets like flies, and there was rumor that soon the plague would strike.

"Mother of God, have pity on us!" was the anguished cry that went up from every heart. "Send us bread . . ."

But there was bread only for those who had money to buy it, and day after day the funeral bells sent out an almost constant dirge as mounds of sunbaked clay were heaped upon the bodies of still more victims of the famine in Palencia things were especially serious, and finally one young man knew that he could stand it no longer. He, twenty-year-old Dominic de Guzman, a student for the priesthood, must do something to help the starving.

"But what *can* you do?" asked friends and teachers anxiously. "Why, you are little more than a boy . . ."

"I know," admitted Dominic. "But I have some

money. It will help to buy bread for at least one family."

Undaunted by the argument that he might as well keep what he had, since it was so little, Dominic went down into the poor section of Palencia and gave away all that he owned—his money, clothes, furniture from his room at school, and finally his books. It was a real sacrifice to part with the books, for they were sheets of precious parchment, that is, dried sheepskin, and of more than ordinary worth because of the many notes which were written in the margins.

"The lad must be a fool!" Dominic's friends told one another. "How can he keep at his studies without books?"

"That's right. How can he?"

But Dominic only smiled when such remarks reached his ears. "Who could prize dead skins when the flesh of the living is perishing from want?" he asked. "I'll manage somehow."

His faith was rewarded. After his great act of charity, Dominic enjoyed even more success at school than before—leading his classes in every subject, and making a name for himself as a scholar. Indeed, when the Bishop of Osma (a town near Palencia) heard about Dominic's fine record, and also how he had sold his precious books in order to help the poor, he made up his mind to one thing. Some day this courageous young man must come to live with him. As a priest he would make a fine assistant.

After his ordination in 1195, Dominic did go to Osma. And two years later when the Bishop died

and Father Diego de Acebes succeeded to his position, nothing would do but that Dominic remain. He would be of great use as prior of the canons—that is, in charge of the assistant priests who lived in the Bishop's house.

Dominic was very happy at Osma. He liked the quiet life there, the chance to pray and study and to help out from time to time in the country parishes. Even more, he appreciated his friendship with Bishop Diego. What a saint this was! What a lover of souls!

"If the Holy Father ever permits him to be a missionary to the Tartars, I want to go along, too," Dominic told himself. "It would be a privilege to live and work with such a man for the rest of my days."

But the years passed, and Bishop Diego was unsuccessful in all his attempts to be relieved of his duties in Osma. He was needed there, said the authorities. And friends and co-workers agreed. Reluctantly he stifled his heart's desire to convert the Tartars—those savage tribes which lived along the Dnieper and Volga rivers in eastern Europe, and from time to time descended upon the Christian countries to the west with fire and sword.

"Lord, not my will but Thine be done!" he prayed.

Then one day there was great excitement in Osma. Bishop Diego was going away, although not to the Tartars. He was going to Denmark on important business for King Alfonso of Castile.

"It has something to do with a marriage for Prince Ferdinand," people said.

"That's right. King Alfonso has asked King Valdemar to let one of his daughters marry his son."

"Yes. And he wants Bishop Diego to help bring matters about."

So one morning in the year 1203, with Dominic as a traveling companion, the Bishop took his place among the dozens of learned priests and wealthy nobles who had been chosen by Alfonso as his ambassadors to the Danish court. But the imposing cavalcade had gone less than three hundred miles—indeed, had barely entered southern France—when scenes of great devastation met their eyes. Acres of fertile land lay blackened and desolate. Wayside shrines were broken. And one village after another lay in smoking ruins.

"What is it?" asked Dominic anxiously. "What's happened here?"

The questions were soon answered by a little group of peasants who timidly approached the royal procession to beg for food. The heretics—commonly known as the Albigenses because their teachings had originated in the French town of Albi—had caused all the damage, they said. Two days ago a band of them had come this way. Finding a few men and women faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church, they had killed most of them, burned and pillaged their lands, then taken the children prisoner.

"Three of those little ones were my own grandsons!" an old man told Diego, tears streaming down his withered cheeks. "Oh, Your Lordship! Isn't there anything that we can do?"

Diego looked at Dominic. "My son, you hear what this poor man says. What do you think?"

Dominic was busy doling out alms to the peasants. "We could drop out of line a while, Your Lordship,"

DOMINIC WAS BUSY DOLING OUT ALMS.

he suggested. "When these poor fellows have eaten, they'll be able to tell us more about what has happened, and perhaps we can figure out some way to help."

So Diego and Dominic left their places in the royal procession to attend to the peasants' wants and to hear what they had to say. Of course as priests they knew about the heresy of the Albigenses which had been afflicting southern France for several years. In fact, they were as much aware of its evils as they were of those existing in eastern Europe because of the pagan Tartars. Yet now the truth of the situation was fully brought home to them.

"Tell us about the heretics," said Bishop Diego presently. "Why do they act as they do?"

Refreshed with food and drink and heartened by the friendliness of Diego and Dominic, the peasants were soon vying with one another in explaining about the Albigenses—what they believed, and the cruelties which they practiced toward faithful members of the Catholic Church.

"The heretics claim that there are two gods, Your Lordship—one good and one bad."

"Ye. The good god made the soul, the bad god made the body."

"That's right. And since anything the bad god made is bad, it must be destroyed."

"So they practice suicide."

"And they don't believe in marriage."

"Or any of the Sacraments."

"They actually despise the Mass."

"And the Old Testament."

"And because we don't agree to their teachings,

they burn our farms and destroy our churches."

Sorrow clouded the Bishop's face. "What do they do with the things which they take from the holy places?"

"Why, they keep them for their own use, Your Lordship."

"Even the sacred vessels?"

"Of course."

"But that's a sacrilege!"

"Yes, Your Lordship."

Soon further details were forthcoming. For instance, one reason that the heretics were so successful in southern France was their crafty leaders—men who seemed to have the cleverness of the devil himself. The powerful Count Raymond of Toulouse and Count Roger of Beziers had fallen so completely under the spell of these men as to give name and fortune to the cause.

"We do need help, Your Lordship!" cried the old man who had lost his grandsons. "One of these days the heretics will be back again. Then what's going to happen?"

But even as Diego groped for words to encourage him, there was a sound of galloping horses and two soldiers rode up breathlessly

"Your Lordship, we've been waiting for you for over two hours! Is anything wrong?"

Diego pointed to the little group of peasants. "Father Dominic and I have been trying to help these poor people," he said. "They've told us how the heretics robbed them of everything—food, homes, children . . ."

The soldiers looked briefly at the peasants, then

shook their heads grimly. "There are thousands more just like them. And there isn't anything anyone can do. The heretics are too powerful."

"But surely if we think about the problem . . ."

"There isn't time, Your Lordship. We have to be on our way."

With sinking heart the Bishop acknowledged that this was true. It was nearly a thousand miles to Denmark, and urgent work awaited everyone in the royal procession.

"My children," he sighed, turning to the peasants, "The best help I can give you at this time is prayer." Then, lifting his right hand, he spoke holy and familiar words over the forlorn little group before him:

"May the blessing of Almighty God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—descend upon you and remain with you forever . . ."

KING DAVID AND HIS SONGS

A STORY OF THE PSALMS

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Gedge Harmon

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

THE SECRET ANOINTING

ABOUT ONE thousand years before the birth of Our Lord, there lived near Bethlehem a man named Isai (also known as Jesse). He had eight sons whom he loved dearly, especially the youngest, a boy of 15 whose name was David.

Now one day Isai was astonished to learn that Samuel, the holy prophet of the Hebrew people, had come to see him.

"What can the great Samuel want of me?" Isai asked a bit nervously of the servant who brought the news. "What have I done?"

"I don't know sir," replied the servant. "But I think that the prophet comes on peaceful business."

Isai lost no time in gathering together his household—his wife, his servants and the seven oldest boys. All must come with him to greet Samuel, and to wish him well. But he did not bother to summon David, who was away in the fields tending the sheep, for the boy was little more than a child, and Isai thought it unlikely that the great prophet would be interested in seeing him.

But in this he was mistaken. "Let me see this youngest son," Samuel commanded. So a servant was dispatched to summon David from the fields and to find someone else to watch the sheep.

Now when the servant came upon Isai's youngest boy, he found him sitting under a tree playing upon a little wooden flute. All about him the flocks were grazing peacefully, and in the branches of the tree overhead the birds were making music of their own—echoes of the youthful shepherd's happy tune. It was a pleasant sight, but the servant did not pause to enjoy it.

"Young master, you must come at once!" he cried breathlessly. "The great and holy prophet Samuel is here and wants to see you!"

David looked up in surprise. "The holy prophet wants to see *me?*"

"Yes, young master."

David laid down his flute. "All right," he said. "I'll come."

When David was brought before Samuel, the prophet's heart swelled with joy. What a fine-looking boy this was! Even more important, his clear gaze and courteous manners proclaimed him to be a lad whom one could trust—truthful, obedient, willing.

"Come here, my son," said Samuel.

Puzzled yet eager, David approached Samuel. Then the latter took some holy oil, offered a brief prayer and anointed David's head.

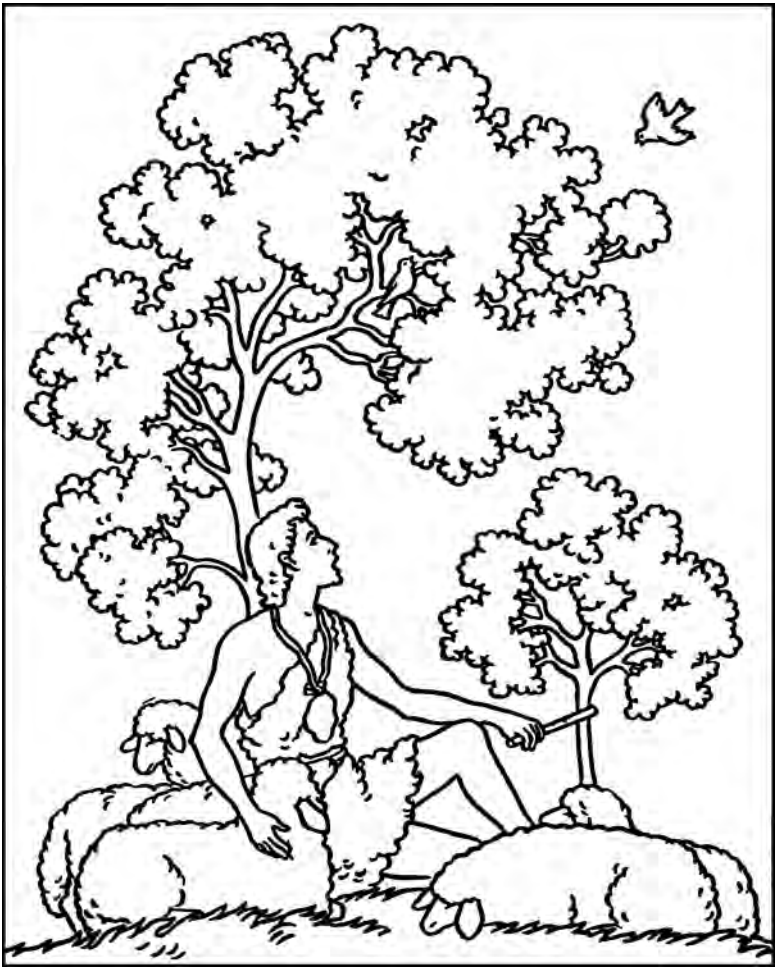
"May the Lord bless you," he said.

Everyone present was full of wonder. What was

the meaning of this action of the holy prophet? Only kings were anointed with oil. And there was already a king ruling over Israel—Saul. But when asked for an explanation, Samuel had only one answer. What had just happened was to be kept a secret. And if anyone wanted to know the reason for Samuel's presence at Isai's house, he was to be told that the prophet had come to offer sacrifice to God. This would be true, for Samuel had brought with him a young calf which even now, according to the Hebrew custom, his assistants were making ready to be slain.

The next day all was as usual at Isai's house. Father and sons were busy at their various tasks, with David out in the fields watching the sheep. Naturally the boy could not help pondering the strange events of the day before, but soon he was busy at his favorite pastime, playing the flute. He knew many songs, some handed down from one generation to another, others which he had composed himself.

"I believe I'll sing one of my own little songs," he decided. And laying down the flute, he began to consider which it should be. Then suddenly he knew. It would be one of his favorites, a song which always had brought peace to his heart when he was troubled. He had sung it many times, especially when out of doors tending the flocks. Now he would sing it again, and perhaps it would drive away the little cloud of anxiety which had been produced by the prophet Samuel's visit and lingered to trouble his heart whenever he thought of



THE YOUNG SHEPHERD KNEW MANY SONGS.

the strange thing that the holy man had done in anointing him with oil.

So David lifted his clear, young voice in song, a song of trust and confidence in God:

> The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture.
>
> He hath brought me up, on the water of refreshment: he hath converted my soul.
>
> He hath led me on the paths of justice, for his own name's sake.
>
> For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me.
>
> Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.
>
> Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me.
>
> Thou hast anointed my head with oil; and my chalice which inebriateth *me*, how goodly is it!
>
> And thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life.
>
> And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days.*

* *Psalm* 22

"SOON THE KING MAY FEEL BETTER,"
THOUGHT DAVID.

SAINT FRANCIS SOLANO

WONDER-WORKER OF THE NEW WORLD AND APOSTLE OF ARGENTINA AND PERU

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Gedge Harmon

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

THE MAYOR'S SON

SCHOOL WAS over in the little Spanish town of Montilla on a sunny day in the year 1566. As the doors of the Jesuit college opened, a crowd of eager students poured down the steps and into the spacious grounds.

"Anybody want to go fishing?" cried one boy, tossing a battered textbook into the air and catching it with one hand.

A companion stared in mock dismay. "*Fishing?* After sitting down all day? Don't be silly, Peter. Let's have a ball game."

At once the would-be angler began to argue his case. Fishing was a restful pastime after six hours in a classroom. There was a little boat he knew, moored in a secret place down the river. It could hold five boys, maybe six. As for tackle and bait . . .

"No, no!" cried the others. "We want action!" And as someone threw a ball high over a tree, there was a mad scramble to catch it. Shouting and laughing rang from all sides, and soon even Peter had forgotten his previous interest in fishing.

"Ball game!" he called, as a fellow student came slowly down the front steps of the college. "Hurry up, Francis Solano. We're going over to the far field."

A smile lit up the newcomer's face, but he shook his head. "Thank you, Peter, not today. I have to look after some very important business."

Peter shrugged his shoulders and trotted off to join his companions, who had almost reached the main gate. Soon the carefree group had disappeared, and comparative quiet descended upon the deserted school grounds.

For a moment the newcomer stood looking after his friends, his dark eyes thoughtful. He had told the truth about his important business. Today, this very afternoon, he was going to tell his parents of the decision he had reached after weeks of prayerful thought: that God was calling him to be a priest.

"A *Franciscan* priest," he told himself happily, and here in the friary in Montilla."

As he made his way toward the gate, the boy's mind was busy with the wonderful thought. Then another consideration presented itself, and some of the eagerness faded from his face. For instance, what would his father say when he learned the news? Matthew Sanchez Solano was mayor of Montilla, a good Christian man, one whose home was always open to the sick and needy—and yet it was very possible that he might be disappointed because his son had no wish to pursue a worldly career. After all, Francis had done well with his school work. He had the makings of a good lawyer,

possibly even of a doctor or a professor.

"Oh, but he *must* understand!" thought the boy. "I'm just not called to have a career in the world. God wants me for His own service."

Concern for his father's opinion gave way, however, as Francis realized that at least his mother would be pleased about his vocation. For years she had been devoted to the Franciscan Order. Before his birth she had recommended him to the care and protection of the Poor Man of Assisi. Indeed, the very fact that he now bore the name of Francis was due to his mother's love of the saint.

"She'll help me," the boy told himself. "She'll make Father understand. I know it!"

Absorbed in his thoughts, the young student walked slowly homeward, scarcely noticing the fresh beauty of the country landscape. God willing, in a few weeks' time he would ask for the Franciscan habit. He was seventeen years old, in good health, and since childhood he had longed to be a priest—facts which spoke well for his being accepted as a novice. Of course it was true that he had also thought of entering the Society of Jesus. His teachers at school were Jesuits, and many of them were his close friends. One or two had even suggested that he teach a while at the college, then enter the Society. But in the end the thought had always persisted that he was not meant to serve God as a Jesuit teacher. He was meant to work out his salvation as a Franciscan friar.

There were two reasons for this. First, the poverty of the Franciscan Order appealed to him espe-

cially. How fine it was to have nothing of one's own, to rely upon God's Providence for the very necessities of life! Then again there was the possibility of going to Africa as a missionary. For a long time now the Franciscans had been connected with this work. Almost every year a little group of friars left home and family to labor among the bloodthirsty Moors.

"That's what I'd like best," Francis told himself as he walked along, "to be a missionary priest in Africa." Then he smiled at his own words. What was he saying? If he became a Franciscan, no one would be concerned with what he *liked.* The superiors would give him the work *they* thought he was fitted to do. That was all he had to remember. And after all, wasn't that the best way of fulfilling God's Will?

As he was considering this, the clamor of voices raised in anger suddenly struck his ears from a field close by.

"Oh! So I'm a coward, am I?" There was a curse, followed by a groan.

The boy stopped short and looked quickly in the direction from which the sounds had come. There he saw two men, armed with swords, about to rush at each other. One of them was staggering, while blood streamed down his cheek. Instantly Francis broke into a run.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! In God's Name, stop!"

As be bounded over a low stone wall and into the field, the wounded man, startled, let his sword slip from his grasp.

"Curse you, boy!" he gasped hoarsely.

His opponent mocked him. "Coward! The boy came just in time!"

Rage gave the wounded man a renewal of strength, but as he lunged to retrieve his sword, Francis put his foot on it.

"Gentlemen," he said calmly, "fighting is all right if there's good reason for it, but duelling is nothing but murder. What can either of you hope to gain, whichever wins?"

The two enemies glared in astonishment. Then the younger found his voice.

"Be off with you, boy!" he cried, choking with anger. "This is no concern of yours!"

"But I think it is, sir." There was a flicker of laughter in his eyes.

"Why, you, you—who the deuce are you?"

Francis smiled broadly. "I am Francis Solano, and my father is the mayor of Montilla."

For a long moment the would-be combatants stared at the mayor's son, puzzled by the effect which the understanding smile of this mere boy was having upon them. He was unusual. Although his clothes were of fine material and he spoke as the educated son of a good family, there was nothing soft or weak about him. Unquestionably he was quite fearless.

Suddenly the younger man rattled his sword impatiently. "Well, do we fight or don't we? It's getting late."

Francis hesitated. The older man had a deep gash on his head which was bleeding badly. There

was no doubt that in a little while, unless something was done, he would die from loss of blood.

"I think this friend of ours needs help," Francis said quickly. "He should go to bed at once."

At these words the wounded man uttered a harsh laugh. "What are you saying, boy? Bed! I'm a stranger in these parts and well-nigh penniless."

"You mean you haven't a place to stay tonight?"

"That's right. But what does it matter? I'm sick of the company of men . . . of wretches like this one here . . . and if you'd only give me back my sword . . ."

"And you?" asked Francis, pretending not to understand and turning quickly to the younger man, "you're a stranger, too?"

"I am. But I could have been at the inn long ago if this blackguard hadn't insulted my honor. Why, he told me right to my face . . ."

Francis interrupted with a laugh and clapped a hand on the speaker's shoulder. "Let's talk about all this after a good meal at my father's house."

There was a moment's silence. Then the younger man spoke:

"But you said your father was the mayor!"

"That's right."

"Who can go to a mayor's house looking like us?"

Francis laughed again as he bent to pick up the older man's sword. "I have a mother, sirs, who will find great pleasure in looking after all your needs before my father comes. Now, shall we go?"

So it was that the boy and his two companions presently started down the highway leading toward

Montilla. A white handkerchief, pressed into service as a bandage, had stopped the flow of blood from the older man's wound, and he was able to stumble forward weakly under Francis' direction. The little group had gone only a short distance, however, when the sound of a violin fell upon their ears—a gay little melody that told of happy hearts and dancing feet.

Francis looked up eagerly. "That's John the fiddler coming from the fair, friends. Keep your eyes on that bend in the road ahead and I promise you a wonderful sight."

Even as he spoke, the lilting strains grew louder and an elderly vagabond came into view—in tattered green suit and scarlet cloak, his rumpled white hair tumbling to his shoulders. There was an air of such happy abandon about the fiddler that it set Francis' eyes dancing with affectionate merriment.

"He'll pass us by if we're not careful, friends, for his heart is in his song." Then, as the newcomer drew apace: "Oh, John! Haven't you a word for us?"

At once the gay music stopped. "Why, Master Francis! Master Francis Solano! What makes you so late from school?"

"Unexpected business, John. I met two friends a while ago, and now I'm taking them home to dinner. Wouldn't you like to join us?"

The old man drew near and peered curiously at the two strangers. His eyes narrowed as he noted the swords, the white bandage with its ominous red stain, the suspicious scowls that still lingered on

both faces. But he smiled and nodded vigorously.

"A good dinner should never be despised, Master Francis. Or new friends. As I've said before, I believe friendship is a foretaste of Heaven, so God bless you for this new chance to enjoy it."

"And you'll play something as we walk?"

"Why not? The time will pass more quickly then."

But even as he lifted his violin to his shoulder, the old man had an idea. "It's been a long time since you played for me, Master Francis. Suppose I help this poor soul with the wound in his head and you make the music?"

Francis smiled. "All right," he said. "Just take his arm, John, and I'll try my luck."

The two enemies exchanged furtive glances as the old fiddler stepped between them. How was it that they had fallen into such unusual company? That the anger which had burned so fiercely within them a short while ago was beginning to subside? But soon came an even greater surprise, for Francis, now a short distance ahead of the little group, had begun to play a melody such as the strangers had never known before. It was a plaintive song, yet one could smile for joy at hearing it.

Puzzled, the wounded man looked at the old fiddler. "What tune is this?" he asked. "And how does a mere boy play so well?"

The latter smiled. "The song, sir, is a hymn to Our Lady. As for the skill of the player . . ."

"*Skill?* But it's more than that!" broke in the younger man. "Why, I'll wager the lad has forgotten

FRANCIS HAD BEGUN TO PLAY
A STRANGE MELODY.

all about us, now that he holds a fiddle in his hands!"

Three pairs of eyes looked down the road to where Francis walked alone. The rays of the setting sun were full upon him as he played and sang, and suddenly tears started in the eyes of the old fiddler.

"I taught the lad to play," he whispered.

"*You?*"

"Yes, through God's mercy. And don't worry that the boy has forgotten you, sirs. This song he sings to Our Lady is offered in both your names."

The recent enemies looked at each other in astonishment. "*What?*"

"That's right, sirs. Master Francis knows many songs, but his favorite is this one—to the Queen of Peace."

SAINT
JOHN MASIAS

MARVELOUS DOMINICAN GATEKEEPER OF LIMA, PERU

By
Mary Fabyan Windeatt

Illustrated by
Sister Mary of the Compassion, O.P.

TAN Books
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CHAPTER 1

SHEPHERD BOY

HE AFTERNOON sun was hot. It beat down on the dusty valley with such strength that the solitary traveler, making his way to the village of Rivera, paused for a moment to mop his brow.

"I'd better stop by that oak tree on the hill," he told himself. "There's no use going farther in this heat."

The oak, gnarled and immense, was the only sizeable tree in sight. It cast a huge shadow on the ground, and the traveler gratefully sank down upon the parched grass. His eyes rested but briefly on the dazzling white ribbon of a road that wound through the valley to Rivera. How tired he was! And how far away America seemed—the land of his dreams! Yet he knew that in a little while he would feel more cheerful. Already Madrid was behind him, and Cordoba. Next would come Seville and Cadiz. With luck, there would be a boat there to take him to Cartagena in the New World.

"Gold," murmured the traveler dreamily, "gold and more gold in Peru! Pounds of gold! Tons of it, if a man is lucky!"

It was fairly comfortable in the shade of the old oak, and the traveler felt his eyes closing. In a little

while he would be on his journey with fresh courage. Just now, though, it would be better to rest. So, with a deep sigh of exhaustion, the man stretched out upon the grass, his bundle under his head, and fell asleep.

Two hours later he stirred and unconsciously pulled his worn coat over his shoulders. The sun was moving toward the west and a little breeze had come up out of nowhere. It was cooler now, but the traveler still felt no urge to be on his way. He would sleep a little longer. Yet even as he settled himself once again, his ears caught a curious sound. Someone was talking, and quite near at hand. Rather, someone was praying. The words were familiar. *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee . . . blessed art thou amongst women . . .*

The traveler opened one eye and squinted at the valley below. A flock of sheep was spread out along the river banks. Turning away from the peaceful scene, the man suddenly gasped with astonishment. A few yards away a boy about ten years old was kneeling on the edge of a little embankment. The rays of the setting sun were on his upturned face, a poor wooden rosary in his hands, his shepherd's staff beside him.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The boy's voice was clear as a bell. He gave no sign that he was aware of being observed; the beads slipped through his young hands in a gentle rhythm. By now sleep had vanished from the traveler, and he stared with amazement at the boy before him. On

his journey from the north of Spain he had seen many a shepherd lad, but none quite like this. Why, the youngster was as devout as though he prayed in a cathedral!

Presently the boy completed his rosary and placed the wooden beads in a scuffed leather satchel that hung from his shoulder. Then, picking up his wooden staff, he jumped lightly down the embankment. As he did so, a ragged white dog appeared from nowhere and ran eagerly after him.

"Wait a minute!" called the man. "Shepherd boy! Wait a minute!"

The sound hit the still air abruptly. The lad turned toward the embankment, the dog at his heels, and the traveler saw that he had an intelligent face, tanned by the sun and wind. And his dark eyes were friendly.

"Yes, sir? You're looking for the town?"

The man shook his head. "No, lad. I know the way to Rivera. But what were you doing a little while ago? Over there on your knees?"

The boy smiled faintly, while his fingers played with the dog's rough coat. "I was offering the Holy Rosary for the Souls in Purgatory."

"What?"

"I was praying for the Souls in Purgatory."

The man laughed. "But that's a work more suited for women than a likely lad of your years."

"Men and boys go to Purgatory, too, sir. It's well that all of us pray for them, that very soon they will be ready to see God in Heaven."

Something in the little shepherd's voice caused the man to stop his joking. "You'd make a good preacher, young friend. What's your name?"

"John Masias, sir, although really it is John d'Arcos. But my father is dead and I use my uncle's name."

The traveler nodded and began to fumble in a pocket. "Here," he said, bringing out a small silver coin, "take this and pray for me, too, John. I'm not a Soul in Purgatory, but I do have troubles."

The boy shook his head. "I think you need all your money, sir. You're on a trip, without a home or anyone to look after you."

"Take it, boy, in return for your prayers."

"But I pray without being paid!"

The man threw up his hands in amazement. "What a lad! Here—look at this coin. Is anything wrong with it?"

"No, sir."

"Then, in God's Name, do what I tell you! Take it and put it to some good use."

Slowly the young shepherd stretched out his hand. "All right," he said simply. "I'll pray very hard that you find happiness in America."

"*America?* What makes you think I'm going there?"

The boy laughed. "Most travelers are going to America these days. In a few years I am going, too."

The traveler nodded shrewdly. "Ah, so you're an ambitious lad after all, in spite of your prayers! Well, America will have enough gold for both of us, I'm sure."

When the traveler had gone on his way, the young shepherd stood looking after him thoughtfully. Perhaps he should have explained his interest in America at greater length. He, poor orphan boy that he was, had no desire to obtain a fortune in gold or silver. He was going to the New World only because he felt it was God's Will.

"Why didn't I say so?" he wondered. "Too many people are going to America to take what they can for themselves. Hardly anyone is going just to be of use to the poor and ignorant."

He was lost in these thoughts when suddenly his keen ears caught the sound of someone scrambling up the hillside from the valley.

"That must be Mary," thought the boy. "But she's very late. I wonder why?"

By now the white sheep dog was barking excitedly, hidden from view by the bushes that screened the path leading to the oak tree. John seized his wooden staff and started down the hill. Was something wrong? The dog didn't usually bark like this when his little sister came to help him with the sheep.

"Here I am!" he called. "Over this way, Mary!"

The echo of his own voice filled the valley, but there was no reply. Quickly he pushed his way through the tangle of vines and bushes that hid the little path. Then he stopped. A seven-year-old girl, in the plain wool garb of a peasant child, was huddled on a stone a few yards away. And she was crying as though her heart would break.

The boy stared. "What's happened, Mary? What's the trouble?"

Slowly the child looked up at her brother, her little face strained and pale in its frame of long black braids. "Oh, John, I thought you'd gone away!" she choked between sobs. "I thought I'd never see you again! I wasn't even going to come here at first . . . and now I'm late, and we won't be able to get the sheep together before dark . . ."

The tears were falling again. "There, there," said the boy soothingly. "I've told you dozens of times that I won't go to America for a long time. Why can't you believe me?"

The child hid her face in her hands. "I don't see why you have to go at all," she whimpered.

The young shepherd sighed. This little sister was his closest living relative. Since the death of their parents, five years ago, the two of them had been living with a farmer down in the valley. They did odd jobs around the house and occasionally went to Rivera to see their uncle, a good man who regretted that he had no room for them in his own house. Actually, however, there was no one to give Mary the love and care every little girl should have.

John sat down on the stone and drew his small sister to him. "Listen," he whispered, taking her hand in his, "a traveler passed by a while ago and left you something. What do you suppose it is?"

For a moment Mary was silent. Then she peered timidly through tear-stained fingers. "What?"

"I THOUGHT YOU HAD GONE AWAY," SHE SAID.

The boy held out his hand. A ray of sunlight stealing through the vines and bushes glistened on the little silver coin. "Here," he said, "it's all yours."

Suddenly tears were a thing of the past. The child reached for the coin eagerly, turning it over and over to make sure it was real. It was the first time she had ever held a piece of money in her hand.

"Oh, John! The traveler must have been a very nice man! Who was he?"

The boy shook his head. "I don't know. Someone who asked our prayers that he would find happiness where he was going."

"It wasn't . . . the vision again? Saint John the Evangelist didn't give you this little coin?"

The young shepherd laughed. "No. It wasn't the good saint who came this time. Just a poor man on his way to America to make a fortune."

Mary sighed with relief. "I'm glad. You don't know how it hurts when Saint John comes and says God wants you to leave me."

"Mary! He doesn't put it that way!"

"What does he say then?"

The shepherd boy shifted uneasily. It was always hard to explain just what happened when the vision came. He would be watching the sheep, perhaps saying the Rosary, when all of a sudden he would know that his patron, John the Evangelist, was beside him. The first vision had come to him over five years ago, when he was just a tiny boy. Since then there had been several others. Each time, the holy Apostle brought the same message.

"What does he tell you, John?"

"He tells me I am to leave Spain and that some day churches will be built in my honor."

"He doesn't really say you'll travel to America."

"No, but I think I'm going there just the same."

"What else?"

John smiled faintly. "Many times my patron saint gives me a glimpse of a beautiful country. Everything is clean and shining and the people are so happy. I'm very sure it must be Heaven. Oh, Mary! If only you could see it, too!"

The little girl looked down at the silver coin in her hand. The old sadness was stealing over her. She never had any visions. And one of these days Saint John the Evangelist was going to take her brother away for good. What would she do then?

SAINT MARIE OF THE INCARNATION

THE STORY OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY SISTERS IN CANADA

By
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TAN Books
Gastonia, North Carolina


S·EN·LA·NOVVELLE·FRAN·SVPERI·DE·LA·MISSION·DES·
INTER
LILIUM
SPINAS

CHAPTER 1

THE MOTHER

YOUNG PIERRE DUPLETTE laid three fresh logs atop the small fire on his master's hearth, then glanced hopefully at the white-haired figure bent over a desk in the far corner of the room. Bertrand d'Eschaux, the Archbishop of Tours, was not a man to demand bodily comforts for himself, even on a cold January morning like this one of the year 1631. There was good reason to believe that a special visitor was about to arrive, and a special visitor generally meant not only a bit of decent warmth in the Archbishop's drab study, but wine and cakes as well.

"Monseigneur, is there anything else you'd like?" asked the boy respectfully.

Slowly the old Archbishop rose to his feet and approached the crackling fire. "No, Pierre—unless it is the answers to a few questions."

"And what would they be, Monseigneur?"

"First, do you know anything of Madame Marie Martin?"

"The daughter of Florent Guyart, the baker? The

poor woman who lost her husband eleven years ago?"

The same."

Pierre nodded vigorously. "Oh, yes, Monseigneur! A very holy soul. Whenever I see her praying in church, I always feel as though I'm watching a saint. She's wonderfully kind to the poor, too. And of course a fine mother to her boy."

"Ah, young Claude. By the way, how old is the lad now?"

"Not quite twelve, Monseigneur. And a strange little character, if I may say so."

"Strange?"

"Well, perhaps that's not the word. But everyone knows he ran away to Paris last week because he said he wasn't loved at home. Three days he was gone, too, which almost broke his mother's heart. Can you imagine a normal child doing such a thing?"

The Archbishop smiled. Young Pierre Duplette—serious, hard-working and trustworthy—had been all but a son to him since that fateful day, eighteen years before, when the plague had carried off both the boy's parents.

"Now, Pierre, don't forget it takes all kinds of folk to make a world," he observed mildly. "Claude Martin will find his place someday." Then, suddenly, cocking his ear, he said, "But isn't that the doorbell? Run and answer it like a good soul. I'm expecting a visitor."

Pierre's eyes shone. So, he'd been right after all! "Of course, Monseigneur. I'll go at once. And

perhaps you'll be wanting wine and cakes in a little while?"

The Archbishop nodded. "Yes, Pierre. The best wine and cakes in the house."

Alone for a moment, Bertrand d'Eschaux turned from the fire and crossed the room to stand by the window overlooking a rustic shrine to Our Lady in the garden outside. It was a desolate place now, the little shrine, with only a few barren trees and vines for a background. Yet the face of the Virgin's statue was as gracious as in the time of blossoms. Indeed, the outstretched hands suddenly seemed to come alive in the pale January sunlight as though they would bestow upon the Archbishop all manner of priceless treasures.

"Not so much for myself as for another, Holy Virgin," he pleaded silently.

Even as the Archbishop prayed, there came a soft rap at the door. Turning, he saw an attractive woman in her early thirties being ushered into the room by a somewhat bewildered Pierre. So there was a reason behind all those questions, the boy's look plainly said.

Although the newcomer was very simply attired—a black hooded cloak covering a dress of common gray homespun—her smile was as radiant as that of a young girl, and the dark eyes that lifted to his own as she came forward to kiss his ring were extraordinarily beautiful.

"Bonjour, Madame Martin! How good to see you!"

"Bonjour, Monseigneur! How good of you to want to see me!"

When Pierre had left the room, the Archbishop

motioned his guest to a chair beside his own close to the fire. "I sent word for you to come, Madame, after hearing what the Prioress of the Ursulines had to tell me yesterday. That was surely good news!"

Madame Martin's slim fingers toyed with the rough folds of her cloak. "Mère Françoise de Saint Bernard, she . . . she told you everything, Monseigneur?"

"She told me that you plan to enter the convent very soon; that your sister and her husband have promised to look after your little boy until he comes of age; and that everything is going to work out well."

In spite of her brave efforts to control them, sudden tears glistened in Madame Martin's dark eyes. "It . . . it's like my beautiful childhood dream come true," she whispered. "And yet at times I'm so frightened, Monseigneur—almost as though the dream were coming true too late. . . ."

The Archbishop leaned forward earnestly. "If anything's troubling you, Madame, why not begin at the beginning and tell me all about it? Maybe I can help you."

"But it would take so long—"

"Nonsense! Today my time is all yours. Come, let's start at the beginning. What's this about a childhood dream coming true?"

So, haltingly at first, then with renewed courage, Madame Martin began to relate her story.

"I was a little girl of seven, Monseigneur, when I dreamed that Our Lord came down through the sky to the schoolyard where I was playing and asked

me if I'd be His special friend. So great was the love that came into my heart that right away in my dream I said I would."

"And then?"

"I was so happy afterward that I told everyone of what had happened. No one paid much attention, of course, for it was only a dream, but I didn't mind. It was enough to know that Jesus loved me, and that I loved Him more than anyone or anything in the world."

"So?"

"By the time I was fourteen, I felt that I was called to be a nun. I told this to my mother, who was most kind, but she said I was still very young and that I must think and pray a great deal before making any decision. She was so serious, Monseigneur, that somehow I was led to believe that convent life was not for me. Then, when I was seventeen—"

"Yes?"

"My father decided I ought to marry a silk merchant—Claude Martin. He was so set on the idea, and Claude was such a good young man, that I never dreamed of questioning anything. We were married in just a few weeks. Two years later, when I was nineteen, our little boy Claude was born."

The Archbishop nodded approvingly. It had been a good idea to have Madame Martin tell her story. The tears were gone from her eyes now, and she seemed to be far more at ease.

"And then what happened, my child?"

"Presently our silk business began to fail. This

worried my husband so much that soon he became quite ill. I nursed him as well as I could, but he only grew worse. Within six months he was dead, Monseigneur, leaving me penniless, and with a little baby to care for."

"And you're just twenty years old? Poor child! What did you do then?"

"For almost two years I lived at home and helped my father with his bakery business. After that I went to live with my older sister Claude and her husband Paul."

"Ah, Madame and Monsieur Buisson?"

"Yes. And how good they've been to my boy and me during the past nine years! We've never wanted for anything."

For a moment the Archbishop was silent, busying himself with adding a fresh log to the fire. But when he turned to Madame Martin, an odd smile was playing about his lips. "Probably you've earned that blessing," he observed dryly. "Doesn't Monsieur Buisson own a thriving transportation business? And don't you practically run it for him?"

"Well—"

"Dozens of vans, carts, horses, drivers, shipments to and from all parts of France—"

"I'm used to the work, Monseigneur"

"Payrolls to meet, bills to be paid, books to be balanced, warehouses to manage—"

"Please, Monseigneur—"

"Merchandise to be accounted for, disputes to be settled—ah, Madame, I've often heard it said that you're down at the river docks until well after mid-

night whenever a boat comes in."

Madame Martin smiled faintly. "You're making me seem like a martyr," she protested, "when all this work is nothing more than God's will for me. Yet right along I've felt that someday He'd call me to other work. Once my boy was old enough to do without a mother's care, He'd want me to go to some convent to give myself to His service."

"And now you think the time has come?"

"I know it has, Monseigneur. Claude will be twelve in April. And the Ursulines have just agreed to let me try their way of life."

For a moment the Archbishop was thoughtful. What was it Madame Martin had said earlier? *"It's like my beautiful childhood dream come true . . . and yet at times I'm so frightened . . . almost as though the dream were coming true too late. . . ."*

"My child," he said finally, "you've scarcely mentioned young Claude's part in all this. That, I'm sure, is what is troubling you. Does the lad know that you plan to leave him for the convent?"

"Not yet, Monseigneur. I haven't had the courage to tell him. But he may suspect some kind of change, for of late the house has been a strange and miserable place. My sister and brother-in-law are so upset about my plans that sometimes they scarcely speak to or look at either of us."

"They don't approve of your being a nun?"

"Oh, no! They say the religious life is for young girls with no responsibilities, not a thirty-one-year--old widow with a fatherless boy to support. Besides, their business is growing very rapidly, and they say I

owe it to them to stay on and help."

"Yet yesterday Mère Françoise* told me that the Buissons have agreed to care for Claude!"

"Ah, but only grudgingly. And whenever I think of the poor child's growing up without either of his real parents with him, my heart almost breaks. God is calling me to His service, Monseigneur, and I long to answer the summons. But where am I to find the courage to leave my boy? Where? And when?"

Slowly the old Archbishop rose to his feet and led Madame Martin to the window overlooking the garden. "There," he said gently, pointing to the Virgin's little shrine, "there is a woman who knew how to lose her Son, my child. Ask her for help."

But—

"It's hard, of course. Very hard. But when you leave here, you must go at once to Claude and tell him everything. Our Lady will help the little fellow to understand far better than you think."

Upon her return to the Buisson house, Madame Martin went immediately in search of Claude. She found him in his room, pale-faced and woebegone, idly leafing through an old textbook. Removing her cloak, she sat down beside him.

"Darling, what's the trouble?" she asked anxiously. "Don't you feel well?"

The boy's thin mouth tightened. "I . . . I'm all right, Maman."**

"But you look so unhappy! Wouldn't you like to go outside and play with your little cousin Marie?"

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* "Mère"= French for "Mother." ("Mère" rhymes with "fair")

** "Maman" = "Mama."

"There's no fun in playing with a four-year-old girl."

"Well, what would you like to do then?"

"Nothing."

"But, Claude—"

Suddenly the boy threw down his book and burst into tears. "Maman, why is everything so different these days?" he sobbed. "Why do people stop talking as soon as they see me, then shake their heads and turn away as though something dreadful were going to happen? There's . . . there's some kind of terrible secret. . . ."

"Now, son—"

"I can't stand it, Maman! I just can't! And while you were gone this morning, I heard Uncle Paul tell Aunt Claude that you've never really loved me!"

A pang shot through the mother's heart as she forced herself to remain calm. What a terrible mistake not to have taken this child into her confidence long ago! No wonder he had run off to Paris last week, bewildered and hurt by all the idle gossip in the Buisson house.

"Darling, listen to me," she said comfortingly "I love you more than anyone or anything in the world. Can't you believe that?"

"But—"

"And because I love you so much, I'm going to ask you to help me do something very important. No one but you can have a part in this, Claude—not even the wisest or the richest or the greatest person on earth."

Slowly the boy's sobs lessened. "W-what is it?" he choked. "W-what do you mean, Maman?"

"I want you to help me save souls, son—through

sacrifice."

"But I don't understand—"

"Listen, dear. Ever since you were a little baby, and even long before that, I've wanted to be a nun. Now, do you think you could let me go away to be an Ursuline? Could you give me permission for that?"

For a long moment Claude stared at his mother, his eyes perplexed and fearful. "Is . . . is that the secret everyone's been trying to keep from me?"

"That's it."

"You mean you want to go away from here and never see me again?"

"Of course not, darling! The Ursuline convent is only a few blocks away. You may come for visits as often as you wish."

"But, Maman—"

"Think, son, what it means when people enter the religious life! In due course all the prayers they offer, all the duties they perform, are given a wonderful new power to save the poor sinners of the world. Wouldn't you be glad for me to have a blessing like that?"

Claude looked uncertainly at the floor. In all his eleven years he had never known such a situation as this. Maman, from whom he had so often asked one permission or another, was now asking a permission from him! And not only was she waiting for his decision, millions of others must be waiting for it, too, in that mysterious world of sinners with which Maman seemed to be so concerned . . .

Slowly the boy raised his eyes. "I . . . I guess it'll

be all right for you to go to the convent," he said finally, and his voice was very small and low. "I guess you'll do a lot of good there, Maman."

Madame Martin's heart all but broke. How she longed to press this solemn-faced youngster to her breast, to pour out her love for him in tender words and caresses. But since that might lead to tears, she contented herself with tracing the Sign of the Cross upon Claude's forehead as he knelt at her feet.

"Son, you've made me very proud and happy," she whispered. "Now, shall we go and find Uncle Paul and Aunt Claude and tell them what you've just told me? They'll be so relieved to hear how brave you've been!"

However, the Buissons were disappointed at Claude's reaction to his mother's plans. The loss of a worker who had been so useful to them during the past nine years was hard to bear, and they made no effort to hide their feelings.

"Marie, how can you hope to be an Ursuline at your age?" demanded Paul Buisson impatiently. "For one thing, your health won't stand the strain. For another, it's foolish for an experienced businesswoman to shut herself away in a convent. Why, just think of all the good you could do if you stay in the world!"

Madame Buisson nodded tearfully. "That's right, Marie. Think of the dozens of our own workmen you've helped to return to the Sacraments."

"But once you're gone, who's to see that they don't slip back again into their old ways?"

"And their wives and families with them?"

Madame Martin smiled. "You two have forgotten one important thing," she said thoughtfully, "God's will. To the best of my knowledge, He wants me to join the Ursulines. Therefore, nothing else matters."

Marie Martin's father, old Florent Guyart, objected to his daughter's religious vocation as vigorously as did her sister and brother-in-law. But in spite of all family arguments, a strange little procession set out through the streets of Tours for the Ursuline convent on the morning of January 25, 1631, the feast of the conversion of Saint Paul. First came little Marie Buisson, bearing her aunt's large crucifix. Next came the Buissons, then Florent Guyart, Marie Martin herself, Dom Raymond (the priest who had long been her confessor), Claude and several friends and neighbors. Nearly everyone was weeping save Madame Martin. Her heart was heavy, of course, at the impending separation from her son, but she forced herself to appear in good spirits and to walk briskly.

"Dear Lord, don't let me weaken!" she murmured. "Don't let me see those tears in Claude's eyes."

A moment later, as the group reached the convent and the heavy wooden doors swung wide, the struggle was over. Not trusting herself to say goodby, Madame Martin merely smiled at her dear ones, knelt for Dom Raymond's blessing, then resolutely crossed the threshold into the cloister. There the Prioress and her community were awaiting her with open arms.

As she looked at all the eager faces about her, suddenly it seemed to Marie Martin that she had

A STRANGE LITTLE PROCESSION SET OUT
FOR THE URSULINE CONVENT.

known this new family all her life. Of course the Prioress, Mère Françoise de Saint Bernard, had been her dear friend for some time, but now the others—the bright-eyed little novices, the Sisters who worked in the kitchen, garden and laundry, the infirm and aged ones whom one of these days God would reward with eternal joy—all were at once immeasurably dear to her.

"Dear Lord, how can I thank You?" she prayed silently. "At last I've come home!"

The next morning Soeur Marie* (for thus she would be known until she received the habit) was even happier. What peace and joy within these convent walls where everyone was dedicated to God's service! Of course it was a pity that her twenty-eight companions in the novitiate—the oldest was only sixteen—had somehow decided that she had been a very important person in the world and so must now be treated with unusual consideration. For instance, a moment ago—

"I'll wash that window, Soeur Marie," one little novice had insisted. "That kind of work is too hard for you."

"And I'll mop the floor," another had put in cheerfully. "After all, you shouldn't undertake too much in your first few days here."

"Oh, no, Sister! Especially not at your age."

As she set herself to the one task which had been allowed her—the dusting of a few chairs—Soeur Marie could scarcely keep from laughing. If only

* "Soeur" = French for "Sister"

these little Sisters could know the amount of work which she had handled for her brother-in-law, even to the unharnessing, feeding and bedding down of some fifty truck holies at night! But of course these little novices meant well, and it would never do to hurt their feelings. A few words to the Novice Mistress, and the problem would surely be solved.

Even as she was reflecting upon all this, a bell sounded in the corridor. At once pails were carried off to be emptied, mops and dusters put away, aprons doffed, veils and habits straightened.

"Soeur Marie, we have special prayers in the chapel now," whispered the senior novice. "Please come and take your place in line."

As she started from the room with the others, Soeur Marie's eyes sparkled with joy. It was so good to be here, to know that she had given herself to God as best she could, and that now all that mattered was to obey the holy Rule in all things!

But a moment later, as she took her place in the chapel, she suddenly felt her blood run cold. Far away in the distance was the heart-rending wail of a familiar little voice:

"Maman, Maman, where are you?"

Soeur Marie turned pale. Surely that couldn't be Claude! Yet the brief stir among the young nuns kneeling beside her, the swift glances of sympathy, were proof enough.

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," intoned the Novice Mistress calmly.

"Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus," responded the novices.

"Incline unto my aid, O God."

"O Lord, make haste to help me."

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

"As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. . . ."

Soeur Marie's head drooped. Even above this earnest chorus of prayer she could still hear her child's frantic crying—nearer now, and more intense:

"Maman, Maman, where are you? I want you back!"