



Outreach Ministry  
Society of the Sacred Heart

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# MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT

A COLLECTION OF PRAYERS, READINGS AND REFLECTIONS



Wanda Bystram, RSCJ

**SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART**



What do I love about you, Madeleine Sophie?  
The woman of frailty and strength,  
the woman tender, yet firm,  
the woman demanding and compassionate.  
What I love about you is  
the active woman whose activity  
draws its inspiration  
from the Heart of Christ.  
What I love about you is  
the woman of contrasts:  
Friend of the humble,  
yet approaching with simplicity  
the great ones of this world;  
friend of silence and of prayer.

I love your creativity your dynamism  
the talent for rejuvenation  
that made you say, at 83:  
"The world is changing; we must change too."

Thank you, Madeleine Sophie,  
for seeing beyond your weakness  
and letting the Strength of God  
perform its work in you.  
You lead us to a great discovery:  
the Fountain of Life itself  
springs out of a wounded Heart!

- Bernadette des Francs, RSCJ (adapted)



*Give only good example to the children; never correct them when out of humor or impatient. We must win them by an appeal to their piety and to their hearts. Soften your reprimands with kind words; encourage and reward them. That is, in short, our way of educating.*

*Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to guide us, then we will act on the Spirit's gentle inspiration. Let us accustom ourselves to walking in these divine paths, following grace and not nature. When we go too fast it is easy to be influenced by the second. Ah! It is a great art to act only by the Spirit of God.*

*Courage and confidence! I cannot repeat this war-cry too often. We should make it our support in our life of conflict.*

*It is not merely for our own sakes that we should try to become interior souls; we should have constantly before our eyes the children who will come to claim spiritual help from us, help that without prayer we shall never be able to give them.*

*We must know how to inspire in our pupils a passion for the beautiful. Let us put history into their souls; without that, memories will fade and we shall have wasted our time. In seeing the empires that rise and fall one after the other, they will perhaps learn to rise above their own troubles. They will thus better understand the sic transit gloria mundi (the glory of this world passes away), and their hearts, disillusioned with what is nothing, will be more strongly drawn to God who alone remains in the midst of so many ruins.*

*What is needed for winning parents and children is to be busy about them, at their service from morning to night; to forget oneself and enter into what concerns the children, body and soul; to listen to them with interest; to console and to encourage them; finally to sacrifice for them everything except one's soul; and become for their sakes gentle, patient, indulgent, in one word, a mother.*

*An abyss of goodness should call forth an abyss of gratitude, fidelity and love.*



*Quotes from Sophie...*

*For the sake of one child, I would have founded the Society.*

*Be humble, be simple, and bring joy to others.*

*Your example, even more than your words, will be an eloquent lesson to the world.*

*What is the good of teaching various subjects, of wasting time in learning them, if at the same time we cannot teach children the words of life and touch their hearts and their consciences?*

*Hurry to be holy.*

*Education must be concerned not only with studies, but also with whatever may be required for the right ordering of life and requirements of cultivated society.*

*You have been chosen to a kind of apostleship: a mission that is great, noble and divine. Great, because it embraces the universe, noble because by it souls are raised to God, divine, because it comes forth from God.*

*Do not think about the future, leave that to the Heart of Jesus; use the present moment to love, to act, to follow.*

*If I had my life to live over again I would seek to live in complete openness to the Holy Spirit.*

*It is all very well to lay the foundations of a solid virtue, but only the union of virtue with learning will give our work its perfection.*

*With the pupils keep an even tone, both gentle and firm. Show them the care with which you help them to advance along every line for which you are responsible, that you care for their interests alone, and that you want to help them to acquire a solid and pious education, enhanced by learning, and thus make them happy.*

*The times in which we live call for fervor, fidelity and generosity. The heart's best security is to trust in God alone.*



*Important Events in the Life of Sophie*

Madeleine Sophie Barat born on December, 12, 1779, in Joigny, France	<b>1779</b>
Sophie to Paris with her brother Louis to begin her studies	<b>1795</b>
Foundation of the Society of the Sacred Heart on November 21, 1800	<b>1800</b>
Move to Amiens, and opening of the first School	<b>1801</b>
Sophie named the first Superior of the Society of the Sacred Heart	<b>1802</b>
Meeting of Rose Philippine Duchesne on December 13, 1804	<b>1804</b>
Sophie was elected Superior General, at the first General Council	<b>1806</b>
Constitutions adopted for the Society of the Sacred Heart	<b>1815</b>
Bishop Dubourg visits Sophie and she sends Philippine along with four companions to Louisiana, starting a period of great expansion in the Society of the Sacred Heart	<b>1818</b>
Mother House transferred to Paris, Hotel Biron	<b>1820</b>
Papal approbation given to the Society of the Sacred Heart by Pope Leo XII	<b>1826</b>
Charles X gave legal recognition to the Society of the Sacred Heart in France	<b>1827</b>
Sophie moves back to Paris, on the Hotel Biron property	<b>1858</b>
8th General Council refuses Sophie's resignation as Superior General	<b>1864</b>
Death of Madeleine Sophie Barat, Ascension Thursday, May 25, 1865	<b>1865</b>
Beautification of Madeleine Sophie Barat	<b>1908</b>
Canonization of Madeleine Sophie Barat, by Pope Pius XI	<b>1925</b>



Though she never allowed herself to be so called, Madeleine Sophie Barat was the founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart, a society that she governed as its superior general for sixty years. She was born in Joigny, a small town in the French province of Burgundy, on December 12, 1779, and grew up in the simple home of a barrel maker, where she received a remarkable education under her brother Louis, studying ancient history, the classics of French literature, Spanish, Italian and Latin.

At sixteen Sophie went to Paris with Louis to study, following a demanding program that included mathematics, Latin, the Church fathers, theology and biblical studies. It was in Paris that she learned from Father Joseph Varin of plans for a new religious congregation, the purpose of which would be to glorify the Heart of Jesus through the education of young people. He saw in this young woman the foundation stone. Sophie, contemplative in spirit yet outgoing in personality, responded generously. On November 21, 1800, with three others she consecrated her life to the end “to make known the revelation of God’s love whose source and symbol is the Heart of Christ.”

The small community began its work in Amiens where they took over a small girls’ school. Other foundations followed, and on January 18, 1806, Sophie, now Mother Barat, was elected superior general of the new congregation. Slowly and through difficulties its spirit took form in written constitutions formulated by the Society in 1815, approved by the Holy See in 1826, and modified in 1851, when the Society was divided into vicariates (today provinces). Although modeled on those of the Society of Jesus, the Constitutions opened to women a type of apostolate not widely seen before, that of the contemplative-in-action, and to a women’s congregation a new type of government, that of centralized authority with a superior general over all the houses.

Mother Barat was daring. In 1818 she sent Philippine Duchesne, a strong, impetuous and utterly generous pioneer, to North America. It was the first venture outside of France. From St. Charles, Missouri, the Society spread through the United States, Canada, the Antilles and Mexico, while Anna du Rousier carried it to South America in 1853. It entered a non-Christian setting for the first time in Algeria. Calls from India, Australia and the Far East had to be deferred, but Mother Barat knew that they would be answered in time and she encouraged an international spirit, open to every race and culture.

As the Society spread, its aim was everywhere carried out by the same four means stated in the Constitutions of 1815. The first was education in private schools, both day and boarding. Mother Barat was a gifted educator who oversaw the development of a *Plan of Studies* that was classical and humanistic in character, with religion at the core of a flexible curriculum.



St. Madeleine Sophie and the first members of the Society of the Sacred Heart saw a need to educate the young women of France, who would have influence on the next generation and hence, upon the political, social and cultural milieu of nineteenth century France. In St. Madeleine Sophie’s words, “Education must be concerned not only with studies but also with whatever may be required for the right ordering of life and requirements of cultivated society.” The mission of Sacred Heart schools has always included imparting to students a strong intellectual foundation. However, the course of studies was meant to do more than simply impart knowledge to students. The course of studies, the daily routine and life of the school, every aspect of a student’s experience at school, was meant to develop within them a love of learning. A finished product was never the aspiration of these educators...

In whatever generation, the work of the Sacred Heart educator will be to convey an understanding of the content of the body of knowledge available to humanity, but more importantly it will be to give each student some self-knowledge, some energy, and a sense of purpose in life. For St. Madeleine Sophie, education was formation, the formation of the mind, the heart, and the soul. To her, it made little sense to educate only one part of the person and not the whole...

In 1833, St. Madeleine Sophie wrote to Mother d’Avenas, “If you only knew how much the Society needs *saintes savantes* you would hurry up and become one. Here in the Roman noviceship we have a number of saints but of savantes, not one. It is all well to lay the foundation of solid virtue but only the union of virtue with learning will give our work its perfection. Unite these two things closely and you will understand the whole extent of your vocation.”

Excerpts from: “Saintes Savantes: Learned Saints for the Twenty-First Century” by Lynne Lieux, RSCJ

There is a phrase from our foundress that Sacred Heart educators the world over cherish: For the sake of a single child, I would have founded the Society of the Sacred Heart.” It is the devotion to, the deep care for each child, each person that colors the vision of Sacred Heart education. We know from the giants who have gone before us that if we wish for the children to live lives of joy and justice, peace and goodness, truth and love, then we are the ones who sow those seeds and water them and model for them the beauty of an adult life...We educators “sketch a plan,” we begin a small work; we rarely see the finished product. Our preaching and our teaching may be important, but the true value is in the “life lived and the things loved.”

Excerpt from: “A Higher Calling to Teach” by Shirley Miller, RSCJ



*From the writings of Sophie...*



*From a conference for Pentecost, 1827*

Now these persons about whom I have been speaking have found the secret of touching hearts; as they are no longer on the lookout for their own advantage, they do not even know whether they are doing good. In a certain sense, they do not even desire to do good; rather they have only one desire: to follow the impulse of the Holy Spirit. As to good or poor success, they calmly leave that to God... Let us call on the Spirit, therefore, so that she call fill us with her gifts.

*From a letter to the Society, March 5, 1865*

As long as Our Lord grants me the slight thread of life that is passing from me little by little, it will be more than ever consecrated to your service... If I did not fear to weary you by saying the same things so often, I should implore you to ground all your resolutions on Our Lord's favorite virtue, humility. It alone, as you know, attracts His gaze; it forms, maintains and increases all other virtues; in a word it should be the basis of Christian and religious perfection. How we should love it! It unites us to the Sacred Heart...

*From a conference, November 20, 1857*

The first person to be placed as a foundation stone of our little Society did not amount to much... It is you who are the hope of the Society; one day you will be its foundation stones. When we die how glad we shall be yes, glad to leave behind us to sustain the Society those who are devoted to it, who will fulfill the plan of God for it. When we have disappeared you will carry on, better than we have done, the work that we began.



*From a letter to Philippine upon Philippine's leaving for America, 1818*

With great tenderness, dear Mother, I write this first letter now that you have accepted your mission—indeed no ordinary mission for you are leading your little flock so far away from us... Your example strengthened me, renewing the attraction I had previously had for this vocation... the persisting of your desires, the ease with which you plan, apparently so beset with difficulties, was finally accomplished when God's time had come... all this proves to me... that God has called you... Now dear Philippine, enter more and more fully into the designs of the loving Lord...



*Biography Continued...*

It stressed both spiritual and intellectual growth, with disciplined personality development. Sacred Heart graduates were to be strong Christian women at the service of the Church, country and human society.

The second means was the education of poor children in schools with a vocational bent. These aimed at overcoming the effects of poverty and preparing students to take part in a rapidly developing world. A wide range of social organizations took shape: libraries, orphanages, clubs and associations that helped to bridge the gap between social classes. These works appealed strongly to Mother Barat, who had a deep concern for social justice.

The third means was the work of retreats, carried on in both types of school and open to outside groups. "There is no doubt", said Mother Barat, "that these retreats are the most effective means for bringing about a renewal of society."

The fourth means, perhaps the most demanding, was a solicitous regard for all the persons met in the course of a busy apostolic life. Each religious was thus called to reveal, by her very presence and by her service to the needs of others, the love of Christ.

Mother Barat directed the Society from the motherhouse in Paris, but her most important means of governing was by personal contact. Despite a frail physique, she traveled from house to house by carriage and primitive trains. She never left Europe but kept in touch with the Society by an amazing correspondence. Besides her official circular letters, over fourteen thousand personal letters are extant. They reveal, in a flowing, conversational style, her business acumen, her penetrating judgments of persons and of events, her humorous common sense, her fortitude under suffering and her insight as a spiritual director. She was an attractive, unobtrusive woman, small in build and vivacious in manner, who governed by patience, compassion, friendship and determination. Hers was a penetrating intelligence, a quietly powerful will, and an affectionate heart.

Though Mother Barat was reticent about her own life of prayer, we can gather from her letters and from the testimony of friends her own spirituality of the Heart of Christ. It grew from the traditions of monastic life and from the devotion to the Sacred Heart as presented by Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and by the French school of spirituality, which stressed union and conformity with the inner dispositions of the Heart of Christ. But Mother Barat was ahead of her time and close to the present in her awareness of the role of the Holy Spirit in the inward life. She died in Paris on Ascension Thursday, May 25, 1865. She was beatified by Pius X in 1908 and canonized by Pius XI in 1925

*-Compiled from various publications of the Society of the Sacred Heart*



A Favorite Prayer of Madeleine Sophie...

Sacred Heart of Jesus I am coming and coming to you  
 because you are my only refuge, my only but certain hope.  
 You are the remedy for all my ills, the comfort for all my miseries,  
 the reparations for all my faults, the supplement for all that is wanting in me, the  
 certainty of all my questions, the infallible and unfailing, inexhaustible source for me  
 of light, of strength, of constancy, of peace and of blessing.  
 I am sure that you will never leave me and you will not stop loving me,  
 of helping me and of protecting me, because you love me with an infinite love.  
 Have pity on me, Lord,  
 according to your great mercy  
 and make of me, in me, and for me, all that you wish,  
 because I abandon myself to you with full and entire confidence  
 that you will never abandon me. Amen.

.....

Prayer recited daily by Madeleine Sophie

O Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
 Give me a heart that is one with your own:  
 A humble heart  
 that knows and loves its nothingness;  
 A gentle heart  
 that holds and calms its own anxieties;  
 A loving heart  
 that has compassion for the suffering of others;  
 A pure heart  
 that recoils even at the appearance of evil;  
 A detached heart  
 that longs for nothing other than the goodness of heaven;  
 A heart detached from self-love and embraced by the love of God,  
 Its attention focused on God, Its goodness is its only treasure  
 In time and eternity. Amen.



(To the melody of "Who Can Count the Myriad Voices")

You have known their hope and longing,  
 You have known the heart of youth.  
 You have cherished them, you have loved them,  
 You have brought them to the truth.  
 You have called us to this mission,  
 Called to walk where you have led.  
 Help us now to know the meaning  
 Of the words which you have said.

*Sancta Magdalena Sophia, ora pro nobis.*

You have loved the poor and lonely,  
 You have heard the silent cry.  
 You have paused and you have listened  
 When the world has passed them by.  
 You have known each child is precious  
 And of such surpassing worth  
 That for one and one child only  
 You would go to ends of earth.

*Sancta Magdalena Sophia, ora pro nobis.*

You have known God's mystic presence,  
 You have walked on sacred ground.  
 You have shown by contemplation  
 How the Spirit can be found.  
 Teach us how to humbly listen,  
 Teach us how to humbly pray  
 That the love you drew from God's heart  
 May fill each one's heart today.

*Sancta Magdalena Sophia, ora pro nobis.*

- Brigid Keogh rscj  
Province of Japan