



Blessed Pauline Jaricot | 1799 ~ 1862

Foundress of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Pauline's Story Begins...

Baptized Marie Pauline Jaricot on the day of her birth (July 22, 1799), she was the last child born to Antoine and Jeanne Jaricot in Lyons, France. The couple had seven children, including son, Phileas, who had been arrived two years earlier, on February 2, 1797. (Pauline's older brother would be very influential in her life – nurturing her love for the Missions.)

Pauline wrote of her parents: *“Happy are those who have received from their parents the first seeds of faith.... Be praised Lord, for giving me a just man for a father and a virtuous and charitable woman as a mother.”*

Lyons, Pauline's hometown, was an industrial city that became famous for its silk factories. Her family were silk merchants, and bourgeois family of that French city. While the early years of her childhood were marked by the exclusive society life of Lyons, something would happen as a teenager that would open her heart to the whole world.

A Vision for the Missions...

At the age of 15, Pauline suffered a bad fall. Not long after that, her beloved mother died. It took Pauline many months to recover, emotionally and physically. When she did, she resumed her social life, but with less delight than before. Her heart, she wrote at this time, was *“made for the whole world.”* *“If only I could love without measure,”* she observed, *“without end.”*

She began to long to help the Missions – China and the United States – a desire nurtured by her brother Phileas, who was preparing for the priesthood and who told Pauline all about the work and witness of missionaries.

Pauline saw this as her vocation – to become a missionary of the love of God. She came to believe that *“to truly help others is to bring them to God.”*

One day while at prayer, 18-year-old Pauline had a vision of two lamps. One had no oil; the other was overflowing and from its abundance poured oil into the empty lamp. To Pauline, the drained lamp signified the faith in her native France, still reeling from the turbulence of the French Revolution. The full lamp was the great faith of Catholics in the Missions – especially in the New World. By aiding the



faith of the young new country of the United States of America, Pauline knew that seeds planted would grow and bear much fruit.

So she came up with a plan to support missionaries. She gathered workers in her family's silk factory into **"circles of 10."** Everyone in the group pledged to pray daily for the Missions and to offer each week a *sou*, the equivalent of a penny. Each member of the group then found 10 friends to do the same.

Even in the face of opposition from parish priests in Lyons, Pauline remained steadfast. Within a year, she had 500 workers enrolled; soon there would be 2,000.

As a child, Pauline had in fact dreamed of building such support for the Missions: *"Oh! I'd love to have a well of gold to give some to all the unfortunate, so that there would not be any more poor people at all and that no one would cry anymore."*

Pauline's successful efforts – where clearly not isolated or unique – were the main thrust behind the formation of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. She was "the match that lit the fire." But there was a struggle – like with all new initiatives – to control what was quickly becoming a source of strength and hope for the missionary Church. At one point, Pauline was sidelined, and she struggled to ensure that what the Lord had inspired her to set in motion, would come fully to life. In 1963, 100 years after her death, Pope John XXIII signed the decree which proclaimed her virtues, declaring her "Venerable." He wrote: "It was she who thought of the society, who conceived it, and made it an organized reality."



And Pauline's vision of two lamps is also still valid, as the vibrant faith in mission countries inspires and deepens our own faith here at home.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith...

On May 3, 1822, in Lyons, a group of men called "Les Messieurs" gathered to discuss a request for funds for the missions in Louisiana in the United States. A representative of Louisiana's Bishop Dubourg, Father Angelo Inglesi, hoped at this meeting to have an organization set up similar to Pauline's "Propagation" which was doing so well. The organization he had in mind would be formed to help missions in Louisiana, which, at that time, extended from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada.

"No!" responded Benoît Coste who was one of "Les Messieurs." He made the point that no single mission should be the sole beneficiary of funds that were gathered; any organization formed must help *all missions everywhere*. (This was, indeed, Pauline's own vision of universal help.) When another member of the group, Victor Girodon, spoke glowingly of the Pauline's plan, the group voted to adopt it. Eventually Pauline consented to join her efforts to those approved by "Les Messieurs." It was, as she said, "a gain for the world."

By 1922, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith – and three other societies established to help the Missions – became Pontifical, with their headquarters moved to Rome, under the direction of the Pope.

With the first 100 years of its existence, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith sent some \$7 million in help to the young church in the United States. (Today, just the Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska, remains dependent on help from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, still benefiting then from the vision of Pauline Jaricot.)

The young Church here at home started contributing to the Propagation of the Faith in 1833, with a humble gift of \$6. Today, Catholics here at home contribute about 25 percent of the support collected through the Propagation of the Faith for the 1,150 mission dioceses worldwide, mostly in Africa and Asia.

A 'Friendship' for the Missions...

Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson was much in demand. Many French bishops who were serving as missionaries in the United States – the “Missions” of his day – wanted this bishop of Nancy in France to visit the young churches there and then return home to encourage interest and support for their work.

In 1839, Bishop Forbin-Janson did just that, sailing across the ocean and landing in New York, where he was welcomed with open arms by Bishop John Dubois. “Poor New York,” he wrote to Catholics back in France, “there is not yet a minor or major seminary... and this diocese is larger than all of England. There are already 200,000 Catholics, with the City of New York having about 24,000. Here everything is to be done for the sake of religion.”

Continuing his travels, Bishop Forbin-Janson also visited New Orleans and Baltimore, as well as Canada – all on horseback. He preached retreats, celebrated Masses for congregations packed into small churches and chapels, and gathered children for religious instruction. Two years later, he returned to France.

Once home he met an old friend – Pauline Jaricot – who had founded the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, helping support the missionary efforts in the United States that he had just witnessed. Bishop Forbin-Janson was determined to “arouse great interest for the useful work of the Propagation of the Faith” among French Catholics.

During a conversation between these two friends in 1843, Bishop Forbin-Janson shared his own longtime dream – to help the children of the Missions. Like Pauline, he saw the “riches” of the poor mission churches of his day. And he was convinced that though weak and needing care, children rich in faith and love were capable of playing their own part in the Church’s mission – and of even stirring adults to the same generous missionary spirit.

Some time during the course of their talk, the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA), a second Pontifical Mission Society, was born. Like the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, MCA would encourage daily prayer and regular sacrifice for *all* the Church's Missions, gathering support into one general fund. Bishop Forbin-Janson started appealing to the children of France to reach out – in faith and love – to help the children of our country and China.

Today, MCA continues to follow the vision of Bishop Forbin-Janson – “children helping children.” After learning about the great needs of the world's poorest children, young people are invited to pray and to offer financial help so that children in the Missions today may know Christ and experience His love and care.

Suffering for a Loving, Generous Heart...

Shortly after the foundation of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Pauline established the Association of the Living Rosary; again her method was to form “circles” which would reach out to form new groups. Another project, to help working class poor, caused Pauline to fall into debt – in part due to the unscrupulous nature of those involved in the effort with her. And yet, her prayer was: “My God forgive them and, in the degree that they have showered me with sufferings, heap blessings upon them.”



The Curé of Ars, her spiritual director for many years, made this public tribute to Pauline: “I know someone who knows how to accept the Cross, and a heavy Cross, and how to bear it with love! It is Mademoiselle Jaricot.” (*See cross he gave her, to the left.*)

One writer, Father Charles Dollen, wrote in a biography about her: “The theology of the Cross came alive for her... More and more she identified with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, loving, suffering, atoning.”

Pauline died on January 9, 1862; the prayer found after her death, written in her own hand, ended with these words: “*Mary, O my Mother, I am Thine!*”

In 1963, 100 years after her death, Pope John XXIII signed the decree which proclaimed the virtues of Pauline Jaricot, declaring her “venerable.” On May 22, 2022, Pauline was beatified, declared “Blessed.” The cause for her canonization continues.
