

LORETTO, BISHOP FLAGET AND SISTER EULALIE
FLAGET

BY SISTER MARY ANTONELLA HARDY
(Sister of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross)

Three-quarters of a century have gone into eternity since the day on which Bishop Flaget, Kentucky's first Bishop and Loretto's staunch friend, passed to his reward. At this remote period, Loretto is now presented with two old letters which have unexpectedly admitted her into the quiet death chamber of the saintly prelate and permitted her to join the lonely watcher at his bedside. At the same time, the precious rosary upon which the dying bishop recited, for the last time, his beads, was given into Loretto's keeping. Unsolicited, unexpected, it came, and as a benediction from Heaven, in which Loretto seemed again to receive the consoling assurance penned by her revered Bishop and friend on January 1, 1829, "Loretto, my dear Loretto . . . I open all my episcopal treasures and pour them with both hands on you . . ." For nearly thirty years the rosary had been treasured by Sister Eulalie Flaget, the Bishop's niece, was then bestowed by her upon Mrs. Josephine Maryman, nee Villier, and, by the latter, a Loretine pupil of Cedar Grove Academy, Louisville, Ky., upon Loretto.

The letters that accompanied the rosary were penned in French, in 1879, and, translated, are as follows:

*Records of the American Catholic
Historical Society of Philadelphia.
JUNE, 1925*

Loretto, Bishop Flaget and Sister Eulalie Flaget 189

S. C. J. M. SAULT AU RECOLLET, JANUARY 9, 1879.

Very dear Josephine,

It is a little late that I am answering your last letter, which I received on the 8th of October. Too, I wished to "kill two birds with one stone" by taking advantage of the New Year to send you my best wishes for you and your dear husband. Believe, my dear Josephine, that I have not failed to implore the divine Infant of the Crib to shower over you and your good husband all the graces necessary for your temporal welfare, but, above all, that could contribute to your salvation. That, you both know, ought to be your principal affair in this world and I am confident that you give it all your care.

I feared that the yellow fever might reach Little Rock. You have been preserved from it—thank well the good God for the favor.

I thank you for the details which you have given me regarding the occupation of your husband and your papa and my dear Charles. You said nothing about Paul. I think that he is with his father and that he will always be a farmer. You will give me great pleasure, dear Josephine, when you write to your father or to Charles and say that their old friend, Sister Eulalie does not forget them and that I also pray God to overwhelm them with His benedictions. I have no doubt that they all practice their religion and also that the good God will bless them doubly.

Since the death of my venerable Uncle, I have kept for you, dear Josephine, the beads which he used for the last time the eve of his death. On Sunday your mama went to see him; he asked for news of you and blessed you with all his heart. In the night he asked me for his rosary; he said it, then gave it to me. He said to me, "Keep it." I have destined it for you, dear Josephine, and, as you are the last person whom he blessed, you shall also have the last rosary upon which he prayed.

Now, I should like to know how I could send it to you, then I will take great pleasure in sending it, and am convinced that you will make good use of it, and, from time to time, you will say it for your old Godmother.

I wanted to wait for a clear day to write you, but I have not succeeded. It snows and I can hardly see. You will excuse your old Godmother, who loves you always with her whole heart and who embraces you most affectionately in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His Divine Mother, where I sign myself

Your devoted Godmother,

G. EULALIE FLAGET,
Religious of the S. H. of Jesus.

You will find enclosed a little picture that will please you.

(The same to the same.)

S. C. J. M. SAULT AU RECOLLET, 20 APRIL, 1879.

Very dear Josephine,

It is at last that I am wishing to answer your letter of the eleventh of February. Lent got in my way. Today, dear Josephine, I come to fulfill a very pleasant task of chatting with you; and first I must tell you that you gave me a great deal of pleasure in giving me the news of Charles and Paul. When you write to them, tell them that their old friend often thinks of them and prays that the good God may bless them in their enterprises of farmers, a position which I prefer to all others. The good God will bless them in as far as they shall be pious Catholics. You did not say anything about your father. I hope he is in good health, also the rest of the family. When you write to them do not fail to tell them a thousand affectionate things and pleasant recollections on my part. You can assure Madame M. Hays that I have not forgotten her. Give her again my enduring friendship. Her sister Catherine is also very dear to me. I ask the prayers of both the one and the other.

You gave me for the beads the same means that our Reverend Mother had already told me. So, dear Josephine, I will put them in the envelope with this letter, and I have the firm confidence that it will surely reach you safe. It is not beauty that you will receive, but a precious souvenir of one who made you a child of God. You are the last person that

he baptized and who, I dare say, has received his last blessing; for the good and dear mama came to see him on Sunday, about four o'clock in the evening. He asked after you and blessed you. The next day, at the same hour, he expired. Would you believe, dear Josephine, without doubt you have dated your letter the 11th of February, the anniversary of the day of his death—I can't forget that date, because it struck me in reading your last letter. I hope, then, that the last present which this Venerable Uncle made me a few minutes before his death will be kept by you with as much affection and piety as your old Godmother has kept it during twenty-nine (29) years. You will say it for me sometimes, with your husband. That is my desire.

I have mumbled along on this page, but you can't expect much good from an old woman who is running in her 81st year, but my heart is always filled with affection for you.

Thank your husband for me on account of the affection he has given to you. I leave you both in the divine Hearts of Jesus and Mary, where I shall always be.

Your devoted Godmother,

G. EULALIE FLAGET,
Religious of the S. H. of Jesus.

MOTHER MARIE GABRIELLE EULALIA FLAGET

A meager sketch of the life of this worthy religious, niece of Monsignor Flaget, has been pieced together with items from several sources and is of more than ordinary interest.

Our first knowledge of Eulalie is had from a letter written by Msgr. Flaget in the year 1820 to Father Chabrat then in France. Translated excerpt from the letter, which was written in French, is as follows:

" 26 8BER, 1820. GETHSEMAN (KY).

" The news which you give me in regard to my niece Eulalie perplexes me more than I can express. I sincerely rejoice at her vocation to the religious life, and above all, at the con-

sent given to this vocation by her father and mother. But that it be in America that she follow it, in the Convent of Nazareth or any other house dependent on that establishment, that is what I do not see clearly, and that I find a difficulty in believing. It is true that two or three French religious who would have perfect knowledge of their language and could teach it, would render important services to religion; if besides, they had that ardent love of the cross to make the greatest and most generous sacrifices, but has my niece the talents? Has she the strength of soul? Although I have a pretty good idea of Eulalie's virtue, and of her vocation I shall refrain from deciding that she come; more information than I have at my disposal would be necessary before expressing myself. You, in all appearances, have already seen her, and you will see her again. You know the Parisians, their customs, their manners—better than I you can decide whether it is best for her to sail or to remain. A young lady who should have this vocation and who would know music would be of great utility."

From another well authenticated source, which later in our narrative will be duly credited, we have the following:

"Eulalia, born February 12, 1798, at Billom in Auvergne, was baptized by her uncle, l'Abbé Flaget, who afterwards became the well-known and saintly missionary, Mgr. Flaget. Scarlet fever, from which she suffered in her childhood, left her very delicate and slightly deaf. According to her own account, she was so mischievous and wilful that her First Communion was delayed a whole year, which punishment had so salutary an effect that she became quite transformed. In preparation for her First Communion she was sent to the Sisters of Mercy as a boarder. During her stay with them many happy days were passed during which, as a great favor, she was permitted to assist at office and even to make meditations with one of her teachers as a preparation for her First Communion, which she made on the seventh of May, 1811. Eu-

lalia made rapid progress in piety and desired above all things to join her Uncle in America, and as a means to this end desired to enter the congregation of the Sisters of Charity (of Nazareth). When the subject was broached to her mother, she forbade her to mention it again until she was 25. Eulalie's ardent nature could not brook such long delay. One day in 1821 as she was on the point of leaving the house to visit the Sisters of Charity and ask them to warn her should they hear of any occasion for the New World, a priest arrived—from America and sent by her uncle. Her father introduced her thus: 'Here is a young person eager to go to America,' but Mme. Flaget interposed immediately saying that she would never allow Eulalia to go to America. The tactful priest, l'Abbé Chabrat, made no comment, fearing a family scene, but he contrived to see the young girl a few minutes privately and counselled her to write to her uncle. Monsigneur Flaget replied in a long letter of eight pages in which he painted in most unprepossessing terms the hardships endured by the nuns in Kentucky. Far from deterring Eulalia, her uncle's letter but strengthened her determination, while her mother was more than ever opposed to her departure. As the time for the Abbé Chabrat's embarkation drew near, Eulalia made another attempt to obtain her mother's consent to her leaving her, but the interview was so stormy and painful that both mother and daughter were ill. The following day, Eulalia's sister came to her room and announced that she had finally persuaded their mother to let her have her way, but she added, as she turned to go,—'Your obstinacy will kill her.' The house was ominously still. After the lapse of half an hour, Eulalia concluded that they were holding a family council in her regard. Having at length found the room where they were assembled she courageously went in and kneeling at her mother's feet implored her permission to follow her vocation. 'Well then, since you wish it, go!' but there was a chilling hardness in her tone. 'How do you expect her to go if you tell her like that,' said Monsieur Flaget; then her mother softened and embracing Eulalia, said 'Go, my child, if it is for your greater happi-

ness.' Very little time sufficed to gather together the necessary articles and in a couple of hours the last farewells were said, and Eulalia was on her way to Bordeaux, whither her brother and sister accompanied her. To her great joy she found herself in time to join l'Abbé Chabrat as the boat had not yet lifted anchor. The passage was made in 45 days in a boat so rickety that it went to pieces soon after all had disembarked. On reaching New York Eulalia was touched to tears on seeing among the baggage a large box addressed in her mother's writing and containing all that a mother's forethought knew would be helpful to her loved daughter. Mlle. Flaget was most kindly received by the Sulpicians at Baltimore. By them she was directed to the house of a pious widow who together with four young girls of Baltimore accompanied Eulalia a short time afterwards in her missionary journey down the Mississippi. They were met at Louisville by Mgr. Flaget who directed them to the Sisters of Charity at Bardstown. The house of the Sisters was a frame building; there was great poverty and much hard work, but Eulalia was undaunted. She proved so satisfactory that in a few months, Dec. 21, 1821, she was clothed with the holy habit of their Order. In labor and abnegation she prepared for her vows made on the 21st of November the following year. Sister Eulalia was a true spouse of Jesus crucified and practiced heroic charity during the terrible cholera epidemic in 1833, nursing in turn with a like devotedness and skill, her uncle Mgr. Flaget, the Sisters of her Order and the negroes suffering from the dread disease."

From the excellent volume "Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky," by McGill, we glean the following: Sister Eulalia was filling the office of Treasurer of the Congregation in 1824; that her difficulty with the English language rendered her inefficient in that capacity. Recollections of Nazareth by one who was a pupil there in the early days (pages 117-118 of the Nazareth volume) give us a delightful pen picture of Sister

Eulalia: ". . . next to that room was the Treasury then kept by Sister Eulalia, a niece of Bishop Flaget to whom she was devoted. The girls soon learned of her ardent affection and when we saw the Bishop coming there was a general cry like Sister Eulalia's, 'Ah, mon Oncle! mon Oncle!'"

"I loved her very dearly and realized even then that France and that Uncle comprised her world. Her room was always fragrant of mignonette. The seed had come from France."

It may not be irrelevant to the subject of our sketch in connection with Father Chabrat's trip to Europe to call attention to the fact that he and Father Nerinckx had started out together, leaving the seminary at Bardstown, March 9, 1820; but they did not return together. Father Nerinckx and his party had sailed from the Island of Texal on August 15, 1821, and their boat made the trip to Philadelphia in just 39 days, landing them in Philadelphia September 23rd (Maes' "Life of Father Nerinckx," pp. 414-462). Father Chabrat's "rickety" boat from Bordeaux was 45 days in reaching New York (Archives R. S. H., Sault au Recollet). Father Nerinckx remained for a time in Philadelphia. He visited at White Marsh, after October 6th, the Jesuit postulants whom he had brought with him from Belgium. He remained for a time in Baltimore, leaving there for Loretto, by stage, November 5, 1821, with eight candidates for Loretto. At Pittsburg, where they remained a week, a flatboat was built to carry them down the Ohio; they reached Louisville on December 7th. Brother Charles Gilbert conducted the ladies to Bardstown, where the good Bishop David and the Sisters of Charity received them very graciously, on December 9th, and many inducements were held out to them to change their vocation and determination of becoming Loretines, and to

join the Sisters of Nazareth. But they felt that God had called them to Loretto, and there they went, arriving on December 10th. . . . Father Nerinckx, who, with Mr. James Van Rysselberghe, had remained one day longer in Louisville to arrange with wagoners for the baggage, arrived the next day with the saintly Bishop Flaget, and there was great joy at Loretto (Maes' "Life," pp. 462-489).

In 1835, Sister Eulalia had the happiness of accompanying Msgr. Flaget on a trip to France. There she bade adieu a second time to her family and set out for Italy which she longed to visit. Her uncle, however, stopped at a Convent for Deaf-Mutes, in France, and his longing for a similar institution in his adopted country was evident and the impossibility of obtaining Sisters from France equally obvious. Sister Eulalia, with characteristic self-sacrifice offered to give up the trip to Rome in order to undergo the training necessary for the care of deaf-mutes. Her offering was spontaneous, her uncle had not asked this generosity of her, but it was richly rewarded, when later on in America she put her newly acquired talent to profit.

Two other ladies accompanied Sister Eulalia from France, and something very regrettable to the Loretto Society occurred in connection with the bringing over from Europe of these three French ladies, Miss Eulalia Flaget, Miss Antoinette Bernier and Miss Louise Jarrige, namely the alienation from it of Father Nerinckx's books (Life, Fr. Nerinckx, by Maes, pp. 573-574 :

"In 1839, Right Reverend Bishop Flaget brought with him from Europe, three French ladies, two of whom were candidates for Loretto Society. Money being a very scarce article at Loretto in those days, he arranged with Bishop Chabrat to pay their traveling expenses with a portion of Father Nerinckx's books.

Mother Isabella (Clarke) objected, that, by the express terms of the founder's last will, the library was to remain at Loretto for the use of the priest who had charge of the Society. But, considering the little use to Loretto of that very select collection of ecclesiastical authors, and the great benefit which the seminarians would derive from such a valuable acquisition, the director quieted her scruples and carried away most of the books over to the Seminary in 1841. The remainder were taken away under Bishop Spalding.

"Bishop Flaget also entertained a great desire of possessing an institution for the education of the deaf and dumb, and having on hand a donation of several hundred dollars which he could apply to a charitable purpose of his own selection, he induced the Loretto Sisters to try the experiment; accordingly three children were admitted in 1840."

Among the deaf mutes admitted was a certain Elizabeth Johnson of Lexington, Kentucky, who remained at Loretto until her death on April 19, 1874.

The *Catholic Advocate* of November 9th and 16th, 1839, carried a prospectus of "Loretto Deaf and Dumb Asylum," announcing that the opening is set for the first Monday in November, that Miss Eulalia Flaget, assisted by Miss Antoinette Bernier and Miss Louisa Jarrige, is in charge, that the system taught is the same as that employed in the well-known establishment "La Charretruse près d'Auray" in Brittany. Similar notices are to be found in the *Catholic Almanac*.

Miss Antoinette Bernier was clothed with the Habit of Loretto on November 1, 1839, and given the name of Sister Philomene. She long edified the Society, dying a faithful Lorette on March 10, 1887, at St. Ann's Academy, Osage Mission, Kansas.

Of Miss Louisa Jarrige the Society has no further record.

Here, then, begins the third epoch in the life of Sister Eulalia. She entered the Loretto Society and was put in charge of the "Deaf and Dumb Asylum." In 1842, she was one of the colony of Loretines who founded the Society's house, St. Benedict's Academy at Cedar Grove, Louisville, Kentucky. The Prospectus in the *Catholic Advocate*, 1842, states that letters should be addressed to "Miss Angela Green" (who was Sister Angela, the Superior) "or to Miss Eulalia Flaget".

From Annals of the Good Shepherd Order in Louisville, Ky. (1823-1893)

Postscript added by Sister Eulalia to letter written by Mgr. Flaget to Superioress General, Mother Marie of St. Euphrasia-Pelletier, of the Convent of Angers, France, August 5, 1841:

"P. S.—My dear uncle forgot to say that before long the Sisters of Loretto will have an establishment here. I hope to have the happiness of being among those who will be sent to it. What joy it will be for me, then, to see the Ladies of the 'Good Shepherd' arrive in Louisville! Oh, do give us the hope that you will come very soon.

"Accept the respectful homage of your humble servant,
EULALIA FLAGET.

From reply of Mother Euphrasia to Monsignor Flaget, Sept. 3, 1841:

"And your dear niece—what shall I say to her? She is indeed one of the protecting angels who are calling us to America. The few lines traced by her hand are treasured here. How affectionately I love that dear, virtuous friend in God! We will never forget her."

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd arriving in Louisville on December 1, 1842, sent a messenger to convey

their obedience to the Right Rev. Bishop Flaget, and to inform him of their arrival. In response, the Very Reverend Vicar General, Father Reynolds, calls on them, gives them most cordial welcome, tells them that His Lordship had been for some days anxiously expecting them, and then conducts them to the Convent of the Sisters of Loretto at Portland. As their carriages reached Portland, and as they approached the Convent, they saw the prelate looking earnestly out one of the windows; his hand was stretched out, and while he seemed thrilled with happiness, he, in a loud voice exclaimed: "I bless the day of your arrival in my diocese."

Entering the convent, they were received by the prelate with paternal kindness. "The good nuns of Loretto could not have been more gracious in their welcome; their hospitality provided everything for us, wearied out from cold and travel. Miss Eulalia Flaget led us to our apartment, where, with intense delight, we saw a magnificent statue of the Immaculate Conception, with God's Mother's hands stretched out toward our approach, as if welcoming us, her cherished daughters, and assuring us of her protection here as well as she had given it to us in Europe."

Thus far the Annals of the Good Shepherd. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd remained nine months with the Sisters of Loretto.

From the same source whence was learned the account of Eulalia's home-leaving in 1821 is further learned that Sister Eulalia was actively employed in teaching when, in obedience to Right Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick, D.D. (Bishop of Philadelphia), she left the Sisters to take care of her uncle. This was probably in the year 1848, as after the consecration ceremonies of Right Reverend Martin John Spalding as coadjutor, September 12, 1848, at which Dr. Kenrick assisted Msgr. Flaget,

the latter failed rapidly, we are told by the Kentucky historian Hon. B. J. Webb, his death occurring eighteen months later, February 11, 1850.

Sister Eulalia remained with her uncle until his death. Here begins for Eulalia the third chapter in her religious life which was commenced with the Holy Infancy at Nazareth, continued with Mary at the Foot of the Cross and happily concluded in the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Sault au Recollet, Canada. To these estimable religious we are indebted for much of the history here given, particularly that of her home-leaving and of the last days of her saintly life.

After the death of her uncle, Eulalia had intended to return to France with Right Reverend Ignatius A. Reynolds, D.D. (Bishop of Charleston and, who, for a time had been Bishop Flaget's Vicar). With him she paid a visit to Manhattanville, met an old friend, Mère Thompson, made a retreat and under the advice of her old director, Père Fouchet, S.J., entered the Convent of the Sacred Heart, March, 1851. She led a life of great fervor. She had a marked devotion to the Way of the Cross. Towards the end of her life she became almost completely deaf, and it is recorded of her that "during Rev. Mother Tommasini's conferences she was accustomed to sit on a little stool directly in front of Rev. Mother's table, which would have disconcerted anybody but Mother Tommasini. She lost the use of her limbs almost completely and used to be carried about in a wicker chair and left hours in the chapel. "Mother Flaget used to make the reading in the refectory, and when she announced the feast day of a saint from *Auvergne* she would repeat *Auvergne* and make the announcement in such a way that she amused the whole Community."

Sister, then "Madam" or Mother, Eulalia died at Sault au Recollet, June 8, 1882.

Regarding Monsignor Flaget's long sojourn in Europe, 1835-1839, it is good to remind ourselves in these days of mission activities and ardent endeavor to further the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, that two years of that time were devoted by the Bishop to the arduous duty assigned him by the Pope of aiding the said Association. From the efforts of the Bishop "thousands and tens of thousands joined the pious Association."