

BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF JEAN-PIERRE MÉDAILLE'S LIFE

1610

The parish records of St.-Michel establish that Jean-Pierre was born on October 6th to Phelippe d'Estévéril and Jean Médaille in the south western town of Carcassonne, France. His father was King Louis XIII's advocate. The family lived in fairly comfortable circumstances and were deeply religious. Little is known of his childhood. There were two brothers: Jean-Paul, born in 1618, who later became a Jesuit missionary, and Jean, who inherited his father's position and became an eminent jurist.

1623

At age 13, Jean Pierre entered grammar class at the newly founded Jesuit College in Carcassonne.

1626

Not yet sixteen, Jean-Pierre, on September 15, entered the Jesuit Novitiate at Toulouse. He spent two years in intense religious formation. Father Pierre Vertamont was Medaille's novice master. Outstanding evaluations of Medaille are documented in the Jesuit Catalogs.

1628

The Plague broke out. The novices wanted to go out and serve, but the rector took them to Lardenne as a refuge place so these young men would not be exposed to the deadly plague. He probably made vows at the end of this novitiate period, September 16, 1628.

1629

Student of the humanities and philosophy at the Jesuit College in Toulouse. Here he met and shared ideas with Father Francis Regis, SJ. Jean-Pierre's life during this period was guided by Father Francis Tarbe, a professor of logic and a profound master of the spiritual life. He was considered to be an exceptional spiritual director. He recognized the high spiritual potential in both these young men.

1633 – 35

Jean-Pierre returned to Carcassonne to teach the third year and fourth year classes of grammar to the young boys at the Jesuit College.

1635 -37

Theology student at the College of Toulouse.

1637

Jean-Pierre was ordained a priest. Age 27

1637 – 42

First assignment as priest was at the Jesuit College in Aurillac as Assistant to the Rector looking after the temporal affairs. This was an “internal ministry”. He also did parish work, directing Sodalities (The Companies of the Blessed Sacrament), instructing laity in spiritual living and organizing ministry groups to go and visit the sick, the poor, prisoners, etc.

1642

Returned to Jesuit College in Toulouse for the one year tertianship. Father Noël Chabanel, S.J. shared this year of spiritual renewal and enrichment with him. Father Noël was missioned to Canada at the end of this year. Noel was later martyred and is one of the Canadian Martyrs.

1642

Professed his final vows on October 11.

1643 – 49

Missioned to the Jesuit College St-Flour where he was Minister. (Assistant Superior, an in-residence appointment (1643-46). This was a three-year appointment. Then he became the Procurator. (Treasurer, an on-the-road appointment collecting funds from patrons who supported the college). 1646-49) This was a three-year appointment.

1646

During this period, Jean-Pierre had time to serve souls as a spiritual director and confessor. Some of his directees he formed into a “secret” association ... his first intuitions of “The Little Design” way of life for women dedicated to God and immersed in the world.

1650

Bishop de Maupas, the Bishop of Le Puy, accepted officially the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph giving them canonical status and the habit on October 15. The first six women were: Françoise Eyraud - thirty-nine years old, made first superior; Clauda Chastel - a widow, could read and write; Anna Chalayer - forty-six years old; Anna Vey -her father promised a considerable dowry if she joined the group. Probably a minor at the time of entering; Anna Brun - fifteen years old, probably one of the orphans of the Hospital; Marguerite Burdier- twenty-four, strong personality, great influence on the growth of the other houses. Father Médaille sent a lay woman, Marguerite de St-Laurent, who was very spiritual woman and literate, to assist with the new foundation. She lived with them for 7 years, acted as a formation directress guiding them in the spiritual life. She never became a Sister of St. Joseph. She retired to an eremitical life. She is called “Margo” in the records. - Sister Therese Vacher, SSJ, of Clermond-Ferrand, France. Letting in Joy by Looking to our Past. (Translated by Francis Cecilia English, SSJ)

1650 – 54

Missioned to the College of Aurillac where he took up again the duties of Minister. (Assistant Superior, an in-residence appointment). Assigned for one year “preacher outside the city”. Médaille was in Le Puy in October for Bishop de Maupas’ signing the letters by which the Sisters of St. Joseph were given civil status – now legally established, their names and ages notarized. Médaille was in Le Puy again on December 2 for the presentation of the document recording the contract between their congregation and their Bishop, His Excellency, Bishop de Maupas. His Jesuit brothers and superiors were uneasy, reserved and prudently cautious with Médaille and “this extraordinary undertaking, the foundation of I know not what grouping of women. I want to know the nature of his plan and from whom he obtained permission to busy himself with such matters which are hardly in accordance with our Institute.” (Letter from Father General, Rome, February 20, 1651.)

1652 – 54

Back in residence at Aurillac as Minister.

1654 – 62

Transferred to the College of Montferrand. A new and permanent orientation to his activity – missionary. Joined “mission bands” travelling in twos, to evangelize the People of God in all the parishes throughout the diocese of Clermont.

1657

Jean-Pierre wrote and published The Maxims of Perfection for all persons aspiring to the great virtue. (128 Maxims)

1660

Jean-Pierre writes The Eucharistic Letter and shares it with Sister Marguerite Burdier, one of the first six women in the congregation of St. Joseph. It did not circulate among the sisters at that time.

1662 – 69

Stationed at the College of Clermont-Ferrand continuing in active missionary work throughout the parishes of France. Sometime within this period he undertook the composition of the Constitutions for the Sisters of St. Joseph.

1664

Asked to return to the College of Clermont as Minister for one year to handle a difficult situation – a one day riot. There was a need to restore order, reconcile differences and handle the practical, temporal affairs.

1669

His ill health brought him in October to the College of Billom, which was like a house of retreat for the retired Jesuits of Toulouse province. He was assigned as a confessor. This “traveler on the road of God’s glory” (Jesuit archives) came to a place of rest after fifteen years of active missionary service to the people of south-western France.

1669

Dies at the College of Billom on December 30 at age 59. He was a member of the Society of Jesus for 43 years. The Jesuit cemetery where he was buried has been destroyed, probably during the war.