Catholic Man of the Month

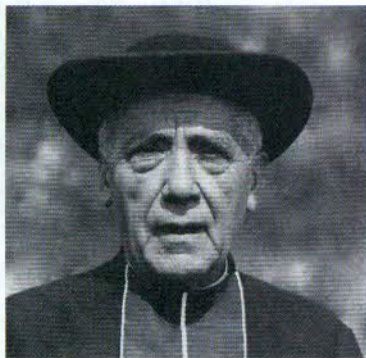## Blessed Jean-Baptiste Fouque (1851-1926)

BORN LESS THAN a year before Blessed Michael McGivney, Father Jean-Baptiste Fouque was a parish priest in a similar industrialized milieu. He carried out many charitable apostolates and served the poor in his native city of Marseilles, France.

Fouque was raised in a devout home, attended Catholic schools and felt a call to the priesthood at a young age. He entered the seminary in Marseilles and was ordained in 1876. After serving in several parishes, he was assigned to Holy Trinity Parish, where he remained for 38 years.

"There is no other food for the soul than the Eucharist," Father Fouque once said. A man of deep faith and Marian devotion, he was known to hear confessions into the evening. Yet, like Father McGivney, he did not believe his ministry ended with the Mass and other sacraments.

In 1888, he established "Le Sainte Famille," a home to protect young women who were flocking to Marseilles from the countryside in search of jobs. He went on to organize other networks of assistance, including a shelter for abandoned children and orphans, a school for domestic workers, a home for the aged and infirm, and a home for children with disabilities. The local authorities came to view these initiatives with great favor and sent people in need to Father Fouque's care.

During the First World War, Father Fouque tended to the wounded and displaced, and he gave refuge to hundreds of orphans. Not long after the Armistice, the indefatigable priest began work on a long-held dream: a free hospital for the poor. St. Joseph Hospital opened in 1921.

Known as the "St. Vincent de Paul of Marseilles," Father Fouque died Dec. 5, 1926. He was beatified in 2018. ✝