



Euphrasia – The Musical tells the true life story of Mother Mary Euphrasia – from a mischievous girl growing up in the aftermath of the French Revolution to her founding of Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

The musical is about one woman’s triumph over insurmountable obstacles through pure grit and tenacity.

Many may have heard about the Sisters of the Good Shepherd (The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd) a Catholic religious order and the nuns’ work with the marginalized communities around the world.

Not all knew about the life of the founder, Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier who aspired to restore the dignity of women and children began in 1835 in Angers, France!

Euphrasia was above all was fully committed to helping better the lives of the marginalized women of her time.

Mother Euphrasia was a forward-thinking woman with audacious ideas in patriarchal societies who bravely thought out of the box to network and connect the nuns to help the poor.



As a young girl, Euphrasia’s encounter with “slavery” gave her a real insight into the issues people face and fuelled her desire to help.  
Source: Euphrasia – The Musical FB

## Who do you look up to for inspiration?

I watched Euphrasia – The Musical and thought to myself, the youth performers were probably Mother Euphrasia’s age when she took it upon herself to change the world she lived in.

More than 150 years ago.

Young men and women today want to be empowered and need support. They are studious, articulate, driven, and ambitious and fight hard for a place in society once they finish school to enter the real world.

Many young people today look for mentors and gurus to grow their online world and businesses. They work hard to grow their Instagram accounts. They learn to make money online, to do business, with dreams of being financially rich.

So they can live the life they want.



Euphrasia – The Musical\_MEGAN CHNG as Josephine is also Choreographer for the musical. Source: Euphrasia – The Musical FB

Mary Euphrasia fought hard for what she believed in, despite facing huge adversities from her bishop.

## **What is the life you really want?**

Maybe it is time to stop looking at Superheroes in comic books and movies and take a look at how a young French girl became someone to inspire other girls to be the best that they can be.

Mary Euphrasia did what she loved and strived to positively impact as many people as possible.

During her time, there were no gurus or mentors. There were no webinars, tutorials or YouTube videos to download.

There was no roadmap.

## **So what is Mary Euphrasia's Legacy?**

I'm sure it did not cross Mary Euphrasia's mind to think of creating an enterprise or be a founder of a billion dollar company so that she could channel the funds to help others when she MAKES it.

Euphrasia started by believing she could do something to help the community around her.

She went to where the needy lived and found ways to help. She volunteered and made friends with the nuns who were weary, short-handed and needed help.

There weren't any motivational speaker to inspire her. Her inspiration came from her love for God.

In Mary Euphrasia's post-French Revolution world, there were countless displaced and homeless women who were widowed with small children.

She was moved to help women and children, especially those who were trafficked, forced to migrate and oppressed by abject poverty.

Her passion and vision to empower young women and girls became a full-time job she loved as she continued to look for a way to impact other nuns to help.

## **The Story of St Mary Euphrasia Pelletier**

Mary Euphrasia Pelletier's story is relatively unknown.

Born in 1796 as Rose Virginie Pelletier, Mary Euphrasia founded the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd when she was 39.

She was a French Catholic who fought the patriarchy of her time and helped countless women and children in her hometown in Angers during the post-French Revolution days.

At her boarding school at Tours, Rose found out about the Convent of the Refuge which belonged to a religious congregation founded in 1641 by St. John Eudes. The convent was a refuge for the rescue of "fallen" women and the protection of those in danger.



ALIA KEARNEY as Ashura who is empowered to help the nun and became bold to report to the port authorities to rescue other women who were exploited and trafficked as slaves. Source: Euphrasia – The Musical FB

## **Order of Our Lady of Charity**

When she was 18, Rose joined the Order of Our Lady of Charity who provided shelter, food, cared for girls and women in dire circumstances.

Some of the girls were orphaned or abandoned and, some had turned to prostitution in order to survive.

The Sisters of Our Lady of Charity provided vocational training and an opportunity for these girls to turn their lives around.

The nuns shared the harsh conditions of the rescued women, surviving on bland food, hard work, confinement and the long periods of silence.

Euphrasia was elected as superior of the Convent of the Refuge at 29 but was compelled to leave Angers and return to her own community at Tours.

In later years, Mother St. Euphrasia became convinced that a centralized organization was necessary as each house as it stood alone would hamper their work to reach out to the needy.

What was needed was a common noviceship and a superior general who could transfer the nuns from one house to another as the need arises.

In all her manifold trials and difficulties, St. Mary Euphrasia displayed heroic fortitude, cheerfulness, and trust in God.

Declared a saint in 1868, her legacy lives on 151 years since her passing in 1868, in 73 countries where the Good Shepherd Sisters welfare organization can be found.



Mother Mary Euphrasia and Monica who grew up to be her life long friend and confidante. Source: Euphrasia – The Musical FB

## St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier (1796 – 1868)

- Born: July 31, 1796, Noirmoutier-en-l'Île, France
- 1814 (18 years old) joined the Order of Our Lady of Charity
- 1835 (39 years old) founded Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
- Died (71 years old): April 24, 1868, Angers, France
- Venerated in: Catholic Church
- Beatified: 30 April 1933, Vatican by Pope Pius XII
- Canonized: 2 May 1940, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican by Pope Pius XII
- Major shrine: Abbaye Saint-Nicolas d'Angers (Convent and Mother-House of the Good Shepherd Congregation)
- Feast Day: 24 April
- Influenced by: John Eudes
- Influenced: Mary of the Divine Heart
- Books: Conferences and Instructions
- Organization founded: Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
- Patronage: Good Shepherd Sisters



Source: Euphrasia – The Musical FB

## **How would a modern woman relate to Mary Euphrasia's story?**

Euphrasia – The Musical's producers Datuk Faridah Merican and Sister Joan Lopez of the Good Shepherd Sisters believe that the story of St Mary Euphrasia Pelletier is one of great inspiration.

Mary Euphrasia's life is a testament to her strong belief in doing good and she did everything she could to help the marginalized women and children in the 1800s.

The story of a French Catholic nun, who devoted her life to provide shelter to women and girls in difficulty, is an inspiration that will be a catalyst for women today.

If there is a word to describe this incredible life's journey of dedication, Mary Euphrasia was a woman ahead of her time. Today, she would probably be called Female Trailblazer who made history by taking over prominent new roles for the first time and pushing boundaries.

What she did in the 1800s was unheard of and has redefined society's oppression of women.

Over the next thirty-three years, she labored tirelessly as she responded to requests to open houses in France, Europe, United States, Latin America, Asia, Oceania, and Africa.

"Most of the time, stories are about male heroes, if you tell a story about a woman, she's always under sufferance and being tortured. This is not that case, this is a good story to tell women," said Faridah in an interview with Malay Mail.

Sister Joan Lopez, the Province Leader of the Good Shepherd Sisters (Singapore and Malaysia) in her interview with the Star, said that it is important for young people to find a good role model.



Photo: Doris Lim

## **Sabahan singer Nikki Palikat played Euphrasia**

Talented Singer Nikki Palikat once said that she felt an emptiness just going on stage and singing during her recording artiste days.

Watching her perform the lead role in Euphrasia the Musical is riveting.

Nikki's passion and storytelling shone in the musical despite the initial weight of responsibility she felt playing a character that lived in the 1800s.

Nikki told Malay Mail that in researching about the French nun, she discovered more about herself in the process.

Few knew about the struggles of Mary Euphrasia who left behind a legacy that continue to inspire millions of others more than a century later.



NIKKI PALIKAT as Mother Mary Euphrasia. Source: Euphrasia – The Musical FB

### **What was the most challenging aspect of Mary Euphrasia's leadership?**

Coming from a grassroots background Mary Euphrasia learned at a young age to reach out to help the poor and needy.

Even as a young girl, her encounter with "slavery" gave her a real insight into the issues people face and fuelled her desire to help.

Mary Euphrasia didn't lose interest and momentum to continuously fundraise and communicate an inspiring vision that's worth fighting for to her closest allies and supporters.

She did things quickly and took action to champion one project after another.

### **What advice could future women leaders learn from Mary Euphrasia?**

Leadership is about empowering others to pursue their dreams and coming alongside women and girls through all their personal trials and fearless walk the walk.

When people see that you really believe in what you are championing then you are more likely to get support on how to impact people's lives.

### **Why Mary Euphrasia is the perfect woman leader?**

Mary Euphrasia instructed her daughters to do all in the spirit of the institute and to be full of love and charity for all souls. Her exemplary qualities are above all inspirational. Mary Euphrasia is a competent visionary who is empathetic, passionate and a champion for women.

It's hard to find a good role model in today's society where most people seemed lost in a dreamlike online world. For young people, finding a passion for work is important.

I work with young people and sometimes they tell me that they find it hard to be excited to show up to work every day, day after day.

Some have no idea what to do after university or getting a job. Most want to be their own bosses and build million dollar companies or get rich quickly.

It is more important for young people to have someone they can aspire to be.

Mary Euphrasia's pioneering works in establishing the Good Shepherd congregation continue to fight the good fight against human trafficking, prostitution, and poverty. Euphrasia's legacy lives on to provide provides shelter and training for women and children.



Mother Mary Euphrasia pointing the way to Jesus to a rescued “slave” Ashura. Source: Euphrasia – The Musical FB

## **How to tell the people about Mary Euphrasia?**

The producers of “Euphrasia” believe that a musical is the best way to tell Mary Euphrasia’s story which everyone can relate to.

Province leader Sister Joan Lopez said the Good Shepherd Sisters wanted to work on a musical since 2017 to celebrate her 150th death anniversary last year.

Euphrasia – The Musical is about a remarkable woman with great commitment in an era that was very difficult for women to come out and do things.

Written from a social angle, issues of human rights, social justice, human trafficking of the weak and marginalized is highlighted.

In the opening bar scene, a young girl (a modern-day slave) who was “owned” by a man was forced into providing commercial sex before she managed to run away and were encouraged to seek shelter protection from violence with the Good Shepherd (Women Shelter).

The musical written by talented local playwrights Cheah UiHua and Terence Toh, opened at KLPac’s Pentas 1 on April 26, 2019, and will tour Ipoh, Perak and Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

The two-hour-long musical, which contains 29 songs, is helmed by Dominic Lucien Luk. The show’s music was composed by singer-songwriter Mia Palencia and arranged by Loh Ui Li. The musical features an ensemble of 27 actors and 13 musicians.

The main cast of Euphrasia includes Nikki Palikat, Megan Chng, Qahar Aqilah, Doreen Tang, Ho Soon Yoon, and Alia Kearney.

The show is a collaboration between The Actors Studio and the Good Shepherd Sisters.



**Euphrasia – The Musical Full Cast. Photo: Doris Lim**

‘Gratitude is the memory of the heart’

From the founding of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd Sisters in 1835, lay women and men committed to the vision have emerged as mission partners playing a vital role in the development of Good Shepherd mission in the Asia Pacific region.

Knowing the founding story and understanding the character and motivation of the early Founders is a powerful orientation tool.

All proceeds of this show go towards work to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence – domestic violence, human trafficking, and child marriage prevention.

### **What is an inspiration? Find out and get inspired!**

My high school classmate Theresa said to me quietly, “I hope you were inspired by the musical.”

Indeed I am.

I was mentally stimulated. The excitement of the mind coupled with the emotions I felt watching the performance was quite overwhelming.

Mary Euphrasia’s life inspired the Euphrasia – The Musical.

The songs, dances and the play will continue to impact everyone who watched it in a very deep and meaningful way. There were many touching moments in the musical that left us crying.

The story of St Mary Euphrasia Pelletier is one that is of great inspiration and a source of healing for generations of young women and will continue to help millions of people around the world.

Source: <https://smardory.com/2019/05/euphrasia-the-musical/>