

Father Coudrin
& Mother Aymer
Their Community

Juan Vicente González Carrera ss.cc.

FATHER COUDRIN
MOTHER AYMER
AND
THEIR COMMUNITY

Juan Vicente González Carrera ss.cc.

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FATHER COUDRIN, MOTHER AYMER, AND THEIR COMMUNITY

By Juan Vicente González Carrera ss.cc.

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Prologue

The feast of the Sacred Heart, June 2, 1978, was the date of the presentation of Volume n. 9 of the Collection Etudes Picpuciennes,¹ entitled *Fr. Coudrin, Mother Aymer and their community*. The author, Fr. Juan Vicente González ss.cc., who died on May 28, 2010, has left us a magnificent work, an indispensable tool for those who want to go deeper into the history and spirituality of the Congregation.

On April 26, 1980 Fr. Columban Crotty ss.cc. signed the preface of the English translation of Fr. Juan Vicente's book. At that moment it was only the first part of the book. It was the beginning of a work of translation intending to offer the complete book to the English speaking brothers and sisters of the Congregation. It was done in a mimeographed form, in order to facilitate its distribution.

On March 3, 1981 the second part of the book was presented. Fr. Columban Crotty ss.cc. mentioned, as he did with the first part, the difficulties with the system of footnotes originally used in the Spanish.

On the feast of the Presentation, February 2, 1986, Fr. Frederick LaBrecque ss.cc. presented the third part of the book. Again, he spoke of the difficulties with the footnotes, as well as the usual complications of a translation that has the original texts in several languages. At the end of his presentation he expressed his desire that the fourth section would be "ready for you soon". However, that fourth part never came out.

In November-December 1986 Parts I and II were reprinted and the footnotes were corrected.

Thirty-three years after the publication of the book by the General House, we now have the complete translation of Fr. Juan Vicente's book. The first step taken after having the whole book translated was to offer an "electronic edition" to the Congregation using the web page of the General Governments of the Congregation. That "electronic edition" is appropriate in this twenty-first century. In fact, this is the most practical way to make the book accessible to all the brothers and sisters, and to any other people interested. However, a more permanent and suitable edition was also needed. So this edition was

¹ In fact, the book is presented as Volume 8 of the Collection "Etudes Picpuciennes". However this is an error, because Volume 8 is the book *Missionaries in action*, by Fernando Abalos ss.cc., Rome, General House, 1976.

prepared with the help of quite a number of brothers and sisters and finally published by our brothers in Indonesia.

Some observations about this edition

The original Spanish edition has an “Alphabetic Index” that is not present in the English translation. No doubt it would be useful; however, today we can get the same result, or even better, using computer technology in the case of the “electronic” edition. Conversely, to develop a new “Alphabetic Index” for this English edition would have involved a lot of work for a tool whose fruits can be obtained easily with other methods. This is why we have decided not to include an alphabetical index.

The footnotes deserve particular attention. The original Spanish edition is not clear in the use of the footnotes. Sometimes the references are placed in footnotes, sometimes in the text itself; the references do not always follow the same criteria. In this edition we have placed the references to sources and texts (except very short ones) in the footnotes, using the abbreviations that are presented in the preliminaries. Consequently the number of footnotes has been increased.

The English translation of the texts has been done from the original French texts (not from the Spanish translation offered by Fr. Juan Vicente).

A brief explanation regarding the abbreviation BP and BM. We have maintained Fr. Juan Vicente’s system of references using these abbreviations, as is indicated in the list of abbreviations. However, most of the documents of the Congregation use the abbreviation LEBP and LEBM. These abbreviations BP and BM are the same as LEBP and LEBM, corresponding to the collection that first appeared in 1913, with the work done by Fr. Philibert Tauvel ss.cc. and Fr. Ildefonse Alazard ss.cc.

Later, in 1925, the letters of the Good Father were published in 5 volumes. This is the reason why sometimes we find in documents of the Congregation abbreviations such as, for instance: LEBP II, p.129-130, meaning pages 129-130 of the second volume of that collection. There is also a similar collection of the writings of the Good Mother (LEBM) in four volumes.

Another step was taken when Fr. Amerigo Cools, General Archivist, did a colossal work classifying and creating and indexing our archives in Rome. That was published in 1968, with the title *Répertoire des Sources de la Maison Générale, concernant le Bon Père et son temps (RSGM)*.

Finally, we have to mention the work done by Fr. André Mark, also General Archivist, which resulted in a new publication of the Good Father’s writings, in 8 volumes, by the General House (first volume in 1994; last one in 2000). However,

Fr. André wisely kept the same numeration given the writings in the old collection of 1925.

Fr. André has also worked on the writings of the Good Mother, especially to arrange all the documentation needed for her cause of beatification. The letters and writings of the Good Mother were prepared in a collection of seven volumes, in a CD. In doing that he thought it best to change the numeration of some letters in order to maintain the criteria of the chronological order. He made an «electronic edition» of the LEBP and of the LEBM. This is available to all who are interested.

Finally, we have to say a word of thanks to the many brothers and sisters who, in one way or another, have collaborated to make possible this new English edition. Our aim has been to make available our spiritual and historical patrimony and to stimulate brothers and sisters to deepen their knowledge and love for the Congregation. We think particularly of the new generations of SS.CC. coming from areas where English is their common language. We hope that the full translation of Fr. Juan Vicente's book will encourage many to read and to know more about our history and spirituality.

Rome, March 27, 2012,
Anniversary of The Death of The Good Father

Presentation

We are offering the community a work that for, different reasons, we have not been able to revise as much as we would have liked to.

And although it always seemed superfluous to consume energy in trying to win over our readers to a love of history, because we started from the supposition that we were appealing to an interest that already existed, we would have liked to present the fruit of our research in as interesting a way as possible so that their reading would be easy and pleasant.

If we have not succeeded in that, we have at least tried to make a large amount of information accessible to all and ensure that each historical reference would be easy to find. With that purpose in mind, we have made a rather thorough subject index and another alphabetical one. We hope they are a help in locating the names of persons and places and that they also offer a minimum of information that facilitates a better understanding of history.

When Father General Jan Scheepens at the end of 1970 asked the Historical Commission in Rome to look for a way to give the community the fruit of what it had discovered in the archives while working on the Rule of Life, we thought the work would be shorter. Nevertheless we were able to finish it, thanks to the community's collaboration in a thousand ways, beginning with the patience of Father General. At no point did he give us time limits nor did he ever tell us to hurry.

We owe a particular word of thanks to the General Archivist, Father Amerigo Cools, who all along has offered his fine technical assistance. Nor can we forget Father Fabian Pérez del Valle and Father Fernando Abalos Murillo, who patiently and meticulously reviewed the manuscript, helped us with their advice and fraternal criticism and supported us with their encouragement.

During so many years of research, the help of the Province of France and in particular Father Alban Le Gargean and Father Tomas Matel has been so important. They both offered pertinent observations.

We remember in a very special way the late Father Médard Jacques, who was not only a perfect collaborator as member of the Commission, but also a master of historical

research and an example of love for the Church, a love he experienced in the community, to which he was totally committed.

Finally our most sincere thanks to Sister María Milagros Arbaizar ss.cc. for her valuable contribution.

Rome, Feast of the Sacred Heart,

June 2, 1978

Preface to The English Translation

The Continental Conference of 1978 authorized the English translation and publication of Father Juan Vicente's book on the Founders and the early history of the Congregation.

A number of unforeseen difficulties have delayed this project. The author requested that the translation be made from a manuscript copy rather than from the book itself, because quotations from the French were in the original language in the manuscript. However, upon completion of the translation, it was evident that the manuscript was an earlier one and that it did not correspond in a number of areas with the final publication. The preliminary chapters were originally the third chapter of Part One; extracts from sermons, now presented in their entirety in the Appendix of the book, were incorporated into the text, and the system of inserting footnotes was completely changed.

I have followed the order of chapters found in the book, even though the Preliminary Chapters are not very interesting for the general reader and would probably be better placed in the Appendix. Quotations from sermons, etc. not found in the book have been dropped. The system used for footnotes, however, is so intricate that the method used in the manuscript has been followed. Anyone wishing to do research might consult the Spanish text.

The time necessary for the revision of the translation, together with the spiraling cost of printing, have convinced me that it is preferable to make the English translation available in mimeographed form as soon as possible. Accordingly, each of the four parts will be printed as soon as they are ready and afterwards it can easily be arranged to have the whole produced in book form if desired.

Part II is ready for typing and should be available in the near future. I hope that the complete translation will be ready by the end of this year.

Columban Crotty, ss.cc.
April 26, 1980 Washington, D.C.

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ABBREVIATIONS

(of the original in Spanish)

a. (or art.)	= Article.
ANN.	= <i>Annales</i> , periodical formerly published at the Generalate.
Arch. SS.CC.	= General House Archives, Rome.
ASP	= Archives of the Sisters' Generalate, Rome.
BM	= Writings of Mother Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie (Bonne Mère = Good Mother).
BP	= Writings of Father Marie-Joseph Coudrin (Bon Père = Good Father).
Brémond	= Henri Brémond. <i>Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France</i> .
Cap. Gen.	= General Chapter.
C.N.S.	= Christ Our Lord.
Couturier I	= H. Couturier, <i>La préparation des Etats Généraux de 1789 en Poitou, Etude historique du Droit</i> . Poitiers, 1909.
Couturier II	= H. Couturier. <i>Une période électorale à Poitiers en 1789</i> . Poitiers, 1911.
Dans. (or Dansette)	= Adrien Dansette. <i>Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine</i> .
CS (also C.Sp.)	= Cahiers de Spiritualité, studies published in several volumes over a period of years after 1958 by the Generalate (particularly in n. 10).
FV	= Writings of Françoise de Viart, Second Superior General of the Sisters.
GB	= Writings of Sister Gabriel de la Barre, ss.cc. (+ 1829), Chronicler and Second member of the Congregation.
Mem. I	= Mémoires published in <i>Annales</i> 1962.
Mem. II (o Ecr.Div.)	= Non edited Mémoires: 1804-1824.
Godechot	= Jacques Godechot. <i>Les Institutions de la France sous la Révolution et l'Empire</i> . Presses Universitaires de France. Deuxième édition, Paris, 1968.

- HL** = Writings of Hilarion Lucas, ss.cc. (+1865).
- Hist.Mis.OO** = History of the missions of Oriental Oceania.
- Hist.Mis.Sand.** = History of the Missions of the Sandwich Islands.
- Mem.** = Mémoires of the history of the Congregation.
- I, II, III, IV, Mem** = Memories presented in Rome, and published in ANN., 1963.
- Qq.R.I.** = Quelques Remarques sur le P.M.J. (1802).
- Qq.R.II.** = Quelques Remarques sur le T.R.P. Marie Joseph Fondateur et Supérieur General et Fondateur de l'Ordre de Zélateurs et Zélatrices des Sacrés Cœurs (1816).
- VBM** = Vie de la Bonne Mère.
- VBP** = Vie du Bon Père.
- ID** = Writings of Father Isidore David, second professed Brother.
- LE** = Livre des Emplois (an early register of Personnel).
- Lestr.** = Lestra, Antoine. *Le Père Coudrin, Fondateur de Picpus.*
- PAC** = Père Amerigo Cools, ss.cc. *Répertoires des Sources de la Maison Généralice concernant le Bon Père et son Temps.* Rome, 1968 (a Bibliography of materials in the General House).
- RSB (or R.de S.B.)** = Rule of Saint Benedict.
- Registre** = Register of Chapters, etc.
- Roux** = Marquis de Roux. *Histoire religieuse de la Révolution à Poitiers et dans la Vienne.* Landarchet, Lyon 1952.
- SG** = Superior General (Brother or Sister).



ABBREVIATIONS

(in the English translation)

- ANN.** = Annales de la Congrégation des Sacrés Cœurs.
- ARCH.** (also **ARCH ***) = General House Archives, Rome.
- ASP** = Archives of the Sisters' Generalate, Rome.
- BM** = Writings of Mother Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie (Bonne Mère = Good Mother).
- BP** = Writings of Father Joseph-Marie Coudrin (Bon Père = Good Father).
- CS** (also **C.Sp.**) = Cahiers de Spiritualité, studies published in several volumes over a period of years after 1958 by the Generalate (particularly in n.10).
- Couturier I** = H. Couturier, *La préparation des EE. Généraux en Poitou, Etude historique du droit*. Poitiers, 1909.
- Couturier II** = H. Couturier, *Une période électorale à Poitiers en 1789*. Poitiers, 1911.
- Dans.** = Adrien Dansette, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine*, Flammarion, Paris, 1965.
- FV** = Writings of Françoise de Viart, Second Superior General of the Sisters.
- GB** (also **GB MEM**) = Writings of Sister Gabriel de la Barre, ss.cc. (+ 1829), Chronicler and Second member of the Congregation.
- Mem. I** = Mémoires published in Annales 1962.
- Mem. II** (o Ecr.Div.) = Non edited Mémoires: 1804 - 1824.
- HL** = Writings of Hilarion Lucas, ss.cc. (+ 1865).
- Hist.Mis.OO** = History of the missions of Oriental Oceania.
- Qq.R.I.** = Quelques remarques sur le P.M.J. (1802).
- Qq.R.II.** = Quelques remarques sur le T.R.P. Marie-Joseph, Fondateur et Supérieur Général de l'Ordre des Zélateurs et Zélatrices des Sacrés Cœurs (1816).
- Mem. C** = Mémoires sur la Congrégation (4 vols.)

Mem. R	= Memories presented in Rome, and published in ANN., 1963.
Mem. M	= Mémoires sur les Missions de l'Océanie.
VBM	= Vie de la Bonne Mère.
VBP	= Vie du Bon Père.
PJ	= Pièces justificatives.
ID	= Writings of Father Isidore David, second professed Brother.
Latr.	= A. Latreille. <i>L'Eglise catholique et la Révolution française</i> .
LE	= Livre des Emplois (an early register of Personnel).
Lestr.	= Antoine Lestra. <i>Le Père Coudrin, Fondateur de Picpus</i> .
LYONNET II	= Bishop Lyonnet. <i>The story of Bishop d'Avivou of Bois-de-Sanzay, later Archbishop of Vienne and of Bordeaux</i> , (2 vol.), J-B. Pelagaud, Paris, 1847.
PAC	= P. Amerigo Cools, ss.cc. <i>Répertoires des Sources de la Maison Généralice concernant le Bon Père et son Temps</i> . Rome, 1968.
Plong.	= Bernard Plongeron. <i>Conscience religieuse en Révolution</i> . Picard, Paris, 1969.
PR	= Paterne Roue, ss.cc., Various articles on historical research.
Roux	= Marquis de Roux. <i>Histoire religieuse de la Révolution à Poitiers et dans la Vienne</i> . Lyon, 1952.
Saill.	= Etienne Saillard. <i>La Terreur à Poitiers</i> . Poitiers, 1912.
NB	= Number without p. = page refer to marginal numbers of originals. Numbers of Founders' writing refer to process of beatification.



in *Section* ordine Auditor

in cujus rei fidem subscripsimus

J. M. J. Courvin
[Signature]



Preliminaries

The writings of the period of the foundation which are conserved in the archives of the General Houses of the Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Hearts (Picpus) form an immense documentation almost completely unedited and relatively little-known, because the few people who have penetrated into the forest of these manuscripts have taken to their graves the best part of their knowledge.

After having read these writings with attention, we thought that perhaps what would be of interest to the present community at this time would be to develop a generic view concerning the entire process of its foundation. As a consequence, abandoning every monographic temptation, we have attempted a synthesis of all the recorded information in the reading of this entire documentation, which embraces the first half-century of the history of the Congregation, and which presents to us a picture of the community which accompanied Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer in the work of creating their religious family.

What interests us in these fifty years is rightly the first construction of the community. We would not wish to fall into the genre of “edifying history,” isolating the spiritual contents from their human context or coating its exposition with episodes which would favor a false piety.

Our goal is to furnish the necessary antecedents to the reader in order to develop a documented picture of the life of faith, across which the community matured the conscience of its charism and assumed its responsibility in the Church, fashioning a communal response to the call of Providence. In other words, we would like to offer the indispensable elements to capture the essence of the history of the Congregation’s foundation.

However, we will not attempt to answer all the questions which pertain to such a complete reality and such a large time span. Just as when one tries to restore an antique mosaic, we have not always succeeded in finding all the fragments and, honestly, we must leave many gaps in knowledge, at times in points of greatest interest. The genuine haste of presenting something after six years of research presses us to leave many gaps it would have pleased us to fill. It is worth more to present something as incomplete rather than present nothing in the hope of completing it, at the risk of not doing anything.

In these preliminary pages, we have noted some data- which seem useful to us for the best reading of this study:

- I. A Look at the Archives;
- II. The Early Library;
- III. The Research Process.

Chapter I

A LOOK AT THE ARCHIVES

In 1968 Father Amerigo Cools, General Archivist of the Congregation published his *Repertory of the Sources in the Generalate on the Good Father and His Times*. It is the best available guide for a study of the documents in the archives and for a more complete index the reader is referred to this work.

A resume of the documentation serves a useful purpose but it would hardly be reasonable to use this vast collection of writings without saying a word about their characteristics and, if possible, their value and authority.

It is not possible to make a complete and systematic study here, for it would never be finished and it would make us lose sight of our objectives, so our study will be limited to a brief description of the principal sources. Classification by author has been decided on because the author is the person who conditions a document and, to a great extent, determines its characteristics and the weight of its authority.

1. Writings of Father Coudrin

Few words are necessary to demonstrate that the Founder's writings are important for any research which proposes to shed light on the history of the origins of the Congregation he founded and on the spirit in which he did so. It would be idle to give a superficial description of them even were they published and in reach of the readers, but since this is not the case, we shall take some time to give an idea of them.

About 2,300 various writings of Father Coudrin are preserved and were collected in the compilation made for the cause of beatification. Of these we omit the official documents –in all some 120– which are almost all published.²

Next we have six of the Founder's sermons. One of these seems to be the work of Father Dodain, a companion on his travels during the Reign of Terror who was guillotined on April 18, 1794.³ There is no doubt that he is the author of the brief *Funeral Oration*

2 Circular Letters: ANN. 1960, pp. 164-239; Petitions and Memoranda: ANN., 1963, pp. 161 ff; General. Chapters: ANN., 1964, PD. 81 ff; Constitutions: ANN., 1961.

3 BP, 2200.

(if it merits the title) given in April 1818 at the burial of Louis Aymer de la Chevalerie, Mother Aymer's brother.⁴

The remaining four are of a much earlier period and two of them were certainly written prior to his ordination to the priesthood. The sermon entitled *Sacrilegious Communion*⁵ has a date: it was preached at Coussay-les-Bois on Sunday, September 5, 1790, when he was still a subdeacon. Another entitled *Blessed are those who suffer* was written in 1791, in the St. Ustre era.⁶ This spiritual text, which explains a very important theme, is printed in its completion in the Appendix, where its principal parts will be studied.

The third sermon entitled *Final Impenitence*,⁷ dates from 1794 and would appear to have been written before the death of Robespierre because mention is made of all the revolutionaries who met tragic deaths except Robespierre, who was certainly the most prominent. However, under the circumstances, it does not seem probable that he would have exposed himself to writing, and risked drawing up a document that would have sent him to the guillotine, if it had been discovered prior to August 1, 1794, which was the date that the death of the despot became known in Poitiers. It is a very violent denunciation of the revolutionaries as rebels against God's law and profaners of his worship.⁸

The final sermon, *On Faith*,⁹ does not have a date. Perhaps it can be placed between the years 1794 and 1797. Because of the importance of the theme, it is published in its totality in the Appendix.

There is no doubt that in all these sermons there is a rhetorical tone. The handling is classical, almost scholarly, according to the canons of the era of Bourdalou. Nevertheless, the style cannot hide a very personal spiritual orientation that was deeply rooted in his life, as subsequent history would show. However, the documents consistently indicate that these sermons are not a good example of his typical way of preaching after the Reign of Terror. "He always preached from the abundance of his heart," wrote Hilarion. "He prayed and God inspired him as to what he should say."¹⁰

Later texts were not written by him but were composed from notes taken by his religious and we have no special guarantee of their fidelity.¹¹

There is also a *Rule* by the Founder which is very early, certainly before Mother

4 BP, 2198.

5 BP, 2001.

6 BP, 2202.

7 BP, 2202b.

8 Hilarion's views; VBP, 20, 21, 47.

9 BP, 2199.

10 HL, Qq.R.l., 1, 35, 47, 50, 55, 66, 67, 78. Qq.R.II. p. 8. HL, Qq.R.l., 55; *ibid.* 73; *ibid.* 46. HL, VBP, 47; BP, 56.

11 BP, 2209.

Aymer's message of 1800 which included the information on what is known as the *Trappist Rule*, drawn up at the close of 1798. It is most likely the first rule of the Solitaires, which would date it as written in 1796-97.¹² Given its spiritual and historical importance, it is published in the Appendix.

The great bulk of Father Coudrin's writings is made up of his letters. Some are addressed to members of the clergy and are not counted in the official correspondence; others are addressed to laymen and civil authorities and to other religious. A good number are letters to various members of his family, some 147 letters, but most of his correspondence is addressed to his religious brothers and sisters.¹³

Among all these letters there are not any examples of what are usually called "letters of spiritual direction" in the style of a St. Francis de Sales, for instance. Still less do they reveal the intention of developing a certain spiritual doctrine, as do the letters on "Abandonment" of Father Caussade.

Father Coudrin's letters were those of an extremely active apostle. Only with great difficulty did he succeed in postponing his tasks for a few fleeting moments in order to send to his distant sons and daughters what was much more a word of remembrance and of affection than an official communication. It could be said with more accuracy that they were "letters of communion." Almost all of them are addressed to superiors, but almost always thinking about the whole community which was entrusted to them. There can be no doubt about this, for he usually mentioned all the members of the community by name and had a special word for each one.¹⁴

His style is familiar, direct, and spontaneous. There is not the least sign of self-concern and not the least condescension in what he says. Although he himself, for reasons of prudence, systematically tore up the correspondence he received, he did not seem to have any suspicion that his own letters were going to be preserved so meticulously. The preservation of the Founder's letters is explained not only by Hilarion's diligence as an archivist, but above all by the universal devotion he was held in by both the brothers and the sisters. There remain some letters which still bear the mark of having been worn like relics under the clothing, perhaps with the hope of curing some illness.

These letters, of so little literary or doctrinal value, are shown to be priceless when the religious spirit which dictated them is unwittingly revealed. In this aspect and always considered in their totality, they are of great interest. They represent a testimony to the

12 BP, 2197.

13 PAC, *Répertoire*.

14 E.g., BP, 102.

charism that inspired a fraternal communion, simple and cordial that characterized Father Coudrin. It was from the practice of this charism that the Congregation was born, much more than from a juridical organization, or a highly developed academic spirituality, but precisely on a “fraternal communion” animated by a dynamic evangelical inspiration. It was a pure evangelical inspiration, without concessions to human vanity, which was the charm and, at the same time, the fragility of his Religious Family.¹⁵

2. Writings of Mother Aymer

For reasons similar to those given in regard to Father Coudrin’s writings, those of Mother Aymer de la Chevalerie are important and so were preserved.

In the collection for the process of beatification, there are 1,529 writings consisting almost entirely of notes and letters sent either to the Founder who was her regular confessor, or to other members of the community, especially to the sisters and, in particular, to the superiors.

From the beginning of her “conversion” in 1794, the ways of the mystical life were opened up to her, and throughout her life she experienced extraordinary phenomena such as ecstasies and visions. She reported them summarily and soberly to Father Coudrin in some “notes,” which as a rule were very brief and simply revealed how reluctantly she decided to write them down. In the rest of her correspondence there is not the slightest trace of this secret of her conscience.¹⁶

These notes, in all less than forty, were almost all written before 1805, and originated in the demand made by Father Coudrin, perhaps in the first months of 1797, that she put the revelations in writing. The most fruitful period of these notes seems to have been from the beginning of 1800 to the end of 1801, in which her theme was that of God’s intentions for the community and its destiny. It is necessary to note that after this period, as far as we know, she wrote nothing on this theme, as if it had been exhausted and the characteristic traits of the community were complete from this time.¹⁷

Next come her letters, among which those addressed to the Founder are of special interest. Almost all of them are later than 1820, which was the year that Father Coudrin left Paris. They testify to the close spiritual friendship which united the Founders. It is very regrettable that no one has as yet been found to study them diligently.¹⁸

15 *Cahiers de Spiritualité*, n. 10, nn. 473-606.

16 BM, 18-52.

17 GB, Mem. II, 33, 36. The writings used in the period of negotiations for Roman approbation are by this time already old, at least fourteen or fifteen years.

18 Fr. Arsène Jédard, who knew very much about the subject, unfortunately published nothing.

Before going on, it is to be noted that the impression made on a present-day reader of Mother Aymer's writings, and especially of the body of correspondence addressed to her sisters, is one of astonishment at the outstanding personality they reveal.

We have heard frequently of the simply horrifying instruments of penance used by the Good Mother, so we suspect that within that tortured body there must have been hidden a tense and somber soul, one insensitive to the simple pleasures of life and feeling a sense of guilt for her social life before the Reign of Terror. How wonderful it is to see portrayed in these letters so uncomplicated a personality. In them is preserved all the grace and charm, not to say "finesse," which made her the central figure in the salons of the nobility of Poitiers under the Old Regime. St. Athanasius says something similar about St. Anthony: the many years spent in the desert did not deprive him of the aristocratic finesse of his manners. The same holds true for Mother Aymer, and this is what her writings tell us.¹⁹

On reading the originals it becomes quite clear that she must have been given a low mark for handwriting in her courses at la Sainte Croix in Poitiers. However, this does not stop her from writing gracefully and with ease in what Trochu called "the Sevigné style," a style which perfectly covered over the life of mortification she led and still more the constant communications received through her mystical experience.²⁰

Of course, her attitude toward the sisters who were her contemporaries and toward the novices was quite different. With the former she showed a real modesty when treating of spiritual matters. When circumstances oblige her doing so, she always said: "I am preaching to myself," or something similar. With the latter, she was not afraid to give spiritual advice when the occasion arose, but not often. She found nothing so repulsive as putting on airs about being a spiritual person, and still worse, what is contemptuously called "pious" when applied to persons with airs of affected piety.

Most of her letters are about government, and especially administration, because, although there was a bursar in Picpus, she was the one who took care of business matters. Her letters were always written in the midst of a very busy life. In 1821, she wrote to the Marchioness de Guerry: "Fifty people have come to my room since I began writing to you, and God alone knows what I am telling you." She was in charge not only of a large community of sisters, but also of male religious nearby who had to be fed and whose clothes had to be washed and mended. If we keep in mind that in 1820 both houses held more than 300 persons, and that there was not too much money available, it is

19 *Vita Antonii* by St. Athanasius. *Vitae Patrum*, Patr., Lat., Migne.

20 M. Trochu. *La Servante de Dieu Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie*, Chap. XVII, p. 252.

understandable why Mother Aymer could not neglect for a moment her care of material matters.²¹

To please so many members of a household, along with many prominent visitors, priests, and bishops, she had no hesitation about showing she was a real gourmet. She wrote to the superior of Sees, Sister Justine, in 1823:

I have also received a cask of wine I have not yet tasted. I am ready to refresh my throat with some and then put it aside for special occasions.

The same year she wrote to Sister Françoise de Viart, superior of Cahors: "I thank you for the delicious grapes, and as a real gourmet I ask you for some truffles, if they are in season."²²

To her friend and confidante of earlier times, Sister Gabriel de la Barre, superior of Poitiers, she wrote about her financial problems. In 1818, she says:

My dearest, try to see about la Girouardiere (some property belonging to Mother Aymer) as soon as you can. For truly with all the establishments it is suggested we buy, and with all those we have that are in such great need, we cannot get along without money. Every day God grants us, I am in deepest sorrow over all this. I do not want to bother you any longer with my tales of woe, but I only ask you to pray for your old mother.²³

To Ludovine de la Marsonnière she wrote in 1808:

Thus life goes on, until the end, gliding along from one trouble to another. What one fears is always what happens, so the love of the Cross is a great good. I want yours to be of straw and you to keep strong enough to bear those of bronze.²⁴

Her profound knowledge of life shows itself in expressions which are almost proverbs. Thus she says: "One always hopes a little bit for what one desires a whole lot."²⁵

In order to give a better idea of her letters, we present here a full copy of one addressed to Sister Alix Guyot, the new superior of the recent foundation of Mortagne, in 1821.²⁶

I am afraid you are wearing yourself out just as the good Simplicienne (the prioress) is doing. You must go on living, so take it easy. The others are in good health, but try to keep them from being bored. Try also to keep up the fervor, the cheerfulness, the kindness, the simplicity, the togetherness, that tender charity which becomes a part of the happiness of religious life. Support the weak,

21 BM, 824, *6.

22 BM, 1061-1062.

23 BM, 605.

24 BM, 328.

25 BM, 302.

26 BM, 818.

encourage the strong. Do not tire yourself; in a word, do the best you can. Assure them of my tender solicitude and all of you trust in my tender love.

All of you write me informally. I am most anxious to hear news about all of you. You are spoken of here every day. You are loved, missed by all. All pray for you so do the same for us and believe I am ever yours. Your old Mother.

Apart from Mother Aymer's notes and letters, we have writings about projects involving the Rule of the Congregation, the first one written around the spring of 1800, with the intention of preparing a presentation in Rome, according to the *Mémoires* of Sister Gabriel de la Barre. They are in the handwriting of Bernard de Villemort which helps to identify the edition indicated by our chronicler. Later, around 1801-1802, she composed the General Rule of the Order of Zealots and Devotees of the Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, Perpetual Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

We shall treat of these Rules later on; we just mention them here in order to give a more complete list of the Foundress' writings.²⁷

3. Writings of Sister Gabriel de la Barre

Sister Gabriel de la Barre, one of the first disciples of Father Coudrin, perhaps since 1793-1794, is also the first confidant of Mother Aymer, and the chronicler of the community from 1800. The first part of her *Mémoires*, which were finished in 1802 were published in the *Annales* in 1962. The title is *La Mere Gabriel de la Barre et son Oeuvre*, and, though the work is not signed, it is in the handwriting of Father Romanus Karbach. Father Amerigo Cools edited the text and wrote the introduction and the critical notes. Unfortunately, publication was not continued, but this work makes a lengthy explanation here unnecessary and we refer you to it.²⁸

Perhaps the earliest writing we have of Sister Gabriel is a fragment entitled *Réponse à mon frère*. According to the most probable conjectures, it is hardly likely that it is later than 1797 when the subject would have already been out of date for it to have been written by Sister Gabriel. It is very possible it goes back to 1795 and refers to the ideals and missions of the "Immensité." Despite its incompleteness, it is a valuable testimony to the spirit which animated not only the young de la Barre, then twenty-four years old, but also the Society of the Sacred Heart in those early times, before Mother Aymer's

27 The text of the first one has been found recently in the archives of the Generalate of the Sisters. For the dates and circumstances of their completion, cf. ANN., 1962, p. 199.

28 ANN., 1962, pp. 161-250. Mother de la Barre signs her name always as "Sr. Gabriel" not "Sr. Gabrielle." We respect her usage, followed by the majority of her contemporaries.

personality became known.²⁹

It was written at the request of a person whom the authoress calls “my brother,” but it certainly was not her real brother who was already dead at this period. Who, then, was this ‘brother’? Most likely it was a priest, a member of the Immensite who, knowing the young Gabriel’s thinking, wished her to put it in writing. There were at least six priests of the Immensite but we think it most likely that it was Father Coudrin himself who was her spiritual director and confessor. This would explain why the document was preserved in our archives.

Hilarion says he copied it completely in his *Mémoires* but actually he left out the first paragraph in which the “Immensité” is explicitly mentioned, and at the end left out another paragraph which makes it clear there is question not only of an incomplete document but of a fragment, that is, a writing which was originally more extensive.³⁰

Another interesting work by Sister Gabriel is about a project on the Rule of the Congregation, without a title. In the introduction there is mentioned “the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.” This document, of which we shall treat in its proper place, was apparently composed before Mother Aymer’s revelations, which seem to have eclipsed silently the modesty of Sister Gabriel. This leads us to conclude it was in the years 1796-1799. These notes have a view of things which, unfortunately, did not contribute more to the formation of our community legislation.³¹

Another of Sister Gabriel’s writings was a small notebook on the religious life. It seems to have been composed very early and she left it in an envelope with the instructions that it be handed over to Father Coudrin after her death. Its title is *Pieuses réflexions*.

Sister Gabriel’s main work is her *Mémoires* on the Good Mother and on the Congregation. The first part, which was finished in 1802, was published many years later.³²

We have four notebooks of twenty-four pages each which make up the second part, entitled *Notes sur la Congrégation*. The date, written by Sister Gabriel, is at the heading of the first notebook, October 18, 1823. It covers the history of the community from 1802 to February 1, 1824, and at the end of page 95 there is this phrase: “finished February 4, 1824.”

These writings are composed in a style quite different from that of the ones published.

29 Hilarion Lucas copied it in the first volume of his *Mémoires*. “Immensité” was the secret code name of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

30 An examination of the original leaves no doubt that the text is interrupted in the middle of a sentence at the end of a page. Then it seems more pages have been lost.

31 Archives of the Generalate of the Sisters.

32 PAC, 5212, 95; 5213.

The twenty years which separate them did not pass in vain. Our chronicler seems to have acquired a greater capability for synthesis and also greater fluency.

Sister Gabriel, who was superior of the residence of Poitiers for more than twenty years, had only indirect information about other houses, information limited to the more important items she could gather. About Poitiers, however, she has an abundance of details.

This whole panorama is depicted in clear outlines, well thought out, and not the result of a wild imagination. Her viewpoint is realistic and objective and at the same time spiritual. Apparently she did not keep any diary or chronicle so that, on recalling the past, she was so scrupulous that she does not give dates, and so it is not easy to record the facts as chronologically as we would have wished.

Two other notebooks of the same type as the ones mentioned were also written by Sister Gabriel and are dedicated to Mother Aymer and simply entitled *The Good Mother*. They contain biographical data, with special reference to her mystical life, all prior to her departure to Mende in 1802. She concludes with this paragraph which tells us much about the attitude she had when she wrote.

It was in this painful period, 1802, that I lost sight of the Good Mother. Since then we have not been together except for brief periods. Since I only want to write about things of which I am sure, I hope, in order to continue these notes, if God grants me life, that I may be able to get information from the religious men and women who lived with her.³³

From the correspondence of Sister Gabriel a good number of letters addressed to the Good Mother and a few less to Father Coudrin and to various members of the community are preserved. They represent the main document we have on the life of the community of Poitiers between 1802 and 1829, and as is easy to imagine, they are of great value for the study of the spirit and life of the early community of the Congregation.

4. Writings of Hilarion Lucas

Even a cursory investigation of the archives of the Generalates of the Brothers or of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts in Rome soon reveals the writings of Hilarion. These are important on account of their quantity and exceptionally so, on account of their quality. This is so even though a century after his death, the interdict imposed on them subsequent to his participation in the deplorable schism of 1853 is still in force to some extent.³⁴

³³ PAC, 5212, 95.

³⁴ ANN., Ignacio Baños, ss.cc., *Father Euthyme Rouhouze*.

Brief Biography of Hilarion

There is no doubt that Hilarion's personality was, to say the least, enigmatic. Any definitive judgment about his moral influence and his manner of thinking must await a careful and serious study of his life.

In spite of this, it is possible to say something here about his very complex personality, and to make some evaluation of his work, although under certain strict reservations.

Joseph Hilarion was the religious name taken by Gregory Lucas. Gregory Lucas was born in Montbason on February 5, 1782. His father was a tax collector, and later was in charge of the books of that same office. His mother was the daughter of a lawyer of Tours. Born out of wedlock, he was immediately sent to the orphan asylum and only in July of that year, when his parents married, was he committed to the care of a nurse.³⁵

We know very little about his early years and his adolescence. According to some very incomplete testimony, during the Revolution he was a student of Bernazais at the school (later lycée) in Poitiers. Bernazais, a teacher of physics, put great stress on "the rights of man and of the citizen." To stimulate his students, he would ceremoniously give a fraternal embrace (accolade) to the one who responded best. A comrade of Lucas, Sayette, testified that he very often received this "accolade."³⁶

When he was hardly seventeen years old in 1799, Hilarion knew Father Coudrin, then a young priest of thirty-one. He had not yet made his First Communion, owing to the corruption of the times. He did so, however, on June 16 of that same year.

Father Coudrin was a hero of the underground Church of Poitiers and had all the attributes to make him the idol of an enthusiastic adolescent such as Hilarion. From then on, led perhaps by a kind of atavistic instinct, he began to note down whatever his idol said, "writing it down the very same day" (about the events of the Reign of Terror).³⁷

The constancy and loyalty he showed in persevering in this relationship of his early youth is noteworthy. Though it became somewhat blurred by traces of a strange fanaticism in his last years, it never weakened.

Hilarion was, undoubtedly, a man with great intensity of feeling, extremely sensitive, intellectually outstanding, with an exceptional memory, and with an extraordinary capacity for work. He was professor, orator, diplomat and secretary, going from one activity to another with remarkable ease and performing each with exceptional ability. The scarcity of priests during the first years of the century compelled those who were as

³⁵ Parish records; PAC, 2641.

³⁶ PAC, 2642.

³⁷ HL, Qq.R.II, p. 1.

zealous as he was to use their talents according to circumstances and to confront tasks as they arose.³⁸ This he did brilliantly.

He took courses in theology, perhaps under Father Coudrin as teacher, for in those years there was neither a seminary nor an organized faculty in Poitiers. At any rate, he began very early to teach at Poitiers itself, and after August 1803 at Mende where on July 3, he was confirmed. He made his religious profession on April 18, 1801.³⁹

Apparently he was ordained in Paris by Bishop de Chabot on September 21, 1805.⁴⁰

In 1806, he accompanied the Founder on his journey to Sees and remained there as professor of theology at the seminary.

In August 1809, when the Congregation left the major seminary of Sees, Hilarion returned to Paris where he taught until 1814. In July of that year, he left for Rome, accompanying the first ambassador of Louis XVIII to the Pope. In Rome he performed brilliantly and with great loyalty to his and the Founders' ideals of the Congregation as may be seen by the way he carried out the negotiations and through the letters we still have not only from him sent to the Founders and to other members of the community from Rome but also from the Founders to him.

He was recalled from Rome by Father Coudrin at a time when it was quite difficult, apparently, for him to obey. At Picpus he met with signs of exceptional confidence. He was Master of Novices from December 1816 to June 1818. He taught at the seminary until the end of 1820, when the Founder took him along on the mission in Troyes. He distinguished himself in these tasks, keeping in special contact with the Good Mother whom he loved and deeply admired, having her participate in his missionary endeavors. He wrote to her often, consulted her, and gave her detailed information about his missionary activity. He helped her in this way to bear up under the new situation the Congregation suffered due to the conflicts with the Curia of Paris and the Founder's leaving the capital.

In 1825, when Father Coudrin went to Rome, he took Hilarion with him. Shortly afterwards he returned to Picpus as a teacher. Perhaps it was at this time that he presented himself along with Father Maigret at the Sorbonne to defend a doctoral thesis. But, when a few days later, the university sent them Doctors' caps, they both scornfully rejected them, refusing to accept anything from a "Gallican" faculty.⁴¹

38 GB, Mem.

39 GB, Mem.

40 PAC, 2643. HL, *Lettre in Mos. Pie.* 14, IX. 1850.

41 PAC, 2644.

Later, he was prior of Picpus where he showed he had little understanding of a large part of the community, so that at the end of 1831, Father Coudrin thought it better to have a new prior. It was then that he devoted himself to writing his *Mémoires*. In a letter of November 28 addressed to Sister Françoise de Viart he wrote:⁴²

I am busy five or six hours a day for four months, working on our history. I copy all the documents, I collect all the facts. In a word, I work like a galley-slave but wholeheartedly. I am *authorized* by our mutual friend (Father Coudrin) to ask for all the information I need. So help me with this good work. I would like to have an exact and authentic copy of all the letters written in the Good Father's and the Good Mother's own handwriting! I do not mean those which they merely signed, nor do I mean letters involving 'matters of conscience' which are personal and private. I want all other letters written either to the brothers or the sisters. The older your residence is the more letters you must have. I have already collected 164 of the Good Father and 75 of the Good Mother.

I have one volume which I have had bound for this collection which later on will be most useful.

So I beg your help, you and Father Césaire and all the brothers and sisters. Since there is question of a collection which will be useful later on, please, Father Césaire and you, testify at the bottom of the page that it is in conformity with the original. I will make another copy for my own collection and deposit yours in the archives. If possible, you might indicate the date of each letter. Next, I would like details on all that can be known from thirty years ago up to now, designating the period and the persons insofar as is possible.

I make this request to everyone in general and to each one in particular. I have already written 36 pages of history, 80 pages of letters, and 220 pages of other documents. When published, there would be in all some 1260 pages.⁴³

In February of the following year he again wrote to Sister Françoise:

I regret I cannot find time to collect all you have been able to send me. I already have a quite beautiful collection. At present, I have 227 letters of the Good Mother and 338 of the Good Father, in all 565 letters which are very useful for me for the general history. I have 230 from Poitiers, Sées and Mende alone. I hope to double the collection should I find the same goodwill everywhere.⁴⁴

Starting out from this period, Hilarion became more or less the official chronicler of the community. In 1835, after Mother Aymer's death, he addressed a letter to the entire Congregation requesting the various residences to cooperate in collecting whatever

42 BP, 1609, 1616.

43 PAC, 2625.

44 Feb. 20, 1832; PAC, 2626.

documents might be pertinent for publishing the first biography of Mother Aymer. He had the express support of the Superiors General, and it would not be long before he received an immense quantity of letters and memoranda which he would copy meticulously and which would form the first important nucleus of the archives.⁴⁵

His work as chronicler is astounding for the rapidity with which it was accomplished, enabling him to achieve a tremendous amount of work in a relatively short time. He wrote in well-formed small lettering with very even lines. The letters are so small that it is difficult to read them and, as he advanced in age they become smaller and smaller, due perhaps to the progressive deterioration of his eyesight.

It may be said that he did not have enough time to examine critically the many documents he made use of, and that his arrangement of their contents was purely chronological.

The value of his testimony is different when he was a personal witness of the facts he relates. This is so in the case of the negotiations he conducted for the Roman approbation of the Congregation in 1814-1816; for the conflict with the Curia of Paris in 1820; for the missions of Troyes between 1820 and 1825. Apart from these cases, it may be said he is content to refer to the documents without any personal reflection or any critical evaluation of the sources. As a rule, he transcribes faithfully. His style is restrained, unpretentious, and clear.

After Father Coudrin's death, he continued his work in Paris and was one of the most enthusiastic collaborators of Archbishop Bonamie in "remodeling" the Constitutions which the Chapter of 1838 approved and which were published in 1840.⁴⁶

The Chapter of 1843 marked an important date in Hilarion's relations with the new Superior General. This Chapter proposed a reform of the Constitutions of the sisters, wholly in keeping with that already promulgated for the brothers. In the acts of the Chapter, the discussions do not appear, so that they do not let us know about Hilarion's attitude during the Assembly.⁴⁷

What we actually do know is that, when the time came for the election of the Council he received no votes, neither for Prior General nor for Master of Novices. Chosen for these positions were: Father Leonce Salles, elected Prior General with twenty-three votes; Father Alexandre Sorieul, elected Master of Novices with twenty-one votes; Father Theophile Guillas, elected Bursar with seventeen votes, after three ballots. Finally, a

45 PAC, 2588.

46 Hulselmans, *op. cit.*

47 Acts of the General Chapter, 1843, pp. 243-275.

vote was taken to choose the three Counsellors. Father Isidore David received twenty-six votes; Father Philippe Fezendier, twenty-three; Father Philibert Vidon, twenty-one. Hilarion received only four votes and so was not a member of the General Council for the first time in his life.

Whether this rejection was the culmination of a procedure about which we know nothing, or whether it is the starting point of a crisis, it can be said that from this moment on his conduct began to change, and his judgment was so distorted that there may well have been an emotional stress. The fact is that, when the Superior General wanted to do in the sisters' branch what was done in the brothers', namely, to "remodel" the Constitutions, there was great tension. Perhaps it was because of his mistaken attitude toward carrying out this decision. What is curious is that Hilarion, now under pressure, does not hesitate to attack the sisters, accusing them of corrupting the Founder's spirit when they approved of what some months or years before he had promoted in the brothers' branch as a needed reform.⁴⁸

From this moment on, everything he wrote was infected by a polemical attitude, and must be read carefully keeping this fact in mind.

In 1850, the General Chapter, in its session of September 3, heard one of Hilarion's publications read. At a session of the same month, it issued a condemnatory sentence. Though he was not dismissed from the Congregation, apparently this was discussed. The Acts say:

The General Chapter by way of secret ballot adopted another proposition formulated thus: Father Hilarion, according to the documents and information communicated at the Chapter, is judged to be dangerous and harmful to the Congregation.⁴⁹

On December 17, 1853, Hilarion left the Congregation to reside at the residence of la Trinité, in a community of primitive observance. He died at Courbevoie on August 25, 1865, at the age of eighty-three.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23rd. Session, Sept. 30, pp. 270 f.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁵⁰ PAC, 2649.

The Principal Works of Hilarion

To make a complete list of Hilarion's works is not easy. As far as possible, the principal works will be listed in chronological order, especially those before 1850.

1. 1801-1802. Quelques remarques sur le R.P.M.J.

This is a pamphlet of twenty-five pages with some notes, whose origin Hilarion explained fifteen years later when he wrote:

I think I should remark that I learned from our Very Reverend Father himself a great part of what I will now relate. Very often we were together after meals and he spoke to us of the Lord's mercy and occasionally let slip some incidents of his life we eagerly collected. The same happened in the case of the early Fathers of Thebaïd, whose disciples more than once snatched secrets their modesty would have wanted to remain hidden.⁵¹

Actually this pamphlet is only a series of notes in which is recorded, not chronologically, what could be gleaned from the Founder about his own life. Frequently his words are between commas. There is no lack of testimonies repeated more than once about the same fact, in one instance received from the Founder and in another instance from someone else. Written in a manner unlike that of any other composition, it is a simple depository of recollections, in which is felt the immediacy of the source and the freshness of the testimony, written, as Hilarion testifies, "the very same day." It is exceptionally valuable.

*2. 1816-1820. Quelques remarques sur les Très Révérend Père Marie-Joseph, Fondateur et Supérieur Général de l'Ordre des Zélateurs de l'Amour des Sacrés Cœurs de Jesus et de Marie.*⁵²

We have a manuscript of this work which is likely the first edition, judging from the frequent corrections. We have another manuscript which seems to be a copy of this, also in the handwriting of Hilarion.

These pages were certainly written before 1820, the year Abraham Coudrin, the Founder's father, died. He is portrayed as alive and in good health. It is certainly later than 1814, and was probably written after 1815, because 1814 was the "last year" mentioned. On the other hand, it seems difficult to place its composition after March 24, 1817, in which the decree of approbation of the Congregation was received, and in which its name was changed. The document still calls it "Order

⁵¹ PAC, 1138, 1139, p. 42.

⁵² PAC, 1138.

of Zealots.” So, it seems more plausible to us to set the date of composition in the period beginning with Hilarion’s return from Rome, June 1816 to March 1817.

In this writing a life of the Founder is sketched, starting out with his childhood and his family. The information clearly is incomplete.

3. *1835. Vie de la Très Révérende Mère Henriette Amer de la Chevalerie, Fondatrice et première Supérieure Générale des Sœurs de la Congrégation des Cœurs de Jésus et de Marie, by Father J. Hilarion, priest of the same Institute.*

The «profession of affection» is dated December 20, 1847, but the composition is much earlier. Its text was published not long ago, in two mimeographed small volumes, with no introductions and no critical notes, by the Generalate of the Sisters.

4. *1836. Mémoires sur la Congrégation des Sacres Cœurs de Jésus et de Marie et de l’Adoration du Très Saint Sacrement de l’Autel,⁵³ Volume I (there are four).*

On the last page Hilarion wrote these words: «October 24, of this year 1836, we have had the consolation of seeing him (Monsignor de Quelen, Archbishop of Paris) at our residence of Picpus.” Between this date and the end of the year, this volume was finished, a volume covering the beginnings of the Congregation until the end of 1820.

- 1837. Volume II. The same date is on the cover, written by Hilarion. It covers 1820 to 1827.
- 1839. Volume III. Also has the same date. It covers 1827 to 1837.
- 1840. Volume IV. It ends with these words: “Here is concluded the Supplement of the Mémoires of the Congregation (January 15, 1840).” It contains the history of the missions of the Congregation up to this date.

5. *1838-1839. Vie du Très Révérend Père Marie-Joseph Coudrin, Fondateur et premier Supérieur General de la Congrégation des Sacrés Cœurs de Jésus et de Marie, By Hilarion, Priest of the same Institute.*

It is possible that this work was composed between the composition of the first two volumes of the *Mémoires* and the last two, although its definitive presentation and the “protestation” have the same date as that of the life of Mother Aymer, December 20, 1847.

53 PAC, 1100-1103.

6. *Other minor works*

Hilarion was an indefatigable worker and in addition to notes, or writings written prior to or after the *Mémoires* which have been mentioned, he has an infinity of other works which might be called “auxiliary” to the main body of his chronicles; works which are of great value for anyone who wants to make a history of our origins.

Annals (annuaires). Countless times Hilarion began again the same work, making notes in a volume which set aside a page for every day of the year and all that happened that day, from the years of the Founder’s childhood to the period of composition, of course in strict chronological order.

Chronology (chronologie). A volume with a brief annotation of facts in chronological order.

7. *Nonliterary works - Secretarial*

Of great historical value also is the enormous work Hilarion did to build up the secretariat and the archives of the Congregation which owe their foundation to him. With no intent to be complete, we comment on the principal documents of this type.

- Copy of the Founders’ letters, of the *Mémoires* of Sister Gabriel de la Barre and other documents.
- Copy of documents which may be of interest for the history of the Congregation. There were various collections.
- Tableau General des Profès de la Congrégation, etc. Following the chronological order of profession, he starts out from Father Coudrin, number 1, down to H. Marco, lay brother, professed September 17, 1828, number 248. Before each name there are the first and last names of the father and mother, the date and place of birth and the date of profession. It is a precise work but incomplete. There are some early names which are not registered in this Tableau.

5. **Documents of the Curia**

There are in our archives a quantity of books and manuscripts which can be classified under no other name than “documents of the Curia.” They correspond, either to local curias, or the General Curia. We comment on the principal ones, observing that nothing of this type can be found prior to 1814-1815, which was the most strictly clandestine

period. In this period nothing could be written which might disclose the existence of an institution which was illegal.

- Registers of the admissions to profession and to the noviceship. The resolutions of the House Chapters are also included here.
- Registers –simply– in which there is noted everything, from the persons making up the community, to the circular letters of the Superior General, etc. There are those from various residences, and the impression is given that few religious of the period had the perseverance or followed the method used by Hilarion. The result is a very incomplete and discontinuous work.
- Book of Professions I. It is a black, cloth-bound book, 25 x 36 cm., begun by Father Marcellin Rouchouze, secretary of the Superior General (his brother, Father Euthyme). It begins from April 20, 1865, and registers the latest information up to October 2, 1870 (Father Santin Corchon's profession). This book was finished later by various writers, and contains 1,050 professed with their curriculum vitae.
- Acts of the General Chapters (23 x 35 cm). They contain the Acts of the General Chapters from 1819 to 1863, inclusive.

6. Other Authors

In the archives, there are documents of many religious of the period of the Founders, so many that it would be very lengthy to present even the main ones, which would be relevant for any particular chapter.

A collection of importance, for instance, is the collection of the letters and writings of the missionaries, some of which have been published in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*. In particular, the published documents have been carefully studied in the original, because as published they have suffered by retouching.

Anyone who might want to get a better idea of the documentation which is found in our archives should read and study attentively the *Repertoire of Father Amerigo Cools*, mentioned in the beginning.



Chapter II

THE EARLY LIBRARY

For a greater and clearer reading of the documentation of our archives, it is most interesting for us to know about the library, whether it was large or small, which the community used in the constructing of its common concept of how to live the Gospel and of what constitutes religious life. Since the process of qualifying the characteristics of the Congregation, as we shall have occasion to show, terminated no later than 1802, the books which most likely influenced it are those printed before the Revolution, since during the ten years of social convulsion literary production was confined entirely to the “spiritual” genre.

We do not have any explicit information on the subject. None of the authors represented in all the documentation, as far as we know, were concerned about transmitting to posterity the sources used by the Founding Community in constructing the new religious Family. It is a lacuna which we regret. What we do not believe is that it is not possible to attempt to make a reconstruction of the early library, no matter how fragmentary and hypothetical it may be, to rebuild at least the “spirituality” section, understood in a broad sense.

We shall utilize two means: that of bibliographical references found in the documentation itself, and that of the catalogue of the early libraries of the Congregation, and especially that of the Generalate, which contains what remains of the early Generalate of Picpus.

The bibliographical references are extremely sparse, in all not quite forty. We shall give the alphabetical list in the Appendix.

As for the libraries, there is no doubt that the library of Picpus, had it remained intact, would have given us interesting information, but it underwent many transfers starting from the expulsion from France in 1905. If on that occasion all the books had been brought to Braine-le-Comte, perhaps we would have been more fortunate, but the fact is that important quantities were given to other houses in Belgium and Spain (Miranda and Fuenterrabía, founded at that time), and even to the faraway house of

Valparaíso in Chile. In addition to these transfers, there was mishandling and discarding of old books by those unaware of their value, so that we have only a few left.

Nevertheless, we have found no fewer than one hundred authors and works which are very significant and which we also list in the Appendix. We shall utilize them for learning about the spiritual atmosphere at least in which the Congregation was born, when we have no greater clues for their effective utilization.



Chapter III

RESEARCH PROCESS

The documentation provides a wealth of information of all kinds which it is necessary to examine in an orderly way in order not to overwhelm the reader. To avoid confusion and to facilitate gradual adaptation to a mentality of almost two centuries back, we have laid out a sort of itinerary of the research of the various aspects of the life of the religious community we are studying.

In order to gain insight into the interior and profound aspects of the life of the community, we thought we should begin from external and more apparent expressions of this life. Following a path that leads from the easy to the difficult enables one to be better prepared to comprehend the difficult.

Consequently, we have arranged the information collected in four parts of similar extent.

1. A Picture of the Events

This is a framework of chronologically ordered events which may serve as a support to the rest of the historical knowledge, and which will help us to understand and appraise them.

We have divided the time span studied into four eras, starting from the first idea of the foundation, which surely is the vision of La Motte, as we have seen, up to 1840, which gives us almost a half-century of existence.

The division into periods of history is always somewhat arbitrary, since the succession of events cannot be cut like a cloth without destroying life. As a consequence, the period always is somewhat approximated, and has as its object to help us make necessary accommodations of vision to focus on the events with the best possible exactitude.

In order to make the division into periods, we have adopted very obvious reference points, taken from the life of this same community.

- a) **First Period:** from the first idea, up to the diocesan approbation (1792-1801), is the time of gestation and of the characterization of the community. It coincides with the Revolution.

- b) **Second Period:** from the diocesan approbation in Poitiers, up to the Roman approbation, in 1817. It is the life of the community as a diocesan Congregation. It is almost exactly the reign of Napoleon.
- c) **Third Period:** the Roman approbation, given to the Congregation as a body within the Church, but not to the Constitutions, which were judged inadequate. It was decided that the General Chapters of 1819 and 1825 would draft the final composition. The Founder traveled to Rome in 1825 and personally presented the new Constitutions to the Holy See, which were approved in the same year and promulgated in February of 1826, which we have considered as the end of this age. It almost parallels the Restoration.
- d) **Fourth Period:** it opens with the Constitutions which, at the time of the death of the Founder on March 27, 1837, his followers, in the Chapter of 1838, decided to change notably. This reform was approved by Rome and promulgated in 1840, which is the reason that we end our study in this year, when following the death of Father Coudrin, the legislation elaborated under his governance also died.

2. At the Service of God and of Man

Placing ourselves into more direct contact with the community, in this second part we make a type of inventory of its entire apostolic activity, which represents as its more outward manifestation how its life and personality express themselves.

3. The Life of Community

Having once completed a consideration of the activity of the community in the service of the Church, we turn toward the community in its very self, in order to try to understand it more intimately.

We will attempt to summarize the long threads of human fabric of which it was formed: its personnel, in order to pursue the kind of relationship that bound so many brothers and sisters to the community.

We will look at its customs and observances, its law, its liturgy, its form of government.

4. The Community's Life of Faith

Finally, we will attempt to ascertain how the community lived its faith, hope,

and charity, that is, how it lived the Gospel, and how it comprehended its religious consecration. We think that with this we will arrive at the nucleus of its fellowship as a body within the Church, and at the same time find the ultimate cause of its activity of service, allowing us to better capture the sentiment of its life and activity, and the call which animated its history.

* * *

In order to write a true “history,” we make an effort to eliminate ideological prejudices, such as beginning with a definite concept of devotion to the Sacred Heart and then interpreting a priori according to that concept information from the documents. Avoidance of unproven assumptions is also an aim of this work.

This does not mean that every assumption is rejected which would amount to the renunciation of all evaluation of the facts, including the true “view” of the same. Only it seems a demand of honesty to state from right here and now what is the viewpoint with which we take up this study.

Before all else, we must state that we consider the historical life of a religious community as a cellular part of the history of the Church. Consequently, we consider it as a “history of grace,” that is, as a manifestation of the action of the Holy Spirit on the People of God.

Therefore, what interests us in this history is the concrete effort to live the Gospel and bring about the Kingdom of God, in determined circumstances of time, place, and social context. We are not interested in what could be a simple curiosity about the past, the past for the past’s sake, but at the same time we cannot overlook the value, we may say “instrumental value” of the details, in the revelation of the spirit in the events and in the institutions.

Then, we cannot disregard from the fact that we are researching the first stage of the “history of grace” of “our” religious community. We are studying the first response to a “charism” which is assumed to be “in force” at the present time, and for that reason the history or “a history” which has much to say for our present day life, not only from the viewpoint of “example” but also from the viewpoint of characterization.





Part I

A Picture of the Facts

Our history began when Pierre Coudrin took refuge at the granary of La Motte d'Usseau. As we shall have occasion to see, it was there that the Founder got the first consciousness of his destiny to be the founder of a new community. Through-out his life he kept a vivid recollection of that moment and of that place where he began his career, as he would say in his old age.^{54*} Gabriel de la Barre and Hilarion Lucas, chroniclers of the Congregation, are in full agreement in testifying from as early as 1800 to the primary significance of this fact which indicates in turn how important a person the priest was who lived the experience. Consequently, it is impossible to give an adequate account of these events without saying a word about him, who is indisputably the prime person of our history. He was the first to have the idea of forming the community, and before becoming its first Superior, was the one who dreamt about it years before it existed, and, secretly, succeeded in bringing it together in the full turmoil of the revolution.

54 What the Good Father thought about his experience at La Motte is frequently mentioned in his writings. Especially in BP, 945 (April 9, 1824 to Françoise de Viart) 86 (the last): "So then let us live for His glory, and may the fervor of the granary of La Motte d'Usseau be not extinguished in your poor father's heart." Cf. also BP, 1107; 1189; 1197; 1254; 1258; 1387; 2272; 1538; 1550; 1593; 1767; and especially the letter of January 16, 1829, BP, 2272: "Our tears pass on, the granary of La Motte might well soon be indispensable for me. How happy I will be to end my career as I began it there..." Cf. GB, Mémoires, ANN., 1962, p. 173. HL, Qq.R.I., 60-62; Qq.R.II., pp. 406-410.

Chapter I

PIERRE COUDRIN THE PRIEST

Pierre Coudrin was not a legendary person. He was born March 1, 1768 in Coussay-les-Bois, a town situated seventeen kilometers east of Chatellerault (Department of Vienne) on the road to Roche-Posay and which in 1791 had a population of 1,400. His parents were Abraham Coudrin and Marie Pion. Although this is not the place to write his biography, it seems indispensable to relate who this priest was, why he took refuge at La Motte, and with what spiritual baggage he arrived at the granary.

1. Early Education

The Christian formation he received from his family in Coussay-les-Bois was complemented in his early youth by his godfather, Father Rion, a brother of his mother. It seems very shortly after his ordination, Father Rion was appointed pastor of Cremille, some eight kilometers from Pierre's birthplace. Soon he took his godson with him to prepare him for his First Communion and teach him reading and writing, as well as some rudiments of Latin.⁵⁵ So it was that, at the end of 1780, he was prepared to enter the school of Chatellerault, quite renowned in the region, which he attended until the summer of 1785. During this period, he spent the major part of his vacation with his godfather, who, December 1781, was transferred to St. Phèle de Maillé, as assistant pastor.⁵⁶

Father Rion was the same age as the recently named pastor of St. Pierre de Maillé, Father André Hubert Fournet, now canonized. Although St. André had been ordained a year before, they knew each other since seminary days and had become great friends. The short distance which separated the two parishes enabled them to live in the same parish residence and to form a small very apostolic and pious community. There young Pierre received a most affectionate welcome and found a priestly example and an evangelical life in which his vocation grew.⁵⁷

55 PR, ANN., 1933-1934, pp. 406-410.

56 PR, ANN., 1935-1936, pp. 67-68.

57 P. Rigaud, *Vie d'André Fournet*, pp. 2, 17-18.

2. At the University of Poitiers

In the autumn of 1785, the young Coudrin, having completed his courses at Châtellerault, entered the University of Poitiers. He was seventeen years of age.⁵⁸

At that time the city had a wholly medieval appearance, with few vestiges of the century of the Sun King, and many of Eleanor of Aquitaine and of the feudal splendour of the twelfth century. The superb walls were still standing, with their ornamental Roman brackets, though in danger of falling in several areas of their six and one half kilometers.⁵⁹

The bridges were fortified, and the Pont-Jaubert, which was probably the bridge crossed by the students, had two beautiful towers, one at each end.

In the inner city, a real forest of bell towers and steeples testified to its religious tradition. In 1785, there were in Poitiers 24 parishes, for its scarcely 29,000 inhabitants. There were 11 houses of religious men with a total of 58-60 members and the convents of women numbered at least 18, with about 300 nuns.⁶⁰

The university, with a little more than a thousand students, suffered as did all of France, from the recent suppression of the Jesuits in 1773. However, it continued to give a youthful tone to the old city, enlivening it with its activity. It carried on its function in various schools and convents scattered throughout all the districts so that it could be said to be identified with the city.

Pierre Coudrin boarded in the district of the Place de Pilon in the modest home of a carpenter's family. He took courses in philosophy at the Diadelphique, a college which was then located in the fifteenth-century hotel which is still the Place de S. Pierre, on the corner of la rue S. Maixent. At the end of the course he graduated cum laude. In 1786, he received the degree of Bachelor, and a year later a Licentiate and Master of Arts.⁶¹

In the autumn of 1787, he began the theological courses at the college of St. Martha.⁶²

Due to the financial situation of his family the student thought it advisable to look for some work which would enable him to at least alleviate the burden of his student expense borne by his father. Father Fournet had in Poitiers a relative, the counselor of the tribunal of le Gran Bailliage, Francis Chocquin. It was possibly Mr. Chocquin who

58 PR, ANN., 1935-1936, p. 69.

59 BP, 5 (Sept. 6, 1788); PR, ANN., 1935-1936, p. 70.

60 BP, 2214, 2215. Cf. G. Dez, Histoire de Poitiers, 159-129.

61 PR, ANN., 1935-1936, p. 69. Cf. BP, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, "Master of Arts," a degree which qualified one to teach humanities and philosophy.

62 BP, 2217: *Certificat de Bonnes Etudes en Théologie*, 1788.

brought him to his home. At any rate, after the summer of 1788, Pierre Coudrin obtained a position –quite common in Poitiers at that time– as tutor to Mr. Chocquin’s children.⁶³

Pierre Coudrin did not have to wait long to be accepted with confidence, which indicates qualities in the student not very common in a young man hardly twenty. Mr. Chocquin and his wife travelled a lot, leaving in the hands of the university student his children, his home, and even the administration of his property in Sarzec. Here is a letter written in this period which we still have, addressed to his sister Marie, September 1788:

A thousand attentions, a thousand kindnesses, make me love, cherish and esteem everyone. I hope this will continue. Mr. Chocquin is quite lively; Mrs. Chocquin has many fine qualities; but the children. are a little hard to take, but if I do everything possible to make them learn no one can reproach me. I am now alone with the children. All the others have left on a long trip. They have left me in charge of all the keys and of all the affairs of the house; I cannot but feel uncomfortable. I am in charge of six tapestry makers, two carpenters, four servants, and perhaps I will have to gather the grapes. I would like them to return soon, but they have a lot of confidence in me. I am always busy, lest they do not find everything in order when they arrive.⁶⁴

At the end of 1789, he left Mr. Chocquin’s home to enter the seminary, at the time a preparation for sacred orders rather than for anything else. He only stayed two years under the direction of the Lazarists who ran it. None of them accepted the constitutional oath and so had to abandon it in August of 1791. When Pierre Coudrin returned from his vacation he found that his teachers had been replaced by schismatic priests, and his convictions obliged him to suspend his studies sine die, as a matter of fact, definitively.⁶⁵

These six years of university and seminary life at Poitiers were rich in experience and intellectual progress. They represented not only a personal growth and maturation decisive for a young man from his seventeenth to his twenty-third year, but also the acquisition of worthwhile relations and friendships which, together with the friendship with the priests we have already mentioned, left their imprint on him for his whole life. All this does not mean that these years were calm and serene without any tension. Perhaps the very fact that they were difficult made a deeper impression.

63 BP, 5 (Sept. 6, 1788).

64 *Ibid.*

65 PR, ANN., 1935, p. 158.

3. The Estates General of 1789

When Louis XVI convoked the Estates General (assemblies seating the representatives of the whole nation, that is, deputies of the clergy, the nobility, and the third estate) on August 6, 1788, the whole country had been in a state of tension for a long time, especially due to the financial situation. But the political uneasiness was felt less in the provinces and regions such as Poitou distant from the capital. There the whole apparatus of the feudal and medieval society continued in its routine rhythm, although there were signs of growing social unrest.

Considered in relation to the general economic situation of France, Poitou was a somewhat backward agricultural region. The fields, almost exclusively given over to the cultivation of grain (wheat, barley, oats, rye), had suffered somewhat bad, cold years, with little rain. We get an idea of what the social problems in the region must have been at the start of the revolution, from a report made in 1791 by the Commission of "Mendicity." It listed, out of a total population of 248,979 inhabitants in the department of Vienne, 33,421 individuals in need of assistance, and 2,882 begging vagabonds. Couturier, from whom we have the datum, summing up the climate of the moment says: "Everywhere the cry is heard: there are many who are poor!"⁶⁶

The preparation for the Estates General began in the parishes, which formed the base of medieval society. Participation was very limited in Poitou. Twenty-seven percent could not express themselves, and although the rural communities which did so responded well, their "complaints" did not reach Versailles. The deputies of Poitou presented the complaints of only a minimum of the peasantry, but most of all the complaints of the bourgeois. Everything took place in a tension unknown until then. The Assembly of the Clergy also had its tensions. The financial disparities between the high and low clergy were irritating, and even though the inaugural discourse of Bishop Martial-Louis de Beaupoil de Saint-Aulaire, who called for unity, was listened to with composure, right afterwards there was dissension. It was the end of March 1789.⁶⁷

As one who was tonsured without office or benefice, and not yet twenty-five years of age, Pierre Coudrin had no vote at these assemblies, but he did share in the social tension of the moment because he felt the sufferings of the poor. His family, used to a nice country life, lost a law suit, precisely in the month of April of 1789. When he wrote to his father about this he said: "I have just learned of our catastrophe, it is decided we are to be in

66 Couturier I, pp. 19-49

67 Couturier I, pp. 361 ff. Cf. La Gorce, *Histoire Religieuse de la Révolution Française*, vol. I.

beggary for the rest of our lives.” It may be said, perhaps, that he was over-alarmed, but what he foresaw was the misery that would ensue. Nevertheless, he did not get involved in the revolutionary movement. This was partly because the agitation occurred especially among the bourgeois of the city, and he did not belong to them, and among a clergy with whom he had no contact, but partly and above all because his formation and that of his milieu led him to respect the established order and keep on the pastoral level, alien to the machinations of politics.⁶⁸

After the meeting of the Estates General in Versailles, in May of 1789, events accelerated, and with the seizure of the Bastille on July 14, they took on a course rather disturbing for the whole country, but especially for the clergy as a privileged social class. In November the Constituent Assembly nationalized ecclesiastical property and on December 19 it was publicly auctioned off. Pierre Coudrin entered the seminary on November 11, under circumstances in which the priesthood no longer offered him a secure financial future. Meanwhile his family seemed condemned to undergo severe poverty, although not to such an extent that it could not contribute to the board of the seminarian and provide a meager title of ordination to the future sub-deacon.⁶⁹

4. Major Orders

As time passed, things became complicated in France. The year 1790 must have been particularly difficult for the seminarian who received the subdiaconate April 3, as it was for the whole Church of France. On July 12 the Constituent Assembly voted and approved the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.⁷⁰

Up to this moment, the Revolution had been a social conflict, but from now on it became a terrible religious crisis. Despite the Constituent Assembly’s claim not to go beyond its prerogatives, it refused to consent to any limitations on them. Under the pretext of remedying very actual and lamentable abuses, it undertook by the *Civil Constitution*, the reform of the ecclesiastical administration and of the hierarchy. It intended to convert the clergy into a tool of the state bureaucracy and did so without reference or subjection to the authority of the Pope or of the episcopacy. A Catholic could accept neither the substance of the law, nor the procedure followed. Louis XVI, though bothered by scruples, felt too the need of immediate action and, being ill-advised, promulgated it August 24, after a month of torments of conscience.⁷¹

68 PR, ANN., 1935-1936, pp. 18-50; 72-74. Cf. BP, p. 8.

69 BP, 2221.

70 Latr. I., pp. 99 ff.

71 Dans. pp. 63-77. La Gorce, *ibid.*, pp. 263-348.

Meanwhile, the subdeacon Coudrin was preparing to mount the pulpit in the parish church of Coussay for the first time. His sermon (in which one can sense how recent his courses in oratory at the seminary had been) is of interest, especially certain biographical references, which under the circumstances have a particular accentuation. In the exordium this is what he said on September 5:

Please be so kind as to make firm my hesitant steps on starting out on the course you have destined me to follow. How will I be able to preach about Your heavenly Father, if You do not enlighten me, if You do not fortify me with Your grace and, above all, if You do not engrave deep in my heart, if You do not express in my conduct the truths I must teach Your people? Bring about that, imitating the Shepherd who keeps this flock, I will be the first to practice what I will teach to my brothers.⁷²

At the end of the year, while Pierre Coudrin was preparing to receive the deaconate -he was ordained deacon December 18, 1780-, the revolutionary government took another step which increased bitterness. On November 27 a decree of the Constituent Assembly imposed penalties on every ecclesiastical minister from the bishops down to pastors and their assistants. The Assembly's decree required them to take an oath to observe the Civil Constitution, under penalty of loss of their offices, or of being charged as "disturbers of public order," if declining to take the oath they should refuse to leave their posts. This time the Pope did not delay in condemning the oath, and on March 10 he issued a Brief on the matter.⁷³ The schism was accomplished. The great majority of the bishops of France -all except two- opposed the oath and refused to take it, beginning with the members of the Assembly, some thirty bishops.⁷⁴

It is not easy to judge what the reaction of the clergy of Poitou was before they knew about the pontifical Brief because the documents have not yet been adequately studied. According to a partial and provisory study it seems that the percentage of those who took the oath was rather high: around 40%.⁷⁵ As for the newly ordained deacon Coudrin, evidently he had no obligation to take the oath, because he neither was in charge of souls officially, nor did he have a benefice. This does not mean the dramatic problem of conscience left him indifferent. His godfather, the Abbé Rion, and St. André Fournet certainly were upset when confronted by this vexing dilemma: refuse to take the oath, and consequently abandon their flock and leave it in undesirable hands; or take the oath, and by this very act deceive and poison this very flock, by seemingly approving of an

72 BP, 2201.

73 Latr. I, p. 99.

74 Latr., *Ibid.*

75 Roux, pp. 21-25. *Archives Evêché de Poitiers: Etat du Clergé de Poitiers, dressé en 1800* (Collection IX).

iniquitous law. We do not have any documents giving the motives both had, nor the reservations they expressed, but it seems a fact that they did take the oath.⁷⁶

During the winter of 1790-1791, Pierre Coudrin was at Poitiers, taking his fourth-year course in theology, while his godfather and the Abbé Fournet remained in their parishes at Maillé. Despite the silence of the documents, it is hard to imagine that Pierre was unaware of their worries. The Abbé Rion as well as St. André Hubert Fournet retracted when they learned about the papal brief, though we do not know the date.⁷⁷

In the first months of 1791, everywhere and varying from region to region, there was set in motion, slowly due to lack of experience, an enormous machine for choosing the ecclesiastical functionaries to take over the offices civilly vacant due to not submitting to the Constitution. At Poitou the atmosphere became tense. On February 15, Bishop St. Aulaire in a pastoral letter exhorted his diocese to remain loyal to the Church. However, this did not prevent Lecesve, the deputy of the clergy in the Assembly, from being chosen Constitutional Bishop of Poitiers on February 28. Gobel consecrated him in Paris at the end of March, while Bishop St. Aulaire issued an ordinance prohibiting the faithful from participating in liturgical functions with schismatics. Lecesve took over on April 10. In those same days the Pope issued another brief condemning, with the penalty of excommunication, those who had taken the oath. Lecesve never became aware of it for he died suddenly twelve days after he had taken office.⁷⁸

5. In Full Conflict

Meanwhile, the papal briefs became known in France. On June 3 we already find our deacon in Coussay-les-Bois, assisting his pastor, Father Limousin, in the campaign for circulating the papal documents. On the fifteenth of the same month they were denounced and both of them had to flee from Coussay. Pierre took refuge in St. Ustre, some fifteen kilometers away to the north, where the pastor was Father Louis Fillatreau, who from then on would be his lifelong friend.⁷⁹

The course of studies must not have ended in the usual way that year, and it is likely that, after the adventures in Coussay and his flight to St. Ustre, the seminarian Coudrin did not open a single textbook. He had more urgent things to think about and to occupy himself with.

This was the period in which he preached his sermon on the beatitude of suffering.

⁷⁶ ARCH., Ev. Poitiers, *op. cit.* Plong, pp. 22-36.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ PR, ANN., 1935, pp. 96 ff.

⁷⁹ PR, ANN., 1935, p. 132.

Despite its strict conformity to the norms of the epoch of Bourdalou, it is an extremely interesting testimony to the spirit with which the young deacon faced up to suffering, of which he already had some experience.⁸⁰

In this sermon there are no references to the social and political situation, and it could be read as a “theme” developed by a seminarian for some occasion such as Holy Week or the Passion. No matter, it is interesting to see how, apart from all the rhetoric, a doctrine on suffering is developed which goes far beyond the bounds of a manual or a collection of sermons; in it there is revealed personal meditation on the subject, meditation very much based on Scripture and particularly on the writings of St. Paul which in the historical context takes on a special emphasis. Furthermore, his conduct right afterwards was an application, of what he said in his first sermon the year before: “. . . that I be the first to practice what I will teach my brothers” (BP 2001). The Revolution gave him an occasion to prove his sincerity.

We do not know what Pierre Coudrin’s activities were during the summer of 1791, the year in which the labors of the Constituent Assembly terminated. In Poitiers, on September 4, the new constitutional bishop, Bishop Montault des Isles, was elected and consecrated on October 22. Throughout these same days violence was experienced in various towns. In Genouille the pastor, who had retracted the oath, miraculously escaped an attempt to kill him when some “patriots” shot at him with a rifle. The waters had not calmed.⁸¹

At the Major Seminary of Poitiers, in the splendid Hotel Pinet -today the School of Medicine- the Lazarists were no longer in residence. In August they had been forced to leave it on account of having rejected the oath. They had taken refuge at le Petit Chateau, a piece of property belonging to the Congregation in the neighbourhood of St. Benoit, one or two kilometers from the city.⁸²

We do not have details about our Deacon’s journey to Poitiers. We only know he made contact with the priests whom Bishop St. Aulaire had left with ample powers before migrating to Switzerland, September 1, 1791, and who were all at the time in the City. They were: Father Dancel de Bruneval, whom he knew well, because he had intervened in the matter of his ordination, Father de la Faire, Father d’Argence, and the Superior of the Minor Seminary of St. Charles, Father Chaudet. It is not clear whether the three last mentioned priests had any special knowledge about the seminarian. At any rate, of those

80 HL, VBP, 21: “I think it was at the beginning of 1791 that Father Coudrin composed and preached the second sermon we have by him.”

81 Roux, pp. 22-24.

82 The seminary was at the “Hotel Pinet.” Cf. P. Contassot, Lazarist: *Les Lazaristes au Grand Séminaire de Poitiers*, pp. 10-15 (unpublished).

in whom the bishop had most confidence, perhaps the closest to him was Father Brault, later Archbishop of Albi. Father Brault had been Pierre's teacher of *De Vera Religione* and of *De Verbo Incarnato* at the University.⁸³

At those moments Pierre Coudrin must have felt the absence of the venerable Bishop d'Aviau, at that time Archbishop of Vienne, who had left Poitiers shortly after Christmas of 1789. As for the Lazarist, Father Hayer, his spiritual director at the seminary, he was able to meet him at the Petit Chateau. What is certain is that the priests gave him a document authorizing him to be ordained by any bishop in communion with the Pope. There is no doubt that this was the conclusion of several days of consultations and conversations on the situation of that Church in France, and on its foreseeable evolution.⁸⁴

Circumstances reveal men, and with a very realistic and almost prophetic view of the schism and of the future which awaited the Church, he immediately decided to be ordained priest. Later on he would say:

I became a priest with the intention of suffering everything, (we know with what spirit), of sacrificing myself for the good Lord and of dying if necessary in His service.⁸⁵

In these dispositions he left Poitiers, and resolved to go to Paris, where he knew there was a bishop in hiding at the Irish Seminary.

Perhaps it was in those days while staying at Poitiers, continually seeking information and counsel, that he wrote the letter, dated October 30, addressed to his friend of St. Ustre, Father Fillatreau. In it he shows not only the desire to send information and express his thanks to the priest who received him so kindly five months before, but also to provide him a means of nourishing the faith of the community of which he had charge.⁸⁶

It is highly likely that he made copies of an account of what happened to the bishop of Senez (Alpes de Haute-Provence) which he circulated in Poitiers among those living clandestinely. The bishop, after having suffered many vexations on the part of the new authorities of his city, was condemned to be deprived of his pension and banished ten leagues from his diocese. Between quotation marks, he gives the bishop's discourse which ends with these words:

...if my fault consists in declaring to you that there is not a single one of them for whose salvation I am not disposed to give up my life, take it away from me, before making me renounce them and separate myself from them. For I am resolved to die for them.

83 Roux, pp. 32, 55-70. PR.ANN., 1935-1936, p. 96. BP, 2218; 2220.

84 Mgr. Lyonnet, *Histoire de Mgr. d'Aviau*, vol. II, p. 250; Roux, p. 97; HL, VBP, 24; PR, ANN., 1935-1936, pp. 158 ff.

85 HL, Qq.R.l., 64.

86 BP, 19.

The young man made but one remark: “What courage!” and then signed his name: “Coudrin, Deacon of the Catholic Church.” A breeze which came from the time of the martyrs began to blow over the Church of France and Pierre Coudrin was aware of it.⁸⁷

6. The Priest

1792 opened up in a climate which, although not yet the Reign of Terror, was explosive. Pierre Coudrin went to Paris trusting in divine Providence. We know little about the details. In the first *Remarques* of Hilarion Lucas (1802), there is only this observation: “on the way he found all sorts of resources, horses for his journey, honest people to pay his way and it cost him nothing.”⁸⁸

In Paris, the young deacon had relatives, and it is possible he stayed at their home, as he did in 1804. His ordination on March 4 was necessarily secret. After his ordination to the priesthood, he made a retreat organized by the “Society of the Sacred Heart” of Father de la Clorivière, and preached by Father Cormaux, without going into the private matters of this society. On finishing they asked him to subscribe to a presentation addressed to the Pope, which Pierre Coudrin must gladly have signed, since it meant a profession of faith and loyalty to the Chair of St. Peter, but the allusions it had to Father Clorivière’s institution escaped him completely.⁸⁹ This document says in part:

God has pity on us in solitude. He has blessed us. He has shed on us the light of His countenance. The Heart of Jesus has poured into our hearts the spirit of grace and of prayer, on our heads the water of salvation, and transformed our eyes into fountains of tears. All He has told us of the opprobriums, the sorrow, and the agony of Jesus has filled our hearts with compunction. Our souls are trembling. Weeping we have looked on Jesus, the author of faith and the One who brings it to perfection. Our lips kiss the crucifix; we nail ourselves to the cross of Christ. Weeping, we fixed our eyes on the chair of Peter. Now, through this petition we make our own, it is what we embrace with all our heart and all our love. It is that to which all of us bind ourselves, to which we submit, and to which we adhere to the point of becoming one with it.

The date is March 27, 1792.⁹⁰

After this retreat, he must not have delayed in taking the road back to Coussay, the same way he had come. On Holy Tuesday, April 3, he assisted as a witness at a marriage in his home parish, and signed himself as “Pierre Coudrin, Priest” (he himself underlined it). Father Limousin was still in Coussay as the legal pastor, despite his refusal to take the oath. It seems that the mayor was one who represented the revolutionary ideas in

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ HL, Qq.R.I., 40. The inferences by Lestra do not seem well-founded.

⁸⁹ PR, ANN., 1935-1936, pp. 159-160;199-205. HL, Qq.R.I., 41.

⁹⁰ Lestr. I, p. 86.

the town because, scarcely had he learned that Pierre Coudrin was saying Mass, when he came to ask him for documents testifying to his ordination. He had to be satisfied with an evasive answer, which necessitated going to the pastor who had authorized the young priest to celebrate. It seems that the mayor's backing in the town was not very strong, because in spite of his indignation he could do nothing further for the moment.⁹¹

In these days there was already a climate of hostility against noncompliant priests in Poitou. On Holy Friday, April 5, Father Fournet, who had taken refuge in Villemort, was brutally dragged off to St. Savin, and after having miraculously escaped being murdered on three occasions on the very same day, had to begin his exile in Spain. In Coussay-les-Bois, however, the pastor was confident of his strength despite the fact that, after March 31, the electors were convoked to choose his successor. He ordered Father Coudrin to sing the main mass on Easter day, April 8, before all the people. The mayor wanted to have his authority recognized once more, and sent a paper to the celebrant to be read at the end of the Mass. It stated that a priest, one who had taken the oath, was coming to give benediction. Pierre Coudrin felt compelled to make a comment on this that was so defiant that it incited revolutionary violence. Not only the pastor but also the new priest had to flee from town, taking refuge where they were safe.⁹²

Pierre Coudrin took refuge on a farm in the neighborhood of Méré, north of Coussay, which did not prevent him from performing a clandestine marriage on April 16, the day after the election of the constitutional pastor in Coussay. Father Limousin went off into exile, while the new priest went to Poitiers to make contact with the Vicars General, informing them of his ordination, and putting himself at their service for the clandestine ministry. Pierre Coudrin did not fear this situation of persecution.⁹³ He would say later on:

When circumstances forced me to leave my father's house, I was very much satisfied seeing myself in such absolute destitution. I was on the way to enduring suffering for the name of Jesus Christ.⁹⁴

Perhaps the declaration of war against Austria on April 20, 1792 brought about agitation which led to those refusing to take the oath being accused of complicity with the enemy. It cannot be said at all that the priest who did not take the oath organized any anticonstitutional activity in France. What is true is that the church established by the Constituent Assembly could not count on the adherence of the majority of the

91 PR, ANN., 1935-1936, pp. 129-132.

92 Rivaud. *Vie de St. André Fournet*. PR, ANN., *Ibid.*, p. 259; HL, VBP, 26.

93 PR, *Ibid.*, p. 254.

94 HL, Qq.R.l., 59.

faithful, who sought out clandestine priests and listened to them, having no regard for those chosen by the people led by the revolutionists. This explains why there was such agitation.⁹⁵

Most likely on the advice of Father de Bruneval, the only priest still in Poitiers, Pierre Coudrin did not return to his native parish. Awaiting better times, he withdrew to the farm of the chateau of La Motte d'Usseau. The chateau is hardly eight kilometers from Châtellerault and belonged to the family of de Viart which he had known in Maillé, and its steward Maumin was a cousin of his.⁹⁶

In the beginning he did nothing to conceal himself, but eventually he judged he could not continue appearing in the town without endangering himself and his relatives. He and his cousin decided to pretend that they were leaving on a long journey. They both went out one evening on horseback and, going into the neighbouring woods, waited for nighttimes, then protected by the darkness they returned again to the farm and hid themselves in a little granary. Perhaps this may have been some days after May 27, when the Assembly decreed the deportation of those who refusing to take the oath were denounced by twenty citizens. This knowledge must have brought about greater aggressiveness among the revolutionaries, although the King's veto took away its legal force. At any rate, it opened up a dangerous path for the Revolution, and promoted repression. The chronicles, at last, give the month of May as the period of Pierre Coudrin's going into close hiding, and estimate it lasted five months until October.⁹⁷



95 Dansette, Latreille.

96 HL, VBP, 26.

97 HL, VBP, 27.

Chapter II

THE COMMUNITY OF FATHER COUDRIN

By the “community of Father Coudrin” we mean the community he founded and which existed in his time. Perhaps the best way to make it known is to present an outline of the development of his life which will enable us to appreciate better the diverse aspects we shall study later on.⁹⁸

We have already given our reasons for beginning our history at La Motte d’Usseau between May and October 1792. We end it in 1840 with the publication of the Constitutions drawn up in 1838. We do so because we think that on this date a truly different period began in which the Founder, more than at the very moment of his death, began to be a person of the past.⁹⁹

A. FIRST PERIOD: 1792-1801

This is the period of the gestation of the community and one that marks it decisively. Therefore it is particularly necessary to relate the circumstances of the social and ecclesial life in the area in which it grew, that is, the region of Poitou and especially of the city of Poitiers, during the Revolution.

To appreciate better the process of this gestation, it will help us if we underline the diverse stages of this gestation, starting from the Founder’s refuge in La Motte. In this way we will be able to appreciate better how the idea of forming a community came to his mind and how he succeeded in establishing a consensus of ideals among those who formed the community when diocesan approval was granted.

1. *La Motte*

Pierre Coudrin took refuge in the granary of the chateau of La Motte d’Usseau in May 1792. He stayed in his cell until October 20 of the same year, five months of seclusion filled with spiritual experience which had very fruitful results.

⁹⁸ We intend to start out from the community as it really was, and avoid as much as possible any “prejudgments.”

⁹⁹ Cf. below, pp. 110 ff.

During this lapse of time the downfall of the monarch in France occurred along with the outburst of violence which accompanied it. As can be easily imagined the revolutionary events in Paris influenced the state of mind of the whole country. The press in its news columns and through political propaganda took over the task of spreading a tempest of information and new ideas throughout the nation. It would not be correct to think that everywhere the Revolution was but an echo of the Capital, as certain books might lead us to think.

In Poitiers the information from Paris was received three or four days later, the time needed for the mail to come from Paris almost 350 kilometers away. The insurrection of the “faubourgs” in June; the declaration of the “Fatherland in danger”; the confinement of the King in the tower of the Temple in August, this news, exaggerated by rumors, must have reached the ears of our recluse.¹⁰⁰

Hope furthers illusions, and Maumin, at whose farm his cousin Pierre was staying, enthusiastically welcomed the rumors that Bouille would come with a fleet to restore the King and destroy his enemies. The young priest, who did not let himself be overcome by fear, kept his sense of reality intact and replied that an end to the situation was not to be expected very soon. He would relate in 1800:

I told him to disillusion himself. Everything will not be over so soon. My dear friend . . . do not let yourself be deceived. All that is to be done at this moment is give yourself to the Good God. . . .¹⁰¹

As the days passed in the obscure confines of his granary, without physical exercise, poorly fed, forced to stay put lest he reveal his presence, he must have been deeply grieved by the news of the massacres of September and of the proclamation of the Republic at the end of the same month. The chronicles say that he thought he was the only noncompliant priest remaining in France, or at least in the region.¹⁰²

It must be noted here that at Poitou nothing happened like what went on in Paris. The Club des Jacobins itself censured the massacres, and that of de Châtelleraut, angered at what had happened, broke away from the main office, protesting that the glories of August 10 were degraded by putting them on the same level as the vile deeds of September. Noncompliant priests suffered detention and loss of pension and, according to the existing laws, even the penalty of exile, but not that of death. The revolutionaries of Poitiers cruelly applied the law, but as a rule, they limited its application to a few cases. Persecution was intensified, emigration increased, the guillotine was set up in the Place

¹⁰⁰ The report of Robespierre's death reached Poitiers, for instance, four days later, on August 1, 1794.

¹⁰¹ HL, Qq.R.l., 60.

¹⁰² HL, VBP, 27.

de Pilori, religious communities were broken up, the Sisters of Wisdom –even those of the Hospital for Incurables– were expelled, but there were no executions or massacres.¹⁰³

Pierre Coudrin’s spirit remained serene. As he advised his relative, the only thing that could be done was to give himself over to God, and he was, in actuality, becoming an anchorite in whom the life of faith took over his entire existence.¹⁰⁴ In 1800 he said:

During the five months . . . I was never bored for a moment. Every day I said Mass at midnight and although I took great care to purify the corporal, I always believed that I had left some particles of the Sacred Species and so had the Lord with me. My Mass over, I climbed up on to ray loft where I spent my whole day reading the history of the Church and praying.¹⁰⁵

In these circumstances must be placed what Sister Gabriel calls “vision”: “It was there –in the granary of La Motte– that in a vision he had knowledge of a foundation to which God destined him along with many others ...”¹⁰⁶

We are not concerned about determining the nature of this vision. What is truly important for our history is that for Pierre Coudrin the significance of this event was that he was made conscious that he was destined to found a religious community.¹⁰⁷

We do not know whether he had ever before thought of becoming a religious, nor have we any knowledge that the suppression of religious life in France, decreed by the Constituent Assembly in 1790, was something that touched him very personally. His Lazarist friends did not come under the decree, since they were simply “a society of clerics.” His dominant preoccupation was doubtless the historical fate of the Church of his time, and the urgency to give himself to God, either giving up his life for Him, or being a docile instrument of His Providence, under the new difficult circumstances.¹⁰⁸

Perhaps the best account of what happened is the one preserved for us by Hilarion Lucas in his first *Remarques*, prior to 1802, in which he does no more than quote the actual words of Pierre Coudrin himself, having written them down the same day.¹⁰⁹

One day, I climbed into my loft, after having said Mass. I knelt close to the corporal where I always believed I had the Blessed Sacrament. I saw then what we are at present. It seemed to me we were many assembled together, that we formed a band of missionaries who were to spread the Gospel everywhere. As I thought of this society of missionaries, there also came to me the idea of a society of women, but not like the one that exists now, for I had never seen nuns. I said to myself: “We will have neither money nor revenue; we will be eaten by lice, “ and as far

103 Roux, pp. 35-49.

104 HL, Qq.R.I., 60-61.

105 *Ibid.*

106 GB, Mémoires. ANN., 1962, p. 173.

107 We leave this analysis up to specialists.

108 Cf. Church history. Cf. HL, Qq.R.I., 60.

109 HL, Qq.R.I., p. 4, n. 2.

as I can recall, for out of fear of not telling the truth I would not say I was sure, I also said: “There will be a society of pious women who will take care of our affairs while we go on mission.” He adds on the next line “This desire to form a society which brings the faith everywhere never left me”.¹¹⁰

The description is moderate and incomplete, but not so much so that it prevents us from deducing the significance that the origin of the very thought of founding a religious family had in the life of the recently ordained priest of twenty-four years, and in the life of that religious family

It should be noted that for Father Coudrin this event was not the fruit of a slow evolution or of a patient development of an idea or of a prior experience. On the contrary, it has the characteristics of a “vision,” that is, of an image which presents itself unexpectedly, in a moment of intense prayer, in which the feeling of the presence of God and of Christ was very strong. This image, not elaborated on by him, would in the future be considered a “revelation.” Hilarion Lucas is responsible for the term.¹¹¹

The “vision” had a prophetic character also: it referred to the future. A future which presented itself as particularly uncertain at that moment, to such an extent that it did not seem humanly possible that it could be realized in a short time. This revelation about the future contained the manifestation of a design of God on a person which converted him into a “founder” (potential for the moment) of a community which was to appear in the Church.

Another aspect to be pointed out is the extent of the design manifested. There is question of missionaries who must spread the Gospel “everywhere,” and not only in France.

We have no confidential information from the young priest about the immediate impression made on him by the “vision” but there is no doubt that from then on the horizons of his life were greatly changed. His temperament was markedly active and so he must have experienced an impatience to take action, despite the circumstances – it was most likely the second half of September– which did not seem too promising.¹¹²

Then there came October 20, the feast of St. Caprasius, Bishop of Agen. On reading the account of his martyrdom in the breviary, Pierre Coudrin shuddered. The pastor of the first centuries, fleeing from persecution, had taken refuge in the mountain overlooking the city. From there he could follow what was happening in the plaza. A young girl of less than twenty years was giving up her life at the stake rather than deny her faith. In his

110 HL, Qq.R.I., 62. Cf. HL, Qq.R.II, 4.

111 HL, VBP, 29.

112 HL, Qq.R.I., 63.

conscience the bishop felt the accusation of cowardice which forced Caprasius to go out and proclaim his faith before the whole city. He was immediately martyred.¹¹³

After he read this, Father Coudrin was deeply moved and, without meditating any more on it, he decided to go out and defy death as did the bishop of Agen.

When I finally left Maumin's granary I prostrated myself at the foot of a holm oak which was not far from the house, and there I offered my life.. However, I always had a presentiment I would be saved...¹¹⁴

It does not appear out of place to suppose that this "presentiment" came from the certainty of heavenly election, for what he would later on refer to as "the Work of God."¹¹⁵

2. Under the Reign of Terror

When he left his hiding place, Pierre Coudrin took less frequented paths to approach Poitiers. There he hoped to establish contact with the priests of the resistance and with the authorities of the underground diocese. Weak and in rags, no one could suspect he was a priest, even apart from the fact that he looked even younger than his twenty-four years. The atmosphere was charged with threats for anyone who, like him, intended to exercise the ministry.¹¹⁶

He was convinced that the revolutionary process was irreversible, and that the schism would last for many years. Little by little he must have come to know more precisely what had happened in France, in the city and in the region during the five months of his hiding.¹¹⁷

Of the priests left by Bishop de St. Aulaire, only Father de Bruneval remained. Father Fournet was in Spain and Father Rion, his uncle, was still free and at this time in Coussay. Perhaps it was at this time also that he met Miss Gauffreau who for almost a year devoted herself to help persecuted priests, and who in her tiny shop on 26 Regratterie Street sheltered those who were in greater danger. Between his visit to Father Bruneval and to Miss Gauffreau, he must have been given full information about the exact situation of the Church in Poitou and in France, and the whereabouts of his friends and acquaintances.¹¹⁸

Father Hayer was in hiding in Niort for about two months. Most of his acquaintances

¹¹³ HL, VBP, 30.

¹¹⁴ HL, Qq.R.l., 64.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. HL, VBP, 30.

¹¹⁶ HL, VBP, 31-33.

¹¹⁷ HL, Qq.R.l., 60.

¹¹⁸ Miss Gauffreau seems to have begun her mission as Mother of Priests during the summer of 1792, when Father Coudrin was at La Motte d'Usseau. Cf. Roux, pp. 30, 64.

among the clergy and of his friends especially were either outside of the country or the region, or else were in hiding. The situation was not as serious as he had imagined in his seclusion. He had thought for a while that he was the only one in Poitou who was noncompliant, but he learned that the desolation among the faithful was great.¹¹⁹

After September 20, the civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths pertained to the municipalities. It was a measure which was intended to restore order to the chaos reigning in the parochial archives since the notorious oath, but which savoured of profanation, and marked a line of separation of Church and State which at that moment of fended the consciences of many people.¹²⁰

The trial of the King in December 1792 and above all the execution by guillotine of Louis XVI in January 1793 shocked both the revolutionaries and the resistance. The Society of Friends of the Constitution swore in Poitiers they would “denounce the traitors.” The law of February 26 penalized with six years imprisonment anyone guilty of concealing those who had been exiled, and in the city a reward of a hundred pounds was offered to anyone who would denounce them. Life was becoming difficult for those who, like Pierre Coudrin, wanted to exercise the clandestine ministry.¹²¹

In spite of everything, this climate did not suffice to deter his priestly activity. He went about the abandoned fields neighboring Poitiers, where no noncompliant priests were seen now, and was given delicate missions by Father de Bruneval, for instance, to get the Dechatres brothers to retract their oath. The same day that he received this mission, January 11, 1793, he performed a clandestine marriage and dared to draw up a record which along with all the witnesses he signed “Coudrin, Catholic priest.”¹²²

From March of the same year the situation became much worse. The insurrection of Vendée made Poitiers a frontier City in a country at war. From January on, France was at war with England, and the Vendéans were in contact with the enemy. There was extreme tension in Poitiers from this period on. Under the laws of March 22 and of April 22, those exiled who had not “emigrated” were condemned to death, and the law prescribed that they be executed twenty-four hours after arrest. From October of the same year a priest found bearing arms, or with evidence of counterrevolutionary activity, for example, a Sacred Heart medal, incurred the penalty of death.¹²³

119 Roux, p. 97.

120 Dans. pp. 92 ff.: “It was only on the evening of its dissolution, September 20, 1792, that the legislative assembly, on transferring from the religious authorities to the municipal authorities the keeping of the registers of the civil state, establishes the regime as we know it now. A measure of supreme importance, for it enshrines the rupture between the world and the Church and heralds the lay State, destroying definitively the old concept of the Christian monarchy which gave a religious character to every great act of life.”

121 Roux, pp. 50 ff.

122 HL, Qq.R.I., 14. Lestr. I, 185.

123 Roux, pp. 50 ff.

In the Place de la Piloni on March 28 the first political executions by guillotine took place. A ditch was dug to irrigate with the victims' blood the "tree of liberty" which had been planted a few meters from the scaffold. But the Reign of Terror in Poitiers, although antedating that of Paris, did not have a Fouquier-Tinville, nor a fierce despot such as Robespierre. Piorry and Planier used legal means and condemned with a judgment that observed legal formality without being as a result any less iniquitous or atrocious. During the whole Reign of Terror in Poitou, which began three months before it began in Paris, thirty-one heads rolled, to which must be added that of four priests executed in Niort. About thirty citizens of Poitou were killed in Paris.¹²⁴

Many of those deported by ship from La Rochelle underwent a slow death, and for all it was an ignominious and brutal punishment. There were many indignities such as those which fifty priests had to suffer who, being deported April 1794, passed through Poitiers, or which forty-two others in Chatellerauld had to undergo in the same period. Nor are we to forget those who were detained, deprived of all they had, including their most personal indispensable belongings, crammed into some sixteen schools and convents, which became improvised prisons and were crowded up to the end of 1794.¹²⁵

In a relatively small city such as Poitiers, with a population of less than 30,000, in which schools did not function for a long time, and where the levying of soldiers for the war decimated homes, the repressive machine of government was widespread and its influence pervasive. "The Committee of Public Safety," later of "Vigilance," along with the Revolutionary Tribunal were tireless.¹²⁶

Of course it is very difficult to offer the reader sufficient information to enable him to reconstruct faithfully in his mind the picture of the Reign of Terror, and to probe the means by which Pierre Coudrin carried out his underground apostolate. Nevertheless, what has been said is enough to make the reader realize that his activity was exceptional, and even in the surroundings and in the circumstances in which he carried it out, he has few rivals. Among the noncompliant priests there were not many who would dare to go out on the street and put themselves at the service of the faithful.¹²⁷

The episode of the "Incurables" probably should be placed in that spring of 1793. Pierre Coudrin was surprised in the Hospital during an inspection by the revolutionaries, and escaped by posing as a vagabond who had no name, save the nickname "Marche-à-Terre," and whose corpse had been removed a few seconds before. From this incident is

124 Roux, p. 105.

125 Saillard. *Documents*, pp. XLVII-XLVIII.

126 Roux, pp. 95, 135.

127 Roux, pp. 55-70.

derived the most characteristic “fighting title” of the priest.¹²⁸

The adventures of “Marche-à-Terre” during the Reign of Terror are those of a hero of the religious resistance to the schism and to the transformation of the Church into a mere tool of the State. He put himself unconditionally at the service of the orthodox faithful in those scandalous times of defections of the clergy, and at the service of the diocesan authorities of the underground Church, who had such a difficult mission to carry out. He was always ready to console the dying and the prisoners, to preach and hear confessions. He directed a little less than a thousand persons in the city, and heard the confession of almost all the priests.¹²⁹

All this is admirable, even surprising. But what one can hardly begin to understand is that, in this climate, and in the midst of these adventures in which he risked his life daily –in some recklessly– he never forgot his destiny as a religious founder, and had taken the first steps toward the foundation. No one could have reproached him if he put off this undertaking for better times, nonetheless, all the documents point to this year of 1793, so full of anguish, as the year in which he began the Congregation.¹³⁰

In what did this beginning consist? We have no explicit references in the documents save the affirmation that it was so.¹³¹

Evidently, it is not hard to imagine that the field of spiritual direction offered him the possibility of contact with the young of both sexes whom the Spirit called to a total self surrender and that he occupied himself in striving to bring them to make a generous response to that call. At any rate, the group he attended was large, and among them there were some with whom he was very friendly. Later, in April 1794, after the execution of the Dechatres brothers when he was obliged to enter the city, he took refuge at the home of Marie-Louise Chevalier, one of those he directed. She and her friend Thérèse Souc de la Garélie –another whom he directed– were the ones who brought him to the house on la rue des Olérons.¹³²

128 HL, VBP, 33.

129 HL, Qq.R.I., 10. VBP, 55.

130 *Les Supplices*. ANN., 1963, especially 1793.

a) June 1800, p. 175: “We came together more than six years ago.”

b) To the Pope, p. 182: “This institution was formed in Poitiers since 1793.”

c) October 2, 1801, p. 186: “for eight years.”

d) May 22, 1802, p. 187: “After nine years.” The same in the “Report” presented to the Nuncio in 1821. Cf. ANN., 1963, p. 238: “This Congregation was founded in 1793.” However, there are also documents in which 1794 is given as the date of foundation. Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 193, 211, and 180.

131 Such preciseness is not found in the *Supplices* and other documents of this type, nor in the chronicle nor in the later correspondence of members of the community.

132 HL, Qq.R.I., II, 45.

3. *On la rue des Olérons*

Shortly before they closed the churches, we were on the pavilion of the Cathedral, three of my girl friends and I. I asked them: “What do you think? They have suppressed the communities, let us form one.” They replied: “We would love to, but on condition you will be the superior.” I accepted at once, for they were all holier than I, and I thought this office would not be hard to carry out. However each one stayed with her own family.¹³³

Suzanne Geoffroy thus relates, a half a century later, how the Association began, which later installed its headquarters on la rue des Olérons. If the record is correct, the approximate date of this happening may be the period in which the churches were closed in Poitiers. We know that the decree is of November 1792, but its enforcement was neither immediate nor total. Only in February of 1794 was it fully enforced. If we take this last date as our point of reference, the Association was very recently formed when Pierre Coudrin arrived to take refuge there at the end of April 1794.¹³⁴

Hilarion says that Father Coudrin believed, at first, that it was from this group that the community he was called to found would begin. He does not say more. What seems more probable is that this was a mere impression, because during the months of the Terror, it is hard to imagine a positive step being taken outside the secret of confession. And the Terror continued to become ever more threatening for him.¹³⁵

In November 1793 the record of the clandestine marriage signed “Coudrin, Catholic priest” was found in the home of Miss Gauffreau and he was convicted; the Committee of Surveillance, however, did not succeed in laying hands on him. In March of 1794 he miraculously escaped, when the guards arrived at his place of refuge minutes after he had left to attend a dying man. They arrested and then guillotined the Lazarist Daudin who was his companion in refuge. Ingenuously and out of weakness, the Deschartres had wound up revealing that the elusive “Marche-à-Terre” was the unrecognized Coudrin, whom they had convicted fruitlessly some months before. The circle was closing around him, and even though he did not diminish his activity, he had to exercise extreme prudence.¹³⁶

Father de Bruneval was imprisoned in la Trinité from the end of March, and from July in la Visitation. Now it was not possible to consult him as easily as when he was imprisoned in his own room in the seminary, which “Marche-à-Terre” knew so well.¹³⁷

133 *Vie de Mme. Geoffroy, religieuse du Sacré Cœur, Poitiers, 1854.*

134 Roux, 140-141: Fermeture Novembre 30, 1793. Décret du 15 Ventose (March 5, 1794): *Ibid.*, pp. 144-146.

135 HL, VBP, 60.

136 Roux, pp. 59, 158, 205 ff.

137 Roux, p. 267.

On the afternoon of August 1, 1794, the news of Robespierre's death reached Poitiers. As throughout the country, there too there was an irrepressible feeling of relief among the people. In spite of the fact that the authorities had no intention of mitigating the Terror. This event checked repressive measures, slowed down the guillotine, and, with a certain sloth and delay, the doors of prisons began opening. Despite all this, the laws remained in force, now enforced, now not enforced, with periods of greater tolerance alternating with others of greater rigor, depending on how far these governing felt they could go.¹³⁸

Perhaps in that autumn of 1794 should be placed the founding of the Society of the Sacred Heart for Priests, which not only Sister Gabriel de la Barre but also Hilarion Lucas attribute to Pierre Coudrin. Sister Gabriel writes: "... he had formed it in concert with many other priests..."

As for Hilarion, speaking of the group on la rue des Olérons, he says:

It was there he began to set up the External Society of the Sacred Heart. . . . There was brought together a large number of priests who formed the Large Society. One day six were present: Fathers de Bruneval, Martin Aglae of Angulema, Fauvette Soyer (future bishop of Luçon), Louis Muret, Henri Arsoneau and P. Marie-Joseph. Others came together later on.¹³⁹

The founders were then six, of whom Father Coudrin was among the youngest. Only Fathers Arsoneau and Soyer were as young as he, the others were priests long before the Revolution. The approximate date is not easy to fix. If Father de Bruneval was present, it must have been after November 9, when he left the Visitation for his home, still "under arrest." If Father Soyer attended, it seems it must have been before the end of October, when he left Poitiers to go to Anjou, unless by chance he was in Poitiers after this date. It seems most unlikely that this act of establishing an institution was in line with his efforts for founding the community about which he was concerned.¹⁴⁰

Hilarion relates, on the other hand, what the Founder says in reference to a first attempt to form the men's branch of the new community, and which failed.

I tried to begin with Henri (Arsoneau), but he left me. I instructed the Prins with this intention, but they too left me.

It is not unlikely that these efforts were made between 1795 and 1797. Meanwhile in the women's branch, although several of these he directed were interiorly inclined to an active religious life, it became clearer each day to the Founder that his intention of founding a religious community could not be accomplished by changing the Association of la rue des Olérons, as he once thought.¹⁴¹

138 Roux, pp. 248ff.

139 GB, *Mémoires*, 5. HL, Qq.R.I., 46.

140 Roux, p. 256. The last baptism with his signature is of Sept. 6, 1795.

141 HL, Qq.R.I., 63.

4. *Miss Aymer*

On Sunday, February 15, 1795, the Association of the Sacred Heart moved to 14 la rue du Moulin à Vent, to a larger house located in a district nearer to the center of the city. During the night, the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament was made in a procession which was a real challenge, but which ended without incident, unknown, by the grace of God, to the police.¹⁴²

Hardly had the Association been installed in its new location when it received a petition for admission from a young woman of twenty-seven years, who five months before had been released from prison. Her name was Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie, and she was living with her mother, a widow, in her mansion on la rue des Hautes-Treilles.¹⁴³

The petition was rejected. Miss Aymer did not belong to the pious world of Poitiers, and everyone knew she had shone in the frivolous milieu of the salons of the nobility. She had a fine voice, a lovely figure, played the harpsichord very well, and above all was so charming that she readily became the center of the pre-revolutionary parties and social gatherings.¹⁴⁴

What the people did not know was the profound change which had taken place within her in almost eleven months of imprisonment. In October 1793 she and her mother had been sent to the Hospitalières, when they had been caught hiding some noncompliant priests in their house. It must be said that the law which condemned to death anyone hiding persons who were to be deported went into effect the day before October 22, 1793, when Madame Aymer and her daughter were arrested. Consequently, the provisions of this law were not known in Poitiers, and, at least legally, no one could be condemned to death for having violated it. So the penalty she and her mother received was imprisonment, which was not as frightful as the prospect of the scaffold.¹⁴⁵

The experience of the prison, apart altogether from the shock of the cross-examinations of the first days, had been harsh. To feel themselves in the hands of revolutionaries, even though those in Poitiers had observed the law, was not precisely reassuring for noble ladies. When was this social tempest which was agitating France going to cease? To the inner anxieties and uncertainties there was also in the prison of the Hospitalières, as in all prisons of the city at this moment, a great number of inconveniences. The prisons were ancient convents, as has been said, in which were lacking minimal services for lodging

142 Lestra I, p. 239.

143 *Notice of Father Venance Prat*, p. 83. HL, VBM, 18.

144 HL, *Op. cit.* 10, 17. GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 3.

145 HL, *Op. cit.* 19. GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 8, Report of Father Prat, pp. 83 ff.

an excessive and ever-growing number of prisoners. A thousand miseries derived from this situation, making daily existence a painful martyrdom, especially for the Aymers, accustomed to a life of luxury.¹⁴⁶

Despite of this, Henriette soon regained her serenity, and devoted herself to alleviating her mother's pains, paying as much attention to her needs as possible. When it was learned in Poitiers that the new law condemned to death those who hid priests, there were some days of anguished uncertainty. Would this apply to Madame Aymer and her daughter? All depended on the judgment of a tribunal and there was no appeal against it. The young girl concealed this from her mother, showing her nothing but an optimistic smile. Charity was opening up her heart, impelling her to make as objects of her attentiveness persons far removed from her in spirit: the jailer's family and an aristocratic lady who was notorious for her revolutionary ideas.¹⁴⁷

In the last days of the Reign of Terror, there was a rumor that a plot was being hatched to massacre all the political prisoners of Poitiers. On learning this, two priests of the underground climbed over the walls of the Hospitalières, to offer their services to the prisoners. Henriette took this occasion to make her general confession to Father Soyer, sealing what she called her "conversion."¹⁴⁸

When on September 11, 1794 the gates of the prison opened for the Aymers and they were able to return to their home, Henriette viewed her life under a different light and desired only to give herself to God. Her former life seemed to her but vanity. She needed a guide. Father Soyer, who had heard her confession not so long ago, was no longer in Poitiers, and besides he was not the person she was looking for. At that time she heard Father Coudrin preach and felt such harmony between her spirit and the priest's way of preaching that she decided to have him as her confessor. Some persons warned her that he was very severe. This, however, confirmed the choice she had made instead of changing it, and from November 1794 on, she made her confession to him.¹⁴⁹

The recently converted young lady did not adopt the style of the pious folk of the city. Her confessions were brief and not very frequent. She remained aloof, shunning all social exchanges. There were no longer servants in her house, and she had become her mother's maid. This was the life she was living when she asked to be admitted into the Society of the Sacred Heart. After that initial rejection, she was received as an extern,

146 The Hospitalières were almost across the street from the present Hôtel des Trois Pilliers, quite near the square, and had some extensive properties, some of which were bought by the Fathers to build the College de la Grand'Maison. Cf. Saillard, p. 185.

147 GB, Ecr.Div., 8, 11. HL, VBM, 18-19.

148 HL, *Op. cit.*, 21. GB, Ecr.Div., 11.

149 GB, *Op. cit.* 12, 14, 16.

either because other information about the postulant had been received, or because Father Coudrin himself, or some better informed person of the Association had insisted.¹⁵⁰

Miss Aymer did not demand much. She asked only to be allowed to occupy a corner of the room in which the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, hidden in the wall. There she spent the whole day, praying in silence, while she sewed or embroidered to help her mother. She arrived in the morning, left in the evening, spoke to no one, smiled gently at everyone, and . . . that is all.¹⁵¹

Without her seeking it, the presence of Henriette Aymer began to have a decisive effect on the Association of the Sacred Heart. Her constant silence, her attractive amiability, the serenity and maturity of her behavior, revealed a person toward whom it was impossible to be indifferent. When she had to speak at meetings, she did so with a mixture of self-assurance and of modesty which charmed everyone. Besides, her words seemed to come out of an interior world very rich and profound.¹⁵²

Some months after her arrival at the residence on la rue Moulin à Vent, a true polarization came about in the Society without anyone having proposed it. On the one hand, there was a small group who felt impelled to imitate her way of life; on the other hand, the rest looked on this novelty with a certain distrust, and preferred what had been done under the direction of Miss Geoffroy up to then.¹⁵³

Thus there was formed a group which then took the name of Solitaires, –almost all of whom were directed by Father Coudrin– and to whom there was granted a certain autonomy in the Society. This situation went on without any changes of importance until the beginnings of 1797.¹⁵⁴

On March 25 of that year, the Society moved to a house on le Plan de St. Pierre, opposite the Cathedral.¹⁵⁵

5. *First Steps*

During the years immediately following Robespierre's death, the underground Church reactivated its forces. The impulse came from hopefulness rather than from a true relief from persecution, a persecution carried on in the name of freedom. Although executions were over, deportations continued, and the legislation of the Reign of Terror remained. At this time, the Church assigned Pierre Coudrin to take temporary charge of

150 *Ibid.*, 13, 14, 19.

151 *Ibid.*, 23-25.

152 GB, Mem., 4-9.

153 GB, Ecr.Div., 30.

154 *Ibid.*, 31.

155 HL, VBM, 31.

the parish of St. Radegonde, which comprised, to the east of the river Clain, the whole district he had served in worst times: Montbernage. The zealous apostle with this heavy responsibility found himself occupied twenty-four hours a day, so he had little time left for other things, apart from spiritual direction of a multitude of persons of every condition.¹⁵⁶

On April 16, 1797, Easter day, something happened to change this way of life: the titular pastor Father Pruel returned to Poitiers and took charge of the parish of St. Radegonde. This resulted in Pierre Coudrin having more time at his disposal and he took advantage of this providential circumstance to work on his project of a religious foundation.

This was no easy undertaking for Miss Geoffroy, although she continued living in her uncle's home, still had the illusion of being the foundress of a congregation foretold by Father Nectou, a Jesuit who died in the odor of sanctity shortly before the Revolution. Miss Geoffroy was jealous of her authority. The influence of other priests added to this difficulty. Almost all the noncompliers in the city, increased in these later days by the return of many, such as Father Pruel, from exile, were in the Society. Most of these priests were much older than Pierre Coudrin who was hardly twenty-nine. They looked on him as a youth without much experience, despite his excellent performance during the period of the Reign of Terror which nobody denied. The Founder had to work with extreme prudence.¹⁵⁷

In March of that year, he had a conversation with Henriette Aymer. As a result of this exchange of ideas –in which for the first time the practical decision to found a community was formulated– it was decided to buy a house, and to begin giving a decidedly religious form to the nucleus of the Solitaires.¹⁵⁸

Where would the money needed to buy a house come from? Henriette Aymer owned some lands which she could sell, lands which she inherited from her father. The difficulty lay in the fact that because of the political situation what needed to be done had to be done secretly, so as not to endanger the Society of the Sacred Heart nor the very family of Aymer. How could they find a buyer who could be trusted and who at the same time would have the large sum of money needed? A noble very rich young lady, whom Pierre Coudrin knew since he was in the seminary, was a member of the Society and he was her director, her name was Miss de Viart. Henriette approached her asking her to buy

156 Roux, 248 ff.

157 HL, VBP, 63. GB, Mem. 9.

158 GB, Memoranda, 10.

the whole of her inheritance. As may well be understood, she found her undecided. She had to wait until the feast of the Sacred Heart –which that year fell on June 23– to get an affirmative answer. The transaction was carried out most secretly, and right away the search to buy property began.¹⁵⁹

Opposite Miss Aymer’s house, on la rue des Hautes-Treuilles, the Morière family had a fine house, with large grounds, and that is the site that was chosen. Miss Aymer had to turn over all her inheritance to buy it, and while she became the secret owner of the new house, she was reduced to extreme poverty. In fact she was so poor that she was unable to pay the dues owed to the Association, and had to be considered officially as an indigent. As far as the public was concerned, the house appeared to be rented to Lussa Souc de la Garélie, one of the Solitaires. Very few knew anything about this.¹⁶⁰

On August 25, Pierre Coudrin had the Solitaires take the religious habit, under secular clothing. They adopted, in a spirit of penitence, woolen underclothing, in those days poorer and coarser than linen. During the ceremony, the small group took “resolutions.” The formula is eloquent:

Today I consecrate myself in a special way to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; I resolve to live for a year under obedience, in chastity and poverty, desiring through my fidelity to these means of perfection to appease the wrath of God ...

What Sister Gabriel says about this period is understandable: “This seed ... had within it all that has been developed since then.”¹⁶¹

It is an important date in the history of the community of Father Coudrin. For the first time, there is expressed a “communitarian” will to construct a new religious Congregation.

Shortly before September 10, 1797, there came to Poitiers the news of the coup of Fructidor, September 4, when the revolutionaries, faced with the increase of votes by the royalists who had gotten a majority in the elections, had recourse to force to put themselves back in power. The immediate practical consequence in Poitou was a fresh outbreak of the persecution of the noncompliant clergy and of the nobility. Madame Aymer had to flee the City and take refuge in the country. Father Pruel, on the twelfth of the month, went off to Switzerland.¹⁶²

In this atmosphere the transfer of the Solitaires to the new residence took place. Henriette Aymer, availing herself of her absence, moved in with them. A room on the first

159 GB, Ecr.Div., 35-39.

160 BM. 2, 4. GB, Ecr.Div., 39. Mem. 11-12.

161 GB, *Op. cit.* 33, 41. Mem. 15. Lestr. I, 285.

162 GB, Ecr.Div., 44. HL, VBM, 33.

floor, with windows overlooking the interior garden, had been set aside as an oratory, which had a skillfully concealed tabernacle in the wall. In various places about the house they prepared “priest holes,” hiding places for the priests in case the gendarmes might suddenly break in. Henriette constructed these with her own hands. On September 29, the Blessed Sacrament was transferred, in a procession as bold as that of 1795.¹⁶³

A few days later, Miss Lussa de la Garélie received the rest of the Association into the residence, providing the Solitaires with a separate dwelling which assured their indispensable independence. The difficult circumstance of the moment suggested this living together, destined to further still for some years an uncertainty filled, for all, with tensions and trials.¹⁶⁴

With Father Pruel’s going abroad, the parish of St. Radegonde fell once again on Pierre Coudrin’s shoulders, and this made it difficult for him to attend to his incipient community as he would have liked. Meanwhile, the Church of Poitiers entered into a period of trials. On December 15, 1797, Father de Bruneval and Father de Beauregard were deported, and on January 6, 1798 were sent to Rochefort. On the sixteenth of this same month Bishop de St. Aulaire died in Friburg, Switzerland. The See remained vacant, the pastors without jurisdiction, and Pierre Coudrin without faculties.¹⁶⁵

In accordance with a pontifical Brief, the Archbishop of Bordeaux appointed Father Perrin, who had left Montfort for Rome and returned to Poitiers in 1795, administrator of the diocese. At the same time, three canons present in Poitiers met and appointed two Capitular Vicars: Father de Mondion and Father Messay. The result was a conflict of jurisdiction which lasted almost the whole year, and which was only settled by Father Perrin’s resignation in the month of October.¹⁶⁶

Father Coudrin, urged by the exigencies of *bonum animarum*, got around the problem by obtaining faculties from both Father Perrin and Father Mondion. The priests of the Society of the Sacred Heart met at the home of one of them, and chose Father Perrin as dean. The Founder was left in an uncomfortable position in the Association.¹⁶⁷

Father Perrin took his responsibility as dean very seriously, and zealously –overzealously, according to some– set out to promote the Society of the Sacred Heart. It did not take him long to realize that a religious community was developing within a secular pious society. Both had a different spirit and, with the best of intentions, were obstructing each other. The nascent religious Congregation needed greater autonomy.¹⁶⁸

163 *Ibid.*

164 HL, VBM, 33. VBP, 68-69.

165 Roux, pp. 267-272; 290-293.

166 Roux, p. 257.

167 HL, VBP, 73.

168 GB, Mem. 27, 36, 38.

With his support, Henriette Aymer was chosen superior of the whole Association in August 1798. The situation of the Solitaires improved; meanwhile, Miss Geoffroy was head of the externs only. Father Perrin drew up regulations and tried to conduct the development of the new Institute in the external forum. This was a fresh source of uncertainties and misunderstanding, because the Solitaires understood they were to obey only Father Coudrin who was their confessor and from then on charged with their spiritual direction.¹⁶⁹

The fame of the Trappist monastery of Valsainte, near Friburg in Switzerland, reached Poitiers during those days. Some French monks had taken refuge there when they left France. It is very likely that what has been called “the Trappist Rule” in our Congregation was only a booklet for publicity published by that monastery. In it is expounded the spiritual practices and austerities of the Trappists, for the purpose of forming in the minds of possible vocations a realistic image of the austere life of the Abbey, and at the same time inspiring those who felt called, exhorting them to start out on the difficult road with “courage.” At any rate, the famous “practices of the Trappists” adopted by the community of Hautes-Treilles are all found in this pamphlet.¹⁷⁰

Henriette Aymer obtained permission from Father Coudrin to make a test of the practices of the Trappists during Advent of 1798. On January 1, the entire community of Solitaires adopted them. This decision of austerity marks a stage in the adoption of the religious life in the practice of the Gospel, and is an indication of the generosity and total dedication which animated the Solitaires.¹⁷¹

At the end of that winter, the dean of the priests of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Father Perrin, was replaced by Father Morat, a close friend of Miss Geoffroy. Decidedly he was not the most appropriate person to understand the situation of the Solitaires.¹⁷²

The Founder, on his part, was concerned with forming the men’s branch after the first failures. With this objective, he instructed in community and priestly life two young men who showed great enthusiasm, Bernard de Villemort and Hilarion Lucas.¹⁷³

We know very little about how this formation was conducted, but we do know that Father Coudrin always brought them along with him on his apostolic journeys. He made them teach catechism and take care of the chapels on the outskirts of the city where he had the center of his activities, in the district of la Tranchée and la Cueille Mirebalaise.¹⁷⁴

169 GB, *ibid.* HL, VBM, 40.

170 GB, Memoranda, 31-34; HL, Mem. C.I, 38. HL, VBM, 39.

171 *Ibid.*

172 GB, Mem. 39.

173 GB, Mem. 42. HL, VBP, 80; HL, Mem. C.I, 38.

174 *Ibid.*

6. *Diocesan Approbation*

At the end of 1799, the political situation in France came to a crisis. During the days of the 18th and 19th of Brumaire –9th and 10th of November– a new government was set up in Paris, the Consulate, of a military and authoritarian character, in which Napoleon Bonaparte made his appearance at the peak of his power.¹⁷⁵

The persecutory measures against the Church were revoked, the priests who had been deported began to return from exile. At the end of the year the churches reopened. After eight years of revolution, public confidence was far from being restored, but after so much uncertainty, firmness and security in those who governed was gradually experienced. But where would this bring the country?¹⁷⁶

On Christmas day of that year 1799, the Founder had prepared a kind of “scenic shock” which made a great impression on the immediate neighborhood: the Solitaires suddenly appeared dressed in white habits in the chapel of Hautes-Treilles. It was a real challenge.¹⁷⁷

This was a bold move, not only because of the political situation, but also because of the attitudes of the clergy of Poitiers, and especially the tensions within the Society of the Sacred Heart. During 1798, the Founder became the object of a campaign of calumnies. Later, at the beginning of 1799, he was criticized for the austerities he permitted those whom he directed to practice. For instance, in imitation of the Trappists, they ate only once a day during their repeated “Lents,” and slept on hard beds.¹⁷⁸

Father Coudrin showed in his manner of conducting his new community much serene firmness, and very strong decisiveness. We do not have explicit records of details, but it seems certain, granted his habitual manner of acting, that he did nothing without diocesan authorization and that this spectacular “wearing of the habit” had the prior consent of the priests. If this had not been so, he could not have avoided a complaint on the part of the dean of the Society, and a rebuke on the part of the priests. No one said anything. In the face of past attacks, Pierre Coudrin had always kept silent. Now he went into action simply, as if nothing had happened.¹⁷⁹

Around Pentecost in 1800, June 1, four postulants of the Solitaires took the habit. Father Coudrin presided over the ceremony and used the occasion to let his intention to found a religious community in a form such as existed prior to the Revolution be

175 Leflon, *La crise révolutionnaire*, Fliche-Martin 20, pp. 161 ff.

176 Dans. 109.

177 GB, Mem. 41. HL, VBM, 42; VBP, 79.

178 HL, VBP, 78, 93-94.

179 There is not the least trace of any criticism of authority in the documents.

known clearly. This declaration was very opportune. Three Solitaires decided to leave and became members of the External Association, directed by Miss Geoffroy. On Trinity Sunday, June 8, they left the house.¹⁸⁰

During this time, Pierre Coudrin and Henriette Aymer decided to hasten the time when they would be free and independent, in order to function as an organization officially recognized by the Church. They drew up a petition to be sent to the priests of the diocese, and on June 17 they received this encouraging document:

This Association, with the precepts and counsels it contains, is too well-suited to making the Gospel of Jesus Christ loved for us not to approve it wholeheartedly. So provisionally we grant the approbation requested above, reserving to our future Bishop the definitive decision. . .

The document was shown to the dean of the Society, but he demanded it be kept secret. The time had not yet arrived to come out of concealment.¹⁸¹

On June 20, the Capitulary Vicars announced to the diocese the election of the new Pope, Pius VII, which took place at the Conclave of Venice the previous March 14. The new Pope had in the past shown himself open to democratic ideas, and Napoleon appeared to him as a valid spokesman. New horizons opened up for the Christian Community in France. For the moment, however, the schism was still alive, and the wounds of persecution were still fresh.¹⁸²

Meanwhile, Pierre Coudrin learned something which, at first, upset him very much. We do not know the exact date, but, according to Sister Gabriel de la Barre, it must have been at the end of 1799 or the beginning of 1800, when Henriette Aymer decided to open up her soul entirely to Father Coudrin who had been her confessor for years. At the beginning of what she called her “conversion,” that is, since the period of her seclusion among the Hospitalières, her life of prayer, which permeated all her activity and filled all her times of silence, flourished at times in experiences of profound meditation which she found difficult to confront, and which she felt reluctant to communicate. All at once, the future, the interior of persons, the very mysteries of faith which seemed to open up to her unsuspected depths, became clear to her.¹⁸³

Father Coudrin was by temperament a man of action, but one who very early had been initiated into a life of profound prayer. He knew that contemplation is a fundamental element of the truly apostolic life and, if his preaching was able to change

¹⁸⁰ GB, Mem. 43-46.

¹⁸¹ ANN., 1963, p. 177.

¹⁸² HL, VBM, 44. GB, Mem. 47-50.

¹⁸³ GB, Ecr.Div., 36, 54, 58. HL, VBM, 61.

persons profoundly, it was in part because the nearness of prayer was felt in his words. Nevertheless, he had a certain reserve in the face of the extraordinary phenomena of the mystical life, and did not feel comfortable when he had to judge them and determine whether to believe them or not. In regard to Henriette, he started out by minimizing them, and at the same time imposed on her the torture of putting her experiences in writing because he knew that was the last thing she would want to do.¹⁸⁴

We do not know for sure, but it is very likely that he consulted Father Hubert Fournet on this matter. This priest was his friend and former confessor and had returned to Maillé in 1797. Perhaps Fournet was not the only one he consulted for there were in Poitiers other venerable and dependable priests such as Father de Bruneval. The fact is that, at the end of 1800, he started to listen to Henriette Aymer's reports of her experiences. We still have the notes Father Coudrin took and the pages Miss Aymer handed over to him. Advent of 1800 was a period rich in such reports about the community and its destiny, which were received as something from God.¹⁸⁵

On October 20, the anniversary of Father Coudrin's departure from La Motte, there took place an important ceremony in the small chapel of the house of Hautes-Treilles. Henriette Aymer took her first religious vows, along with four companions. At the same ceremony, Father Coudrin, with his first two disciples, formulated their "resolutions." Father Coudrin took the name Caprasius, de Villemort took Bernard, and Lucas took Hilarion. That same day, the new community made a petition to the diocesan authorities: that Father Coudrin be named its superior. This was granted on the twenty-eighth of the same month by the Vicar, Father Mondion. Everyone felt they had taken an important step.¹⁸⁶

However, it was not without preparation. Following an Advent of intense penance and prayer, Father Coudrin knelt on the altar steps and pronounced his first vows just before celebrating Mass on Christmas Eve. Then he went up to the altar to say Mass. Although we do not know the precise moment, Miss Aymer also took the three vows, because in October she had not taken the vow of poverty. This has always been regarded as the birth of the Congregation.¹⁸⁷

The year 1801 was filled with happenings for the little community. Brother Bernard de Villemort travelled to Paris at the end of 1800 for the purpose of being ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop d'Aviaud of Vienne, who had secretly returned from Rome and

184 GB, Ecr.Div., 63-64.

185 HL, VBM, GB, Mem. 70-73.

186 HL, VBM, 46. GB, Mem. 56-57. HL, Memoranda C. 48.

187 GB, Mem. 75. HL, VBP, 88. VBM, 68-69.

was in Vivarais. On passing through the capital Brother Bernard would be able to greet his father who had returned from exile, and put himself in contact with the Apostolic Delegate, Bishop Spina, whom the Pope had sent to deal with the new government. He was only able to get him to send a petition of the Founders to Rome. After having lost his vocation, de Villemort returned to Poitiers and stayed at his father's home.¹⁸⁸

On February 2, the feast of Candlemas, another ceremony was held in the chapel of Hautes-Treilles. The Founder took his perpetual vows, while Isidore David and Hilarion Lucas made their first profession. The same was done by Sisters Gabriel de la Barre, Magdalene Chevalier and Gertrude Godet.¹⁸⁹

During this same month, the sorrowful but necessary separation from the Society of Externs of Miss Geoffroy occurred.¹⁹⁰

April was a sad month. Sister Thérèse de la Garélie died on the twenty-third, Sister Magdalène Chevalier on the twenty-seventh, and Miss Aymer's mother on the thirtieth. In so small a community the feeling of desolation was great, despite the consolation derived from their awareness of the virtues of the deceased sisters and their joyful acceptance of death.¹⁹¹

On May 20, the men's section of the community, which now occupied Miss Aymer's house, a half a block from the Grande Maison, obtained approbation from the Capitulary Vicars of Poitiers.

The Congregation had obtained, although in secret and provisionally until there was a bishop, its first diocesan approbation.¹⁹²

7. *Bishop de Chabot*

At the beginning of autumn 1801, the first orthodox bishop to visit the City after the Revolution came to Poitiers. It was Jean-Baptiste de Chabot, Bishop of St. Claude (Jura).

Born in Marigny-Brizay (Chatellerault), he had made his first studies in Poitiers. Afterwards he entered the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris. Ordained priest in 1765, he was later appointed Vicar General of Rouen and promoted to the episcopate in 1785. In 1791, he was obliged to emigrate to Switzerland. He had returned to France only a few months previously.¹⁹³

188 GB, Mem. 83, 87, 115. HL, Mem. C.I, 53.

189 GB, Mem. 79.

190 GB, Mem. 84-85. HL, Mem. C.I, 64.

191 GB, Mem. 89. HL, Mem. C.I, 67-69.

192 GB, Mem. 96. HL, Mem. C.I, 72-73.

193 GB, Mem. 105. HL, Mem. C.I, 81.

When the Pope, in order to prepare the way for reconciliation, made the unprecedented decision to ask for the resignation of the entire episcopate of France, de Chabot had presented his immediately, on September 18 of that same year. He was sixty-one years old at the time.¹⁹⁴

Bishop de Chabot was the son of female Aymer de la Chevalerie and “uncle” of Henriette, uncle “a la mode de Bretagne” (that is, cousin of Henriette’s father). As soon as Father Coudrin learned of his arrival in the city, he contacted him, paid him a visit, and then the bishop came to the Grande Maison. In a short time, he was a great admirer and friend of the new community.¹⁹⁵

Hilarion Lucas rightly says:

His memory will ever be precious to us, and those who come after us will recall thankfully that he was the instrument by which God served to extend our Institute and obtain for us the approbation of the Holy See...¹⁹⁶

Actually, the role of Bishop de Chabot was decisive for the Congregation in many respects. He had known his cousin in her more worldly days in the salons of Poitiers before the Revolution. He admired greatly what grace had worked in her, and was soon convinced that here there was genuine mystical life. The bishop’s judgment on this point was very helpful in setting Father Coudrin’s mind at ease because he was too always circumspect in regard to Mother Henriette’s revelations.¹⁹⁷

Bishop de Chabot was the first bishop to support the Congregation unconditionally and take it under his protection, making its existence possible under the Napoleonic dictatorship. His favor was important and decisive not only in Mende but also in Picpus, where he lived until his death, April 28, 1819. His presence was always a guarantee, not only to the government, but also to the diocesan authorities and under his protection the new community took its first steps.¹⁹⁸

B. SECOND PERIOD: 1802 - 1817

This second period goes from the period of the diocesan approbation of Poitiers, of which we have spoken, to the Roman approbation. In other words, it covers the life of the community under the statute of “Diocesan Congregation.” It almost wholly coincides with Napoleon Bonaparte’s domination, and only the final stage, that of the negotiations for Roman approbation, takes place during the first years of the Restoration.

¹⁹⁴ GB, Ecr.Div., 80.

¹⁹⁵ PAC, 1271-1272, 1270b.

¹⁹⁶ HL, Mem. C.I., 299.

¹⁹⁷ GB, Ecr.Div., 82.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Testimony of Bishop de Chabot. Cf. PAC, 1383.

Napoleon's intention to use the Church as a tool, which he revealed from the beginning, made the new-born community feel a prudent lack of trust, and maintain a very strict clandestinity. Hilarion says in his *Mémoire* of December 1814, addressed to the Holy See:

Various congregations have formed in France. They attracted the attention of the police. Bonaparte, who felt uneasy about religious institutions, declared that there could be no religious order without his approval. Almost every congregation believed they had to obey to avoid the imminent dissolution which threatened them. They submitted their regulations to the current civil authority. Bonaparte, ruthless enemy of commitments for life, laid down the general rule that vows could only be taken for one year. We were far from condemning the behavior of the congregations which abided by Bonaparte's orders. They had judged it more worthwhile to suffer a lesser evil than to be dispersed, perhaps without hope of being restored. Yet, after mature reflection, we thought we ought not imitate them. Every procedure of our country's tyrant inspired a justifiable defiance. We were convinced, and sad experience proved it later, that to ask approval of the government was to put ourselves entirely under its hand, and we have good enough reasons to suspect his irreligious projects.

He continues further on:

Strengthened by the support of the Lord who has given us so many outstanding proofs of His mercy and relying on the powerful intercession of the Heart of Mary, we resolved to abandon ourselves to Providence, and made no overture to the man who then governed our unfortunate country. We were assured that, if our institution was the work of God, He would well know how to maintain it and strike blind our enemies or rather His. While arming ourselves with courage, nonetheless, we had to avoid anything rash that might have hammed us through our own fault. So we took all the means we could to screen front the eyes of the police the relationship of our various establishments. At Sées we were deemed to be the directors of the seminary, in other places teachers. Our sisters were deemed to be boarding school teachers. Following the same principle of Christian prudence, our sisters in Paris, whose residence was constantly watched by an uneasy government, did not wear the sane costume, nor did they say the Office in common, but, like the other houses, they had perpetual adoration, and observed abstinence every day of the year, ran free schools, taught poor young girls at the residence, and had regular chapters.¹⁹⁹

The secret was so well-kept that Napoleon's police, under none other than Fouché, began to suspect only in 1812 that, not only in Paris but also in Poitiers and other cities, our residences could only be those of a clandestine religious congregation. The investigation begun at the time was not completed due to the preoccupations of ever-growing internal

¹⁹⁹ HL, Mem. R.I., ANN., 1963, pp. 199-200.

tension, as well as to the international situation. That year was the year of the Russian campaign.

Even the clergy were not informed about the secret, especially at the Curia of Paris. Cardinal Maury, Napoleon's man, was very much surprised when later on, in full session of the "Congress" of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in June 7, 1816, he learned that the residence of Picpus was a religious house founded there in 1804.²⁰⁰

All the precautions necessary to keep the Congregation hidden did not hinder its development and growth, as we shall see later, although there is no doubt it did make things very arduous and was restrictive.

1. *The First Expansion: 1802-1809*

When Father Coudrin left Poitiers May 3, 1802, to follow Bishop de Chabot to Mende, he did what seemed to many in Poitiers something crazy. The community of Hautes-Treilles was getting on fine, but as yet it was far from being so stable as to be able to be deprived without risk of the Founders' presence. Nevertheless, the following July, Mother Aymer also left for Mende.²⁰¹

In Poitiers there remained Father Isidore David, at the head of the male community, and Sister Gabriel de la Barre of the female community.

The Founder—who was at first Secretary and then Vicar General of Bishop de Chabot—was in charge of the exhaustive task of applying the Concordat and of reorganizing two former dioceses now made into one, that of Mende (Lozère) and that of Viviera (Ardèche). Meanwhile, the community took root in the region and vocations increased.²⁰²

In 1803, the Bishop of Cahors, informed of the work going on in Mende on behalf of poor children, got the city authorities interested, and the old house of the Mirepoix nuns was offered to the Congregation. On July 15 of the same year, Adoration began in Cahors. Shortly thereafter, a residence for men was opened. At the head of both houses stayed Father Antoine Astier and Sister Ludovine de la Marsonière. Sister Ludovine was the eleventh professed of the Congregation, and had entered in 1801. Father Antoine, thirty-nine years old, a deacon before the Revolution, had been ordained priest a few months before having made his profession at the residence of Mende the previous year.

Very soon Cahors, like Mende, became a nursery of vocations for both houses of the community.²⁰³

200 HL, Mem. C.I, 236.

201 GB, Ecr.Div., 98, 102. HL, VBP, 103-104. Mem. C.I, 83, 91.

202 HL, Mem. C.I, 92 ff.; VBP, 103 ff. BP, 31, 164. BM, 60, 128.

203 HL, Mem. C.I, 110 ff; VBP, 115 ff. GB, Ecr.Div., 116.

Meanwhile, it was not long before there developed a two-fold tension between Father Coudrin, who was not of the clergy of the diocese, nor did he speak Provençal, and a section of that clergy, on the one hand, and between the Vicar General himself and the civil authorities on the other. This last tension was the most delicate at this moment. The Prefect did not look placidly on the independence and energy with which Father Coudrin proceeded. The crisis reached its peak, when, counter to the order of the Prefect, the Vicar refused ecclesiastical burial to Nogaret the schismatic ex-bishop who had died unrepentant. The authorities decided to arrest Father Coudrin, but he learned about it in time. He informed the bishop, and since both as usual had a common cause, they left without delay for Paris on Monday, April 23, 1804. When the Prefect of la Lozère learned of their flight, both were outside of his jurisdiction.²⁰⁴

In Paris they found everything underway for the proclamation of the First Consul as Emperor of the French. The bishop and his vicar were treated with courtesy, as well as granted an audience with Napoleon May 13, but the solution was postponed front week to week and from month to month, until in March 1805 Bishop de Chabot felt obliged to present his resignation, since they did not permit him to return to his diocese with the vicar in whom he had confidence.²⁰⁵

The times were not propitious for the founding of religious residences. Napoleon did not want organizations which were outside his totalitarian control. Congregations of women, especially those providing public services, such as the Daughters of Charity, offered no difficulty to the government, but those of men had to be controlled by the government or close down. A decree prescribing this was published June 22, 1804. In its first article it said: “. . . Likewise all other congregations or associations formed under pretext of religion, and not authorized, will be abolished.”²⁰⁶

Father Coudrin knew very well that these laws were not only in writing but were going to be enforced, a truly serious threat. Not long before, Father de la Clorivière and the Fathers of the Faith had been imprisoned. Yet all this did not discourage him. Had he not escaped greater dangers during the Reign of Terror? And, finally, his work was not his but God's. August 4, 1804, he wrote to Sister Gabriel de la Barre in an unusually confidential tone:

Feast of St. Dominic, who underwent the crucible of tribulations for the sake of a work like to that which makes all my joy even despite my being in exile. Yes, my dear daughter, I live only to strengthen, if necessary at a great price, the Work of the Heart of this Loving Master who showers me with His favors.²⁰⁷

204 Lestr. II, 100-191.

205 HL, VBP, 116-117. BP, 165.

206 Lestr. II, 219 ff.

207 BP, 192.

While in Paris, in April of that year, Father Coudrin found a field for his apostolate in the parish of St. Roque. His preaching resulted in conversions and brought many to him for spiritual direction. Thus he began to be known and esteemed by the clergy of the parish and the faithful of the district, which was that of the Tuileries. In the field of spiritual direction there began to flourish religious vocations.²⁰⁸

One of the first vocations in Paris was that of Miss Quemmerais. The Founder then summoned Mother Aymer, who arrived in the capital August 8 at the house of her new daughter, 393 rue de Argenteuil. The decisions were reached rapidly. At the end of the same month a house was acquired on la rue de la Place Vendôme, 34 (today la rue de la Paix), which in March of 1805 would be abandoned for moving to la rue de Picpus.²⁰⁹

In this same period, it became possible to carry out a project which was under study for a long time (1803). A priest of Laval, Father Morin, had learned of the foundation of Poitiers, and had asked for one for this city. On October 15, 1804, Mother Aymer set out, with five sisters, to found a residence there which was already functioning when she returned to the capital on the nineteenth of the same month.²¹⁰

July 3, 1805, sisters arrived at the residence of Pont-Lieu, near Le Mans, thus setting up the sixth establishment of the Congregation.²¹¹

During the octave of Corpus Christi of that year, June 14-21, Father Coudrin travelled to Sees to give a retreat, invited by the Bishop de Boiscollet, who had appointed him Vicar General without obligation of residence. This appointment was much more than an honorary distinction for the Founder, for it put him under the protection of a diocesan bishop. In Paris, everything depended on the confidence Bishop de Chabot had in him, and on a verbal approbation. The times permitted nothing else.²¹²

The Bishop of Sées desired that the community take charge of the major seminary of his diocese, and the Founder thought he should accede to his request. Thus it was that in January 1806 he travelled to this city accompanied by Hilarion Lucas, who was to teach theology. In the course of the year, in July, Father Antoine Astier, until then superior of Cahors, came to take charge as rector of the seminary.²¹³

In this period, a young man of twenty-nine presented himself before the bishop for ordination. He had felt called to this vocation after having miraculously escaped the guillotine during the Revolution. The bishop presented him to Father Coudrin who

208 HL, VBP, 117-118.

209 HL, Mem. C.I., 125-126.

210 HL, Mem. C.I., 128.

211 HL, *ibid.*, 130.

212 HL, Mem. 132. GB, Ecr.Div., 146.

213 HL, *ibid.*, 142.

received him and let him take his vows in March of the same year, without having made a long novice-ship. He was Father Hippolyte Launay, who, having been ordained priest in July, was appointed head of the community of Cahors, replacing Father Antoine.²¹⁴

At the end of spring of 1806, though we do not know the exact date, the image of Our Lady of Peace arrives at Picpus. It was an event which has repercussions on the community. The statue was a beautiful wooden carving of the French sixteenth century, a superb work of art, but, above all, with a background of popular veneration which developed in pre-Revolutionary Paris.

For the small clandestine community, which begins its expansion in the midst of so many dangers and fears, seeing the Founder entering the Main Residence carrying the image of Mary with an olive branch in her hand, and the child in her arms, who clutches the cross and plays with the world, appeared as one of those symbolic gestures in which is divined a providential intention greater than that which can be grasped at first sight. It was as if there had been heard, especially for this community, the words of Jesus in St. John: "I tell you all this that in me you may find peace. You will suffer in the world. But take courage! I have overcome the world!" (Jn 16:33).²¹⁵

In May 1807 the residence of the sisters in Sées began to function.²¹⁶

At the beginning of this year, the community counted in France twenty-five professed men, of whom twelve were priests and eleven brothers. There were fifty-eight sisters. Among the men four vocations, three of them priests, were lost. Two brothers had died. Among the sisters, twenty-one had died and one had left.²¹⁷

214 Father Hippolyte Launay: GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 159.

215 *A short history*: The statue first belonged to the family de Joyeuse. In 1587, Henri de Joyeuse, Count of Bouchage, governor of Anjou, of Maine, Touraine and Perche, became a widower and then a Capuchin. On entering the monastery on la rue St. Honoré, he brought the statue along with him, and the friars placed it shortly thereafter in an outdoor niche. Not long afterwards, it became the center of a pilgrimage for the pious faithful and the first archbishop of Paris, Gondi, suggested it be transferred into the interior of the church. This was done on September 24, 1651. In 1657, it was placed in an ad hoc chapel next to the church itself. The Nuncio of the Pope, in the presence of Louis XIV, installed it. On July 9, 1658, the miraculous cure of the monarch who was gravely ill was attributed to it.

The king came on August 16 to thank Mary for his cure. A large painting commemorates the event. It is in the splendid "ex voto" style and can be viewed at Versailles. Pope Alexander VII allowed the celebration of a feast to be held on July 9.

In 1790, when religious orders were suppressed, the provincial of the Capuchins entrusted the statue to a person who guaranteed it would be venerated, Miss Papin, who left it, after her death in 1802, to Madame Coipel, who died in 1806, after she had left it to Pauline Sophie d'Albert de Lynes, who also died in the early months of 1806. On her death, Madame Coipel's son reclaimed the statue, and gave it to his wife. She was a penitent of Father Coudrin, and decided to give him the statue, which he entrusted to Mother Aymer, and placed in the chapel of Picpus, where it is still preserved. On July 7, 1806, Cardinal de Belloy, Archbishop of Paris, transferred the indulgences to the new place of worship.

We cannot determine exactly the date of arrival in Picpus. The date given by Hilarion and repeated by Lestra, May 6, does not seem to agree with BM.357*7 (May 5, 1806) and BP, 267*1 (May 7, 1806), which show that efforts to obtain it were still going on at this time.

216 HL, Mem. C.I, 148.

217 L.E. - HL, *Tableau de Profès*.

2. *A Measure of Hope: 1809-1814*

The last five years of Napoleon's government saw the tension between the State and the Church increase. The smallness of the community and its well-kept secrecy put it beyond the reach of the tyrant's power, but the climate was not favorable for greater growth. At the end of 1808, education was centralized and monopolized by the State, under the control of the university. To be sure, this control was not exercised in actuality as rigorously as Bonaparte expected, but it meant difficulty for the life and growth of the primary schools for men and the secondary academies the community had in Paris, Cahors, Poitiers, Mende and Laval.²¹⁸

In mid-1808, Cardinal de Belloy, Archbishop of Paris, who was almost a centenarian, died, and Napoleon, as successor, had Cardinal Maury chosen as Vicar Capitular. Pius VII resisted the despot's impositions, denying canonical installation to the new bishops, who in order to take over their jurisdictions had to be appointed by the Cathedral Chapters. The Holy See never granted jurisdiction and kept contact with the diocese through the Vicar General, Bishop d'Astros.²¹⁹

In 1809 came the occupation of Rome and the excommunication of Napoleon; and the Pope was taken prisoner and carried off first to Grenoble, and then to Savoy. Isolated from his advisors, surrounded by spies, assaulted by the functionaries who accompanied him, entreated by prelates won over to the 22 oppressor's cause, Pius VII managed to resist and did not yield.²²⁰

Hilarion in his first *Mémoire* of December 7, 1814 says:

We soon learned to our most bitter sorrow that the august Pontiff who governs the Church so gloriously was torn away from his capital, front the center of Christianity, and brought to Savoy. This news, which afflicted us severely, indicated to us also a new obligation to be carried out, that of confirming the faithful in the faith in the midst of the tempest assailing the Church. This imposed on us the obligation of recalling to Christians the obedience they owed to the successor of Peter. The Lord inspired us with the fortitude necessary for carrying out this sacred duty and one so dear to our hearts. In catechisms, in particular instructions, in pulpits let us with special care develop the rights and prerogatives of the Roman Church. Let us unvoke the great principles of the hierarchy, and that powerful voice of tradition which brings us back to the chair of Peter. The correspondence of the Sovereign Pontiff with an impious government, the Bull of June 10, 1809, the briefs to the chapter of Florence and to Cardinal Maury were put under the eyes of our students who were destined to fill the vacancies of

218 J. Godechot. *Les institutions de la France sous la Révolution et l'Empire*, pp. 732 ff.

219 Dans. pp. 170 ff.

220 Dans, *ibid.*; Latr. II, 160 ff.

the sanctuary. The Superior General of our sisters ordered that in several of her residences the seven penitential psalms be recited throughout the day and night on behalf of the Church and her Head. This practice went on for three years. Many brothers took part in this good work. . .²²¹

This situation explains perhaps why, between 1806 and 1814, no new residence was founded. Particularly in Paris, relations with the authorities, civil as well as religious, were extremely delicate, and prudence advised doing only what was indispensable. Consequently, no new approbations or licenses were sought.²²²

In 1811 the National Council was convoked by the Emperor for the purpose of overcoming the Pope's resistance. But, seeing that, to the contrary, this was likely to become even stronger, he abolished the Council, and imprisoned Bishop de Boulogne, who said in his inaugural address: "Without the august chair of Rome, the episcopacy would only wither like a branch torn from the trunk."

Archbishop d'Aviau of Bordeaux was one of the leaders of the resistance to the Emperor and of fidelity to the Pope, and was always kept under guard.²²³

In these circumstances, Father Coudrin's invitation to the Archbishop of Bordeaux to preside over the distribution of prizes at the seminary of Picpus was bold and almost provocative.²²⁴

With 1812 came the campaign of Russia, and with it the beginning of the end of Bonaparte's domination. The community went on with its work tenaciously, without attracting attention. The police began to suspect, we do not know why, that our houses concealed a common design of restoring religious life, but there was neither time nor calm for terminating their investigations before the collapse of their power came about.²²⁵

On the state of mind of this period 1808-1812 in the community we have an unpublished paragraph by Sister Gabriel de la Barre:

So long as circumstance allowed the Good Mother to go occasionally to visit the residences, the crosses seemed light to her. But there came a time when she stopped travelling. Bonaparte had extended his conquests throughout almost all parts of Europe. He persecuted the Sovereign Pontiff; he hindered the performance of every ecclesiastical affair. The bishops, trembling under his domination, strove to preserve the faith in France and believed it hardly possible for religious orders to flourish again. Some of the separated members of the old orders hardly dared to

221 HL, Mem. R.I, ANN., 1963, p. 201.

222 BM, 424. "I would like to be able to calm you, but we are all in a critical situation. So we must pray more fervently and abandon ourselves to Providence." HL, Mem. C.I, 179; VBP, 143.

223 Dans, 169-180.

224 HL, VBP, 141.

225 The Prefect of Poitiers and those of other cities were put in charge of making investigations by the government, but this did not continue due to the changes in the internal and international political situation.

meet. All that we had to do was to pray, suffer and tranquilly await the moments God had marked for manifesting His Might. No one believed the Bourbons would return, but we greatly hoped so. The Good Mother had said when Bonaparte was still only First Consul that our lawful Princes will bring back religion and peace to France and the affairs of the Congregation will only progress on a grand scale in this period.²²⁶

In October 1812, the retreat from Russia changed the course of events. On October 18 of the following year, 1813, Napoleon lost the battle of Leipzig, and at the beginning of 1814, like a torrent flooding over various points on the frontier, the allied armies invaded France, and on March 31 entered Paris. It was the end. The Emperor abdicated April 11 at Fontainebleau. On May 3 Louis XVIII, Louis XVI's brother, entered the capital and the period called the "Restoration" began.²²⁷

3. *Eyes Turned to Rome: 1814-1817*

With the first legation sent by Louis XVIII to Pius VII, Father Hilarion Lucas left for Rome, July 7, 1814, and arrived in the Eternal City on the twenty-first. He went as theological consultant to Bishop Courtois de Pressigny of St. Malo, who had been recently appointed the King's representative before the Quirinal.²²⁸

The Founder gave him his blessing on leaving, but the trip was rather unforeseen, so that, without excluding the expectation that something might serve the cause of the Congregation, he did not give him any document accrediting his being sent. There was question perhaps of a providential opportunity, and all was left up to Providence.²²⁹

In Paris, Hilarion had known Father Fontana, General of the Barnabites, who had shown interest in the nascent congregation and had visited it. He was the one who put Hilarion in contact with Cardinal Brancadoro, who, in turn, obtained for him a private audience with the Pope, August 4, at 8 p.m. The interview was most cordial. Upon Hilarion's explanation of the Congregation, the Pope told him to put it all in writing, and gave him his blessing for the whole community and its superiors. Hardly had he returned to the embassy in St. Louis of France where he was staying when Hilarion picked up his pen and wrote Father Coudrin asking for instructions. According to him, he had spoken to no one save the Pope about the matter. In the embassy, nothing was suspected about these activities until the approbation of the Congregation.²³⁰

226 GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 191.

227 Lovie-Palluel-Guillard, *L'Episode Napoléonien*, pp. 130 ff.

228 HL, *Mem. C.I.*, 196.

229 HL, *Mem. C.I.*, 195.

230 HL, *ibid.*, 197.

The greatest hope, not only of Hilarion himself but also of the community, came from a prophecy which Mother Aymer had made in 1801. Sister Gabriel put it in her *Mémoire* in 1802:

Our Lord promised her (the Good Mother) since then that we would be approved by the Pope, that the Blessed Virgin would make him do that. She objected to Him that we were almost nothing, and that a much more imposing establishment which must outrival us had as protector the bishop of St. Malo. Then Our Lord answered her: “My Mother’s protection is worth much more than that of the Bishop of St. Malo. . . .”²³¹

The more imposing institution to which Mother Aymer refers is none other than that founded by Father de Cloriviere, under the protection in 1801 of the same Courtois de Pressigny. Faith was had in these revelations and from this faith was born a boldness unhindered by any difficulties.

As was customary, the Founder’s reply was not prompt, and Hilarion decided to take advantage of the delay to obtain a rescript of indulgences for the community, which he presented as a simple “confraternity.” The rescript was given dated September 4, and granted indulgences for First Fridays, First Saturdays, and a good number of feasts of the liturgical year.²³²

Some days later, he received a letter from Father Coudrin, sent from Paris August 29, 1814, which began with these words:

How pleased I am with the steps you have taken, my dear friend, and with the reply the Holy See has deigned to give you!

Toward the end he says:

Find out, then, whether or not an approbation, independently of royal approbation, will be given, although we hope very much His Majesty will give his sanction.²³³

Hilarion waited for nothing else to begin a series of conferences with Father Fontana. Out of these conferences came a line of procedure. The Congregation must first be approved by the Holy See, and afterwards by the King. The General of the Barnabites advised Hilarion to present a “report” expounding the purpose of the Congregation and its methods.²³⁴

On November 18, 1814, he received the petition from Father Coudrin dated October 25 in Paris and signed by him and by Mother Aymer, together with a recommendation from Bishop de Chabot. Nine days later, November 27, Lucas was received by Pius VII

²³¹ GB, Mem. 73.

²³² HL, Mem. C.I, 199.

²³³ BP, 473.

²³⁴ HL, Mem. C.I, 200.

in a private audience. The Pope sent the petition to Bishop Morozzo, secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, who was the one qualified to make the decision. On the next day, Hilarion found Bishop Morozzo well-disposed, 37 and learned that Cardinal Oppizzoni would keep him informed.²³⁵

November 28 was the starting-off point for a new phase of activities. There were frequent conferences with Cardinal Oppizzoni, the composing of three “reports”: the first, of December 7, 1814, had the objective of showing that the Institute had already undergone a long testing period, more than twenty years of clandestine existence; the two later ones, of December 26, 1814 and January 24, 1815, endeavored to reply to the difficulties Cardinal Oppizzoni had brought out in the course of conversations.²³⁶

After November 1814, Hilarion Lucas had written the Founder asking for a project of Constitutions to present, in accord with what he had proposed, not only to Father Fontana, but also to Cardinal Oppizzoni. On December 29 of that year, Father Coudrin wrote to him:²³⁷

You know how difficult it is to do all you ask of me. It would be much simpler that you had sent me a model, because busy as I am and in the absence of my secretary (Father Hilarion himself) how could I in so short a time foresee, write and organize all you mention in your two little simple pages, and duplicates! Keep in mind that our good King has granted nothing to anyone, and though he wishes and loves what is good with all his might, it is not possible for him to do it... However, I will do whatever I can, but it cannot be done following the old form... I do not have the courage to present a project I see cannot be achieved right away. Religion is without recourse, without support.... However, I am afire with the desire to see your project succeed; I find it in our hearts, but nowhere else.²³⁸

Father Hilarion must have received the letter in mid-January 1815, and without intending anything other than a brief stimulus “encouragement,” composed his third “report of the twenty-fourth of the same month. As early as December 18, 1814, however, he had obtained a second brief of indulgences, thanks to Cardinal Galletti’s intercession.²³⁹

In summary, the zealous secretary expanded his relations each day at the Curia and showed a remarkable ability in conducting negotiations. This was not easy, because he had to keep all these endeavors hidden from the ambassador who not so long before that had forbidden Father de Bonald, who lived as did Lucas at St. Louis of France, to have anything to do with the approbation of a religious institute of Paris which had been recommended to him.²⁴⁰

235 *Ibid.*, 201.

236 *Ibid.*, 202.

237 HL, Letter of November 30, 1814, to the Good Father. Cf. PAC, 2542.

238 BP, 479.

239 HL, Mem. R.III, ANN., 1963, p. 210.

240 HL, Mem. C.I, 216.

Hilarion understood that to ask people to keep a secret was to make his movements mysterious, and by that very fact expose them to a curiosity which might end up with making them known. Consequently, he asked no one to be silent, and his prudence was shown in not speaking about the affair except to indispensable persons and ones in high posts of responsibility.²⁴¹

All was going along relatively well, when in April 1815 Napoleon disembarked in Jean Gulf, and arrived on the twentieth at the Tuileries. They were the so-called “Hundred Days,” which ended with the battle of Waterloo June 16, and the second abdication of Napoleon the twenty-second of that month, again at Fontainebleau. On July 8, Louis XVIII returned to Paris.²⁴²

During the “Hundred Days,” the Pope being threatened, abandoned the Eternal City, the Curia for the most part dispersed, and Cardinal Oppizzoni returned to his diocese of Bologna.²⁴³

At the end of July, Hilarion resumed relations with the Founder, demanding Constitutions, because it seemed to be that this was the decisive issue for carrying on his conferences at the Curia. He got ready to get everything moving, when on July 27 he broke his leg and had to stay in bed until November.²⁴⁴

Still convalescing, Hilarion received the letter of October 18 from Father Coudrin which said:

How much I would like to be able to send you what you asked for our negotiations! But it will be long before it will be possible, my dear friend, to do anything stable in France. There has been no progress in matters of religion. Everything is at a standstill, is exasperating, and gradually fades away. If the agreements with the Court of Rome are deferred further, I do not know what will be the result.²⁴⁵

Apparently the procurator was discouraged for a while, because he writes in his reports: “Brother Hilarion has done nothing to have another informant appointed, since he does not think there is any hope of success.” On November 21, perhaps by chance, he met Cardinal Scotti, who informed him that Bishop Morozzo had handed over to him the entire file on the process of approbation. The cardinal let him know he was very favorable, but at the same time made it very clear that Constitutions were required for a successful outcome.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 223, 231.

²⁴³ Leflon, *op. cit.*, pp. 295 ff.

²⁴⁴ HL, Mem. C.I., 231.

²⁴⁵ BP, 491b.

²⁴⁶ HL, Mem. C. first ed. He says in the definitive edition: Father Hilarion did not make great efforts to obtain the appointment of another cardinal advocate, since he did not expect there would likely be a successful outcome of our affairs in the actual situation.”

On December 13, 1815, Hilarion went to the hearing requested by Cardinal Scotti, with the sole intent of obtaining a “brief of encouragement.” A document of this kind, not only would mean encouragement for religious, but also a guarantee for bishops who would have less difficulty in ceding vocations to an institute recommended by the Holy See. Cardinal Scotti’s reply was decisive. The constitutional petition must be considered as a stimulus (“encouragement”) and a testimony of the Pope’s interest in the community. Constitutions had to be written and Hilarion decided to do so, following the suggestions of Father Coudrin.²⁴⁷ He says in the life of Father Coudrin. He wrote after the Founder’s death:

Some articles had been put in writing, but all this did not make a body of rules which I could present for getting the sanction of the Holy See. Fortunately for more than fifteen years I had been almost always near the Founder. And due to my post, I was frequently in communication with the Foundress. I was well acquainted with their views, or rather the views God inspired them with. I had only need of putting in writing what I had heard them say, what was practiced in our houses after the birth of the Institute. So I contented myself with indicating the main points and sending the rest to the two General Chapters which were to meet in 1819 and 1824. However, fearful of making mistakes, I sent my work to our Very Reverend Father and to Mother Henriette. This was a wise precaution. They made some changes of quite some importance, and the draft of our rules, signed by both, came to me at Rome at the beginning of 1816.²⁴⁸

Through the reports, we know he received the Constitutions on April 16. On the nineteenth of the same month, they were in the hands of Cardinal Scotti.

On May 7, the cardinal requested the procurator to make a Latin translation of the Constitutions, which on the twenty-fourth was presented to him along with a fourth “report.”²⁴⁹

Meanwhile, at the embassy the Bishop of St. Malo’s appointment would soon expire. Hilarion, on April 25, had written the Founder asking his advice as to whether he should stay in Rome or return to Paris with the ambassador. Father Coudrin answered him May 13, telling him to return. It must have been hard for our procurator to abandon conducting the negotiations when, after many preliminaries, they were finally beginning to open up the path to the definitive approbation of the Congregation.²⁵⁰

June 7 there was held the first “Congress” of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars at which there was treated the question of the approbation of our Congregation.

247 HL, *ibid.*, 232.

248 HL, VBP, 168. GB, Ecr.Div., 243.

249 HL, Mem. C.I, 234; Mem. R.IV, ANN., 1963, p. 217.

250 HL, Mem. C.I, 235.

Cardinal Scotti presented his report.²⁵¹

Hilarion on the same day visited Cardinal Scotti, and between the eleventh and the twelfth saw also Bishop Morozzo and Cardinals Arezzo, Duganni and Malvasia. Thus he learned what had happened at the Congress. Some of the members had brought up various difficulties, either on account of the lack of prior royal approval; or due to the very title of the Congregation: “. . . of the Sacred Hearts,” who felt it inappropriate; or due to the simple fact of engaging themselves in approving new congregations before having restored old ones suppressed by the Revolution. For his part, Cardinal Maury could not get over his surprise on receiving the first notice of a foundation of some importance, which for more than ten years flourished in his former diocese, without having been informed about it. Hilarion knew that the decision of the Congress had been as follows: the naming of a commission for examining the Constitutions, and the requirement that they be perfected.

On June 10, the procurator was received for the last time by Pius VII, who insisted on the importance of the missions.²⁵²

Hilarion was very well aware that the final thing he had to do was to find some trustworthy person in Rome, one who would accept the post of procurator once he returned to France. At that time Father Vidal, a priest who had left the country in the period of the exile of the “noncompliant” and who had been the teacher of the infante of Parma, was chaplain of St. Louis of France. Knowing the difficulties the procurator was having, he offered to take care of the Congregation’s interests himself. On June 14, Hilarion handed over to him written instructions and all necessary documents. Six days later, the twentieth to be exact, he took the stagecoach back to Paris.²⁵³

Father Vidal was a pious and self-denying priest, but there is no doubt he was not as talented as Hilarion. At any rate, he could not be expected to have the knowledge of the history of the community such as Father Lucas had. It is too bad that the Founder called Hilarion back, precisely when the real negotiations began, for perhaps his presence might have prevented many inconveniences. Perhaps Father Coudrin thought the negotiations would still go on for years and, although there are no indications of this, the financial costs must have been heavy. Once the commission of the Bishop of St. Malo had terminated, the community would have had to pay for the procurator’s staying in Rome which would have cost a lot, in fact, it is likely that it seemed too much.²⁵⁴

251 *Ibid.*, 236.

252 *Ibid.*, 237-238.

253 *Ibid.*, 237.

254 *Ibid.*, 237.

On August 23, 1816, the second “Congress” of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars was held. Cardinal Maury “perorated for an hour” –to use Hilarion’s expression–suggesting on the basis of some idea or other he had of the life of a community with which he was unacquainted, a thousand changes. He suggested that the Rule of St. Benedict be dropped in order to take as a foundation that of St. Vincent de Paul.²⁵⁵

On August 27, it was decided to consult the Capitular Vicar of Paris. That same day Father Vidal wrote Father Coudrin. The thirtieth of the same month Cardinals Scotti and Duganni also wrote him, and on September 4, Bishop Cuneo wrote, all insisting on the urgency of obtaining the Vicar of Paris’ report. It is to be noted that the Holy See recognized only Bishop d’Astros. So, to him were presented the Constitutions and a report on the Congregation, September 29. On October 1, 1816, the report was ready, and when Hilarion brought it to the archbishopric to have a seal put on it, although they acknowledged the Vicar’s signature, they did not want to put the seal on it unless he showed them the Constitutions. He could do nothing else but leave without the seal.²⁵⁶

This episode is an eloquent revelation of the kind of relations existing between the residence of Picpus and the Gallican trend of the Curia of Paris, most likely in contact with Cardinal Maury. Of course, we do not know everything from the documents, but we do know that it was symptomatic of a great tension and mutual distrust which would make possible later the outburst resulting from the case of “Lemercier,” pastor of Sainte Marguerite.²⁵⁷

Hilarion informed Rome of what had happened in the Arch-bishopric of Paris. His letters to Father Vidal, Cardinal Scotti, Father Fontana, who was made a cardinal March 8, of that year, and to Bishop Sala are of October 1 On the next day, October 2, Father Coudrin also wrote to Cardinal Scotti. We do not know the text of this letter, but it must have contained a report on what happened at the Archbishopric of Paris.²⁵⁸

Meanwhile, some other letters arrived from Rome. It was always Cardinal Maury who presented the most problems and who held on to his stand that there must first be obtained the King’s approval.

On December 3, a letter from Cardinal Scotti was received in Picpus, signed November 15 in Rome. Later another from Cardinal Duganni, signed the twenty-third of the same month, in which were expressed some favorable prospects of approval, but not soon.²⁵⁹

255 *Ibid.*, 239-240.

256 *Ibid.*, 240.

257 *Ibid.*, 241.

258 *Ibid.*, 241.

259 *Ibid.*, 242, 255.

Under these circumstances the Founder wrote his two records of December 6, 1816, under the title of “Zealots,” and of December 27, under the title “Adorers.” Meanwhile in Rome, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars had already given, December 20, the decree of final approbation, which Pius VII confirmed January 10, 1817.²⁶⁰

The decree reached Father Coudrin only on March 24. On April 14, he communicated it to the whole community in an official letter. The same day he sent an exposition to the Chief Chaplain of France, Monsignor de Taleyrand-Prigord, to find out how to open the process of civil approval. By May 9, he had the Chief Chaplain’s reply, in which he assured him it would be very easy to obtain the approval.²⁶¹ He said:

You already enjoy the consolation, Sir, of having received from the Holy Father his approbation of this nascent Institute. I have no doubt that you will also get that of the civil authority as soon as you ask for it. Not only do I see nothing against it, but it seems to me that it will eagerly welcome this new resource presented it, for strengthening good morals and peace by faith and religion. I would be happy if I could contribute to the prosperity of your company. . . .²⁶²

Hilarion who in his *Mémoires* informs us about these negotiations presents us with a picture of the serious difficulties involved. According to an ordinance of the King of September 1816, it was the Chief Chaplain who must present the Rules of Congregations for royal sanction but he was not the one who was to give this approval. It had to be discussed in the Council of State, and possibly sent also to the Chambers. In all these cases, it was pretty certain that the opinions would not have been favorable to us, since ours is a community which had itself approved by the Holy See before the State approved of it. The Chief Chaplain’s letter was, consequently, ingenuously optimistic, and not quite realistic. That was why, despite Monsignor Taleyrand’s words, Father Coudrin dropped the idea of initiating negotiations for obtaining civil approval of the Congregation.²⁶³

The daily life of the houses of the community, eight in number in January 1817, had passed through a succession of contentment and of fear since the fall of Napoleon. Everyone expected that under the restoration of the Bourbons there would be a regime of justice for the Church, at least of respect for its independence, though not for recuperation of its old privileges, lost, in the eyes of the majority, irreversibly. But the end of tyranny was at the high cost of an invasion of France by hostile armies, with all the consequences of a military defeat: confusion in the social order, and an acute crisis in the economic order. A year after Louis XVIII entered Paris, the return of Napoleon and the famous

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 256. *Deux mémoires*, BP, ANN., 1963, pp. 220-226.

²⁶¹ HL, Mem. C.I, 257-258 ff.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 266, note 2.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 266.

“Hundred Days” had brought about an outbreak of violence such as had not been seen in France since before 1800.²⁶⁴

The Founder wrote to Rome in August 1815:

All of Loire to the north is pillaged by the enraged French army . . . the most culpable with impunity. They still shout beneath the windows of the Tuileries: “Long live the Emperor!” Thousands of allied troops to whom we owe the return of our *good* King, but who etc. There is no money, left in the treasury. The department of the Seine is the only one which pays anything, and everywhere else the allies receive and carry off immense contributions. . . . Everybody is in consternation and almost despair. . . . I know quite well that the French have committed many wrongs in Prussia, etc. . . . but the reprisals are terrible, my friend. . . . The hydra has swallowed everything in a hundred days, and now it is carrying off the rest. . . . The calamity is at its peak. . . . We are not sure our nation will not be divided. *Never did the Revolution of 1793 become as demoralized as that of 1815.*²⁶⁵

Once this avalanche was over, everything gradually came back again to order and calm, although the parliamentary monarchy was governing anxiously, and the ideas of the Revolution were still alive.

In these last years of the life of the “Diocesan Congregation,” the community followed a normal rhythm, without as yet showing an extraordinary progress, although this was not so in the case of the foundation of the residence of Barlat on July 4, 1815.²⁶⁶

In January 1817, in the brothers’ branch there were fifty-seven professed, sixteen members had died since its origin, and eleven had left. The total number of professions had been, then, some eighty-four.

On the same date, the sisters were approximately 186. Some sixty-four had died since the origin, four had left. We have no data about a dozen. The total of professions had reached 254.²⁶⁷

C. THIRD PERIOD: 1817-1826

This third period of the life of the community contemporaneous with the Founder, extends from the period of the Roman approbation, in January 1817, to that of the promulgation of the new Constitutions, in 1826. Although it is relatively a shorter period than the other three periods –only nine years– it was quite rich in important happenings. These were the crisis in relations with the Archiepiscopal Curia of Paris, the first two

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 245-246.

²⁶⁵ BP, 488.

²⁶⁶ HL, Mem. C.I, 229.

²⁶⁷ LE.

General Chapters in the history of the Congregation, 1819 and 1824, which finished drawing up the Constitutions, the missions of Troyes, the Founder's journey to Rome in 1825, which was crowned by the Roman approbation and promulgation of the new Constitutions in 1826.

It is not to be forgotten that all this happened during the restoration of the Bourbons, starting out with the entrance of Louis XVIII into Paris May 3, 1814, and terminating August 3, 1830, with the abdication of Charles X and of the Dauphin.

It is not easy to depict in a few lines the characteristic traits of this extremely complex period. On the political and governmental plane, there was in effect an intent to return to the old regime, of alliance of "throne and altar," and of domination by the clergy. There is no doubt that these machinations were stupid and even today seem to us ridiculous, since they show an ignorance of the irreversible social evolution which had been brought about in France during the twenty years of revolution and Napoleonic domination. It was this mentality that gave rise to events such as the consecration of Charles X, and the laws against sacrilege, all of which could but irritate the society of the time and provoke a reaction by the anticlericals, and advance the current of secularization of the State and of the society, which was to take over in July 1830.²⁶⁸

The ecclesiastical hierarchy which directed the maneuver was inspired by Gallicanism. In a certain sense, a Gallicanism that was "moderate," in that it allowed itself to be influenced by the prestige and popularity of Pius VII who had given an example of dignity and evangelical meekness throughout the Calvary imposed on him by Bonaparte.²⁶⁹

1. *The Great Disillusionment: 1817-1820*

The approbation by Rome in January 1817 was a great accomplishment for the Congregation. Recognition on the part of the Supreme Authority of the Church enabled it to hope in the future for greater freedom in its daily life and in the exercise of the ministry, including fewer complications in the administration of properties, and thereby in the financing of works, so laboriously organized in the eight houses which had been founded.²⁷⁰

Above all, now that relations of the Church with the State seemed to be tending to what in the mentality of that era was looked on as a "normalization," there were many illusions in various areas of the community, and the Founders themselves thought at first

²⁶⁸ Dans, pp. 183-201.

²⁶⁹ Dans, p. 186.

²⁷⁰ HL, Mem. C.I., 266; BP, 533.

that a phase was opening up in which everything would be easier. But it was not so, and the three years following the approbation were years of disillusionment.²⁷¹

The objection raised by Cardinal Maury during the negotiations in Rome that, according to Gallican tradition, the bishops of France did not recognize the decrees of the Roman Congregations and therefore would not recognize the decree of approbation of the Congregation led to the belief that a Bull would be required. So negotiations were carried on which ended with the issuance of the Bull *Pastor Aeternus*, of November 17, 1817. Yet as a matter of fact the Bull settled nothing on the civil plane, for the French government did not acknowledge documents unless granted to institutes previously approved by it, and if they were not, they could not be printed or published. This was the procedure, and the Archbishop of Paris, to whom the Bull was sent with the recommendation that it be published, could not attempt to do so without a crisis, a conflict with the government of “his most Christian Majesty.” He was asked to do so precisely at the moment in which such matters were under discussion on the diplomatic level, and the passage of a law sanctioning the French viewpoint was held up by understandable frictions in the Parliament.²⁷²

This was the first but not the only nor the hardest disillusionment. Shortly before July 16, 1817, Father Dubois died. He was the pastor of Sainte Marguerite, the parish in which was located the residence of Picpus, in Paris. Starting out from the founding of this residence in 1805, there had never been the slightest friction or conflict with the parish. Bishop de Chabot had obtained from the then Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de Belloy, an “exemption” from parochial jurisdiction. Because of the difficulties of the time the exemption had been given verbally, but this had sufficed. Later, on April 28, 1810, Father Lejeas, Capitulary Vicar General, confirmed in writing the dispensation from having to make Easter Communion in the parish, and afterwards Father d’Epinasse, around 1812-1813, did so verbally.²⁷³

This exemption was justified, and furthermore readily granted in all the dioceses of France in which the Congregation had residences. It was also promoted in Paris because of the distance, at least two kilometers, which separated the residence from the parish, and because of the number of the members of the community. The increase, not only in the number of sisters, but also of the brothers in the school and seminary, turned any activity into a spectacular and troublesome ceremony, to the point of constituting in itself

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² Father Marie-Bernard Lavanant, ss.cc., *Valeur et efficacité de la Bulle Pastor Aeternus*, ANN., 1967, pp. 149-240.

²⁷³ BM, 564. HL, Mem. C.I, 338.

a reason for avoiding it. Without counting the novitiate nor the priests and brothers, in 1815 there were already in Picpus seventy-nine secondary boarders, fifteen students of philosophy, and thirty of theology, which amounted to about 150 persons. The sisters' residence held many more.²⁷⁴

Lestra assumes, based upon certain indications, that around Father Coudrin “everyone took things too seriously” and “were excited.” There may be some truth in this, but it seems far from being an adequate explanation of the crisis. At any rate, if there was emotion around Picpus, it was present also in the tactics of the parish and of the Archiepiscopal Curia which supported the pastor without any concession to Picpus.²⁷⁵

The relations of Father Lemercier, the pastor who was newly appointed at the end of November 1817, with Father Coudrin were from the start tense and estranged, perhaps on the part of both. Lestra did not inquire into this, and was content to assert that the pastor was within his rights; that the Archbishop treated him with paternal kindness, and that the complete explanation of the difficulty lay in the inexplicable obstinacy of Father Coudrin and those around him.²⁷⁶

It seems that the real historical problem is other than this. It is necessary to find the reason why the Curia of Paris changed its policy in regard to the Residence of Picpus, for since 1805, it had followed a policy of “trust.” It does not seem enough to say that the new pastor, Father Lemercier, was a canonist and jealous of his rights, and that Father Coudrin was stubborn, and Bull in hand, refused to yield an inch to his adversary. The real conflict was not between the Residence of Picpus and the Parish of Sainte Marguerite, but between the Residence of Picpus and the Archiepiscopal Curia of Paris, with the pastor's pretensions providing the cover-up.

To find the explanation of this situation it seems indispensable to recall the relations of the Residence with the Curia in the times of Cardinal Maury, which were relatively recent, and the cardinal's attitude in Rome during the process of approbation. Particularly in 1811, when Bishop d'Astros, the Vicar General acknowledged by Rome, proclaimed the Papal Briefs to the Chapter of Florence and to Cardinal Maury –for which he was imprisoned in Vincennes– the attitude of the Residence had been bold and determined. As Hilarion recalls, the Papal Brief, which was a condemnation of Cardinal Maury and of the conduct of the Emperor toward the Church, was shown to the seminarians and duly commented on with a strong “ultramontane” spirit.²⁷⁷

274 BP, 491.

275 Lestr. II., pp. 480 ff.

276 *Ibid.*

277 Dans, p. 169 ff.; Lestr. II., 131 ff., 216 ff.

Hilarion's text is clear:

Cardinal Maury was acquainted with our establishment in Picpus. He was not unaware that we did not want to have any relations with him in spiritual matters in the diocese of Paris. In a conversation he had with our Very Reverend Father at the Archbishop's palace to which he had been summoned, he expressed with extreme vehemence his feelings about Bishop d'Astros and the Reverend Father Marie-Joseph stoutly defended this highly regarded ecclesiastic, whom he held in great esteem. Further, we had among our boarders a protégé of the Cardinal, and this young man was taking a course in theology. The professor devoted a part of his lectures to prove the invalidity of the powers conferred by the Chapters on the "elected" bishops. However, we experienced no persecution on this subject. I may add that a priest of the Congregation often openly attacked in the theses of the Faculty of Theology, the Gallican liberties which were made use of during this period for attacking the privileges of the Holy Roman Church. He also proved the Pope's authority over the institution of the bishops, and these procedures repeated time after time caused no harm to the residence of Picpus.²⁷⁸

This respect for the independence of Picpus, which furthermore was so loyally defended by Father Coudrin, is truly surprising. It means it was esteemed despite the different stand it took. What seems to have irritated Cardinal Maury himself and his partisans of the Curia of Paris is that it was possible to hide from him, so successfully and completely, the religious life which was carried on for so many years in the house. His astonishment in April 1816, when the news fell out of the clouds in Rome, must have had its repercussions on his friends in Paris.²⁷⁹

But perhaps the decisive factor in the conduct of the Curia was the respect all had for Bishop de Chabot, who, although taking a position very much opposed to that of the clergy submissive to Napoleon, always acted with great discretion. And Bishop de Chabot lived at Picpus and identified himself with its cause.²⁸⁰

Things had reached this point when the pastor of Sainte Marguerite died, and Father Lemercier was appointed to replace him. Perhaps the first indication given by the new pastor of his attitude was a letter sent to Father Coudrin. This letter has been lost but Father Coudrin refers to it in a note sent to Mother Aymer in October 1817. It says:

Father Lemercier has just sent me an insidious and quite political letter. He gives a glimpse of everything he would demand.²⁸¹

278 HL, Mem. C.I, 173.

279 *Ibid.*, 236.

280 There is no doubt this presence of Bishop de Chabot, in addition to the very small size of the community in the early days, contributed to secure its independence. Once the bishop was gone and the community increased its work, the situation was different.

281 SP, 538.

Then there was an interview, in January 1818, shortly after Father Lemerrier took over the parish. It was an expounding on the part of the pastor of all his requirements for observing the present canons: Paschal Communion and First Communions administered in the parish and by the pastor, the same for presiding over burials. Furthermore, he asked for seminarians to teach catechism in the parish. The tone of the conversation was animated, Speaking of Father Lemerrier, Hilarion says: “He was very vivacious.” Father Coudrin replied that he did not intend to renounce the privilege the residence had enjoyed since its founding, more than twelve years ago. But he did let him have four seminarians to teach catechism.²⁸²

If Father Lemerrier was very sure of his rights, and very unappreciative of the saying “*summum jus, summa injuria*,” especially in the case of Picpus, Father Coudrin was no less sure of the privileges he possessed. He had not obtained them from the benevolence of the former pastor, but from Cardinal de Belloy, through the intercession of Bishop de Chabot. So long as the Archepiscopal Curia did not withdraw them, he would continue using them. Easter Communion was given in 1818 at Picpus as every year.²⁸³

Lemerrier did not therefore renounce his rights. Perhaps he dreamed of “playing the role of bishop,” as did certain pastors of the old regime, and hoped to give to the worship of his parish the splendor of many clergy and unlimited assistance. On March 2, 1819, as Easter approached, which fell that year on April 11, Bishop de Chabot renewed his testimony that the community was “exempt,” and did so this time in writing:

I certify that the students of Father Coudrin and the boarding students of Mother Aymer, my niece, were authorized by me in 1805, to make their First Communion and to receive their Easter Communion at the oratory of Picpus,- by virtue of the powers I received from the late Cardinal de Belloy, Archbishop of Paris. In testimony whereof I have delivered the present certificate. Paris, March 2, 1819. J.B. ex-Bishop of Mende.²⁸⁴

On April 28, after a brief illness, Bishop de Chabot died.²⁸⁵

Not long before, April 2, two letters had arrived from Lemerrier, insisting on the “obligation” that the students of Picpus had as Christian faithful of the parish to attend Sainte Marguerite. In the one addressed to Mother Aymer, there are these words which are not without a certain pontifical fury:

Resistance to the voice of your pastor cannot impose silence on him. My conscience obliges me to trouble yours. . . .

282 ML. Mem. C.I., 338.

283 *Ibid.*

284 Plongeron, *La vie quotidienne du clergé français du XVIIIe siècle*, p. 135. BP, 573.

285 HL, Mem. C.I., 184.

But at Picpus nobody moved, and Easter Communion was received at home as usual.²⁸⁶

For the vespers of Corpus Christi, which fell on June 10, Lemer cier planned a new offensive. This time he had a letter sent by the Vicars, dated June 2, and he sent it to Picpus with one of his own of June 4. The secretary, Father Achard, sent it in the name of the Vicars:

I am charged by the Capitulary Vicars to let you know of their decision relative to the pretensions of Father Coudrin. It holds that no other cross is to appear in the procession than that of the parish.²⁸⁷

In his letter, the pastor of Sainte Marguerite, among other things, said:

Allow me, Sir, to take advantage of this circumstance to tell you how much I regret that there is not that harmony between us which I sincerely desire to see established. You want it, and I do too. Now more than ever we must unite to bring it about. I have learned, Sir, that you had reason to complain about one of our priests, and I have handled it justly, and I hope that it will not happen again. I know that I too have been charged with making certain remarks. I formally declare that I have nothing to be ashamed of, and that in the various discussions which could have taken place over our respective pretensions, I said nothing uncharitable, not even anything discourteous. Weigh, Sir, in your wisdom the inconvenience which the total absence of your students would bring about. Will there not come about a kind of scandal which will sadden pious souls and make the impious gloat. . . . I must tell you how I praise the zeal shown by the young ecclesiastics you send to help us in our teaching of catechism. This developed real talents. The analysis they have made of my instructions promises auspicious dispositions for the ministry of the word for which insensibly the necessity of explaining the most essential truths forms them.²⁸⁸

The reply was short and simple. Since the pastor declared that the agreement made with the former pastor was over, he would make use of the right to stay home. Hilarion observes: "Father Lemer cier was very annoyed at the refusal, and soon his pretensions led him to fine blameworthy the most simple things." Actually, he interpreted as an offense that, on the octave of Corpus Christi, when the parish procession came to Picpus, it was not let enter the chapel, and an altar was raised in the patio of the entrance. The real reason for this was that the chapel was so small that it hardly held the sisters of the community. Besides, this had always been the case previously.²⁸⁹

At this time, the Founder stopped sending catechists to the parish because, in his

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 340.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 341.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, note 2.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 342.

view, the experience had turned out negative. This offended the pastor very much, and he had recourse to the Vicars. They, however, did not want to compromise themselves, and so left it up to the future bishop who was still to be nominated.²⁹⁰

On October 8, 1819, Bishop de Talleyrand-Périgord took over the See of Paris and Father Coudrin set out to contact him the first days. He asked insistently for an audience which was always denied him with the excuse that the bishop was “overburdened.” Now the conflict was to pass from the parish to the Archbishop Curia.²⁹¹

A week later, Father Lemercier sent a “report” to the archbishop, expounding his difficulties with Father Coudrin, “director of a boarding school situated on la rue Picpus, now a so-called seminary.” He accuses the Founder of having criticized the clergy of the parish and -in an interview with him in January 1818- of insinuating that he alone did anything good in this territory. He made this visit as pastor, after having waited in vain for him to visit him. During this visit he found Father Coudrin relatively courteous, yet whenever an important point was reached, he replied: “I’ll consider it.”

Coming later to the most decisive part of the exposition, he says:

Let us establish the facts:

Father Coudrin refused in 1818 and 1819 to send his students to carry out at the parish their paschal obligation. Father Coudrin administers to the sick without informing me. Father Coudrin administers to them, including people outside the residence, without letting me know in time so that someone may come. As witness to this: an administration given in the interval between the notice given and the arrival of the parish priest. The danger passed, is it to be assumed that a priest was denied, knowing that he received viaticum after having received extreme unction, as is said, at the point of death.

Later on he continues with his pretensions:

I conclude with this:

- 1st The boys’ boarding school, as that of the girls who are under Father Coudrin’s direction, are to be required, as all other residents of the house, to make their Easter duties at the parish, the alleged exemption in virtue of a Bull, *even if it is as valid as he contends, though according to our principles it is not*, cannot be applied to subjects outside the so-called Congregation.
- 2nd Father Coudrin is to call the pastor for administering to the sick of both sexes.
- 3rd Should these sick persons die, they are to be brought to the church, unless there should be an understanding about rights.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 343.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 344, 361.

- 4th Father Coudrin should be prohibited from performing any public office, at least during the hours assigned to the officials of the parish; he should abstain from sermons, collections, receiving alms.
- 5th He should be forbidden all benedictions, all novenas and all ceremonies tending to draw parishioners away from their church, still less to seek to attract them to his church by *alleged miracles*.
- 6th He is not to be permitted, in order to get higher stipends, to give any particular instruction at low Masses held in the chapel.
- 7th When corpses are brought -under the authorization of the government- to the cemetery of Picpus, the corpses are to be received by the pastor and the clergy of the parish.
- 8th Father Coudrin is to send every Sunday and holy day a certain number of his students to take part in our ceremonies and to prepare them thus for the functions they will perform one day.
- 9th Father Coudrin is to send his students to join in the processions of the Blessed Sacrament, and, in the case when the itinerary should require a station in his house, the procession is to be received in an appropriate manner, without his objecting to receive it in the chapel rather than in the patio.
- 10th Father Coudrin is to be invited to send us students for elementary as well as advanced catechetics.
- 11th Father Coudrin is to be let know that the right acquisition of a piece of property by a private person does not place him under the exemption by the acquisition itself. Father Coudrin, who owns a lot of properties, will soon own the whole left side of La Rue Picpus. And negotiations are under way for acquiring the residence in which the Archbishop of Tours lived.
- 12th In the elementary schools which are set up, it is recommended and required that the children attend the catechism classes of the parish.

These, Monsignor, are the difficulties which have come up between Father Coudrin and the pastor and councilors of the parish of Sainte Marguerite, about which Your Eminence would do well to make a decision . . . etc. ...²⁹²

This report is dated November 15, 1819.

The document does not seem to come from a very calm judgment. The tone is bitter, contemptuous, often hurting. At any rate, it shows that the pastor had not the least trust in Father Coudrin, whom he does not hesitate to present as a priest rebellious toward his “pastor” (that is, the priest in charge of Sainte Marguerite), rich and interested in piling up money, who gives a sermon at Mass in order to increase the stipend, who invents miracles to attract the faithful to his chapel. He runs a “boardinghouse” which he calls a “seminary,” over which the pastor wants to assert his authority and guarantee the

²⁹² *Ibid.*, note 1. Lestra. II, pp. 451 ff. , 480 ff.

formation. In no paragraph is there the least acknowledgment that there is question of a religious residence, or of what deserves to be respected by the authorities. Rather, there is a question of curbing abuses, and doing away with the spirit of independence. The main sin consists in a possible loss of stipends for the pastor. If they could be assured, an agreement would be possible.

Actually, he gives the impression of being rather mean.

Father Coudrin's response had to be given right away. It was as it should be, an affirmation of the legitimacy of his conduct up to then, a petition for the prolongation of the privileges granted by Cardinal de Belloy and never discussed until then, and a protest against the unjust tone and the unjust personal accusations of Father Lemercier.²⁹³

We have no information in the documents we have been able to consult that in the months which separate this "report" from Easter of 1820 -which this year fell on April 2- any notable friction arose between Father Coudrin and the parish.

It must have been during Easter week, ever critical in the relations with Sainte Marguerite, that the Founder went to the archbishop, as Hilarion relates:

Our Very Reverend Father went to the archbishop, saw Monsignor de Quelen and showed him the Bull (leaving it with him for a month) which approved our Constitutions, the exemptions we had obtained from Bishop de Chabot and Bishop Lejeas, as well as the various approbations granted by many bishops. In this interview of April, he made the prelate realize how painful it would be to see us deprived of the privileges we enjoyed whether in Paris or in other establishments. He became aware that Monsignor de Quelen had been forewarned. His Excellency promised nothing. However, he did leave us with the hope that at any rate he would make no decision without having called us and listened to us. Father de Jalabert gave the same assurance.²⁹⁴

Despite what many friends advised him to do, Father Coudrin did not want to return to the archbishopric to insist on his views. Thus, he let the whole months of April and May go by until June 2, he was called by the Coadjutor, who informed him about the decisions made by Archbishop de Taleyrand-Périgord the previous May 30. Practically, he agreed with the pastor and revoked the procedure followed by the archbishopric up to that time. This was all contained in an ordinance dated May 30.²⁹⁵

This document was quite surprising, because it revoked, apparently definitively, the procedure followed up to then by the archbishopric with the community of Picpus, and because it did so without giving any reason, without any consideration, breaking the

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 345; cf. note.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 362.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 363.

promises made, and did so in an extreme application of a right which, in the circumstances, turned out to be “*summum jus...*”

If we rely on what was in the document, the “ordinance” made into a law for the residence of Picpus all the claims of the pastor.

Hilarion says that during this same time it was learned at the residence that the new council of the archbishop was made up of partisans of Cardinal Maury, enemies of d’Astros, and who remembered the stands taken by the Theological School of Picpus in that period. Among them, Desjardins and Borderie, both partisans of Lemercier in the conflict with the parish of Sainte Marguerite.²⁹⁶

Anyhow, the effect of this ordinance on Father Coudrin was extreme frustration. It may be said that he abandoned all hope of cooperation with the diocesan Curia of Paris. In the reply he addressed to the Coadjutor, Bishop de Quélen, he announced his intention to leave. He only requested that the licenses remain in force as long as it would take to find a place where he may transfer both communities, supposedly some months. The date of the letter was June 21, 1820.²⁹⁷

On June 23, Monsignor Eliçagaray, a good friend of Father Coudrin, sent him a very affectionate letter. In it he condemned the conduct of the Curia and stated the ordinance was unjust. He begged the Founder to reconsider his decision, and make an effort to reestablish contact with the Curia. He urged him not to leave, for it would be, according to him, a great loss for God’s Work.²⁹⁸

On June 27, Father Coudrin wrote in reply to his friend thanking him for his interest, but did not change his mind. He gave a short and simple reason but one which seems strong if seen in the context of Father’s evangelical concept of the apostolate and is not regarded as an endeavor to take over power. He said: “Good cannot be done there where there is not full confidence on the part of ecclesiastical superiors. Now, I repeat, there is no doubt we do not have it.”²⁹⁹

As far as documents of the Congregation are concerned, two months of silence pass by without information of any important event. Apparently there being no solution to the crisis, it seems Father Coudrin decided to leave, according to the principles avowed to his friend. There must have been days of uncertainty as to the immediate future, in which the horizon was cloudy.

This was the picture when, in the last days of August, the Founder received an

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 362.

²⁹⁷ BP, 626. HL, *ibid.*, 365.

²⁹⁸ Archives 1-91/2C.

²⁹⁹ BP, 628.

unexpected letter from the Vicar General of Troyes. Father Petitier wrote in the name of Bishop de Boulogne, famous as an orator and journalist since he was a young man, and whose valor in defending the rights of the Pope against Napoleon's pretensions had earned him imprisonment in Vincennes. He was at this moment one of the most influential bishops of France, so it is easy to imagine that he could count on the understanding of Father Coudrin. Father Petitier wrote:

Sir, Bishop (de Boulogne) has learned from Father de Bourdeiller, Vicar General of Bayonne, that you are about to leave Paris. His Excellency would be charmed to have in his diocese a man so commendable for his talents, his zeal and his virtues. There is a very fine residence for your priests, and there will be no difficulty in finding another quite nearby for your sisters. If you still feel the same way, His Excellency would make you offers which would be very agreeable to you, enabling you to maintain and extend all your establishments, and follow the course of all your good works. I pray you to let me know your intentions in this regard. I have the honor, etc. . . .³⁰⁰

These brief lines show that the Bishop of Troyes was sufficiently informed about the conflict of Picpus with the Curia of Paris, and about the Founder's reasons for thinking of leaving the diocese. In a gesture of evangelical generosity, he offered him precisely what he needed: the support of his confidence, and the necessary autonomy for developing his foundation and carrying on his apostolic works.

Father Coudrin's answer was prompt: a personal journey to Troyes. This shows the importance he gave to Bishop de Boulogne's offer, which for the whole community meant something providential, a sign of God's love for the community.³⁰¹

The trip lasted hardly three days and at the end of August 1820, Father Coudrin accepted Bishop de Boulogne's proposal, and asked him to send a letter to Bishop de Qu len. It seems that this letter, the text of which we do not know, along with "the complaints of a great number of persons, including some of high rank" of which Hilarion speaks, which reached the archbishopric in various ways, disturbed the Curia. Father Desjardins had Father de Frayssinous contact Father Coudrin to find out if he could reach an agreement with him that would change his mind about leaving Paris.³⁰²

A letter was requested of the Founder in which he would renew his obedience to the cardinal, and it appears there was even an outline of this document, by which he would profess that he and all his religious were at the disposition of His Eminence. This, at any rate, was the sense of the conversation the said prelate had with Father Coudrin

³⁰⁰ BP, 635.

³⁰¹ HL, *op. cit.*, 381.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 381.

on September 22. What precisely was the nature of the obedience required? Hilarion, protesting against the claims of Paris, says:

The principal pastors of the diocese have the right of surveillance over us, to require that we perform the duties our rules impose on us. We depend on them so long as we are in their dioceses; but they have no right to change anything in our Constitutions, nor to let us refuse obedience to our Superior General.³⁰³

If demands of this nature were made, as seems undeniable, the attitude of the Founder and of his community takes on the character of a simple defense of its charism and of its right to exist as a congregation of pontifical right.³⁰⁴

The day after the interview, Father Coudrin wrote a letter to the cardinal in which he protests against the false accusations of rebellion of which he was accused. He says:

We had only hoped that you would regard us with sufficient benevolence to continue the privileges we had obtained under your predecessor and during the vacancy of the See. On requesting this we paid homage to your rights.³⁰⁵

The cardinal's answer this time was immediate, and filled with protests of affection, which must have been most genuine. The reply is dated September 24, 1820.³⁰⁶

There has come about between the, pastor of your parish and you, a dispute which I have had to judge according to law. This is my sole explanation to you of all of my procedures and their result. Thenceforth, what is a privilege and favor can only be put off to another time as I have ever in mind that which it is up to you alone to accelerate. You could not wait, and you complain about an apparent severity which was only a momentary means needed for the progress of the affair.

This paragraph impressed Lestra who, it seems, did not read the rest of the letter. We regret that such pastoral affection and such well-weighed intentions in the ordinance of May 30 only came to light for the first time on September 24, and that they were nowhere evidence in the conversation Father Coudrin had with Bishop Quélen on the previous June 2, when the famous ordinance was communicated to him. However, it is a fact that, in spite of the full submission of the residence of Picpus to the said ordinance, these measures were not revoked until many years later. But let us go on a while with this document:

There is nothing I would not be ready to do for the prosperity of your residence. I only want to know about it. You ought to have given me this satisfaction. . .

303 HL, Mem. C.I, 383.

304 The right of religious was clear, but the Curia of Paris, rejecting the Bull, thought it could treat the Congregation as a rebellious diocesan cleric. The community was in seven other dioceses of France, and no other bishop ever adopted an attitude like this.

305 BP, 638.

306 BP, 639.

Further On:

You are surprised your Institute has been refused the privileges of seminaries. What, then, is a seminary which is unknown to the bishop? What is a school of theology which I do not inspect, whose teachers, the books, the students are unknown to me, whose chapel and all that is performed there is not authorized and regulated by my ordinances? What will I say of priests subject to vows without my knowledge, of laymen received the same profession, at the risk of occasioning protests from which public malevolence profits? What will I say about a community of women whose Constitutions are for me a mystery and who on making a profession without my knowing it seems to exist outside of my domain.

307

In this paragraph stands out most clearly that the conflict with the pastor of Sainte Marguerite was nothing but a façade, and that the real intent of the Curia was to repudiate the Roman approbation of the Congregation. It not only refused to publish the Bull, but wanted to consider the residence of Picpus as a work of a diocesan cleric, and of a rebellious cleric at that. The Curia did not accept that the professions were outside its jurisdiction. As for the “mystery” of the Constitutions, it is an expression hard to explain, an expression used by Bishop Taleyrand-Périgord and his assistant Bishop de Quélen, who had been the first informed about the Bull at the beginning of 1817, and between April and June 2 had available an abundance of documentation.³⁰⁸

Without going into other details, this seems sufficient to make understandable all of Father Coudrin’s discouragement and disillusionment in respect to the possibility of finding in the Curia of Paris the support he needed from the hierarchy of France. A final paragraph confirms this, and we think it useful to read:

And to come to what we want to say about a Council which you set against me, which is alien to me and whose authority counterbalances mine, since it hinders one of the most venerable priests of my clergy from accepting my decisions! . . . In vain is there sought refuge under the shade of a Bull or of a Brief of the Apostolic See. It is a matter of principle that these acts, to which all respect is due, nevertheless have no effect save through an *exequatur* of the Ordinary. It is a formality particularly prescribed by the clause joined to the Pontifical Decree granted you. Nothing, my dear Father, keeps you from me, what then can prevent my heart from reaching out to you?³⁰⁹

The letter from Father Desjardins asking the Founder to accede to the petitions of the archbishop and write to the pastor of Sainte Marguerite was dated September 26.³¹⁰

307 HL, PJ, 88.

308 HL, Mem. C.I., 266.

309 HL, PJ, 88.

310 BP, 640.

But the impression found in Picpus after the reading of all these documents was that to which Hilarion refers in his *Mémoires*:

Monsignor the Archbishop of Paris, not having ordered the Bull to be enforced, could look on us as a simple guild without any right to a privilege of exemption, nor to any other advantages customarily accorded to recognized communities...³¹¹

The Superior General's departure from Paris could only result in grave harm to the community which was in full expansion. The Founder was the first to realize this, but saw no other way out of this painful matter. It always turns out more sorrowful to meet obstacles for living the Gospel which have been put in the way by those who are expected to give greatest support.

Everything, however, had not been entirely negative in these last three years, starting out from the Roman approbation. The community had developed notably. At the end of 1816, there were sixty professed members; now there were more than 130, so the Congregation has more than doubled.³¹²

On the other hand, the rhythm of foundations had recovered. In 1818, a residence was opened in Rennes, and in 1819, another in Tours, with the enthusiastic support of the archbishop of the city, who had entrusted to the priests of the Congregation the direction of his major and minor seminaries.

In the rest of France, the other seven residences functioned without the least crisis with the bishops, and kept themselves at the fringe of all the tensions of Paris. On reading the correspondence of the Founders, there is left the impression that they took great care not to comment on what was going on in Picpus. Of course, at the General Chapter of 1819, the superiors of all the residences were informed about the situation, but there are no indications in the documents that the conflict was presented to them dramatically but rather remained as a local problem.

On September 28, Father Coudrin made a trip to Troyes to deal with the bishop about the details of his moving to that city, and to determine the installation of a missionary residence in the diocese. He returned to Paris during the first days of October. Now all he had to do was pack his bags.³¹³

On October 3, he wrote the last letter to the pastor of Sainte Marguerite, in which he summarily lists the difficulties he has suffered from the pastor and concludes bluntly:

(These things) . . . have proved to me with certainty that I could never hope to get along with you... I suffered from all the harm you have done to me. I harbor no

³¹¹ HL, *op. cit.*, 367.

³¹² LE-HL, *ibid.*, 411.

³¹³ HL, *ibid.*, 381.

ill feeling about them. I would be glad to have the opportunity to be of service to you. . .³¹⁴

On October 4, he replied to the cardinal's letter of September 24. He did not spare expressions of veneration and submission to the archbishop, but at the same time he protested against the unjust accusations contained in the letter of September 24: that is, that he did not inform him about the Constitutions of the sisters and the life of the residence, and that the Congregation is opposed to the cardinal. He concludes announcing his proximate departure, and requesting permission be granted for a delay in moving the residences which would be more costly.³¹⁵

Meanwhile, the conflict was reflected among the public of Paris, as may be seen in the letter Hilarion in his *Mémoires* attributes to Grosbois, and in his collection of documents to Niel, and in which the author, a layman and a friend of Picpus, sent to the assistant bishop de Quélen. The letter of October 8, 1820 judges the pastor of Sainte Marguerite very harshly.

The recently arrived and obstreperous man, appointed due to arrant favoritism not to say most unjustly, ought to have appreciated his standing as a stranger in this diocese, and the virtuous men whom he dares to calumniate every day. These circumstances have demonstrated to me the high reputation of the respectable head of this residence which is being persecuted unjustly, and the interest clearly shown by decent people of all classes...³¹⁶

To the vicar Desjardins, who constantly wrote him praising the gentleness of St. Francis de Sales and his submission to the "Common Father," the Founder answers on October 12:

I can never have the pretension of being a St. Francis de Sales, nor a St. Vincent de Paul, but be assured that I have no bitterness nor malice against anyone. I am in charge of a work which I have reason to believe is the Work of God, since He has sustained me up to this day. I hope He will still protect it. I am distressed that your Eminence feels the least chagrin about what is going on, but you yourself are aware that I am not the cause of it.³¹⁷

In those days the *Journal des Debats* reported the rumor of the departure:

It is reported that these respected ecclesiastics must leave the diocese to go to Troyes, where they have been called by Bishop de Boulogne. More than thirty priests followed by a large number of the seminary will create a large void in the capital, where they were of great service to the parishes, the hospitals, as well as to the districts of the neighborhood. The deceased pastor, Father Dubois, whose

314 BP, 641.

315 BP, 642.

316 HL, *Pièces justificatives*, no. 96 (Oct. 8, 1820).

317 BP, 649.

memory is so dear to all honorable people, protected them in a very special way, and encouraged them in the work they were doing constantly in so populated a suburb. They were of great help to the parish of Sainte Marguerite, with its some forty thousand souls. It is hoped that the Ecclesiastical Superiors will keep for the suburb such priceless auxiliaries so useful to the area they edified for so long a time. We fear no less the departure of the nuns who teach the little girls of the area, and who had so many in their boarding school.³¹⁸

Actually, the massive departure had been held up, due to the intervention of Bishop Saussol of Sees, and on this same day, October 17, the Founder wrote a last letter to the Archbishop of Paris, expressing his gratitude.³¹⁹

On October 21, Father Coudrin issued a document in which he made the following appointments: Prior of Picpus, Father Hilarion Maigret; Master of Novices, the young Irishman Father Felix Cummins, who was professed only two years; General Bursar, Father Philip Fezendié. Fathers Maigret and Cummins were also appointed professors of theology, and Father Bachelot, director of the seminary, which he called “Maison Ecclésiastique.”³²⁰

The next day he left for Troyes.

2. *New Horizons: 1820-1824*

On Sunday, October 22, 1820, Father Coudrin left for Troyes. The missionaries followed him on the tenth of November and were installed at St. Martin des Champs on the outskirts of the city. On December 13, Mother Aymer arrived with the first group of ten sisters and two days later there were twenty. Counting Father Coudrin, there were ten brothers.³²¹

A fresh enthusiasm animated the small community. It began with the experience of the missions. A circular letter of November 26 announced what had occurred to the whole Congregation: “We are going to begin in the diocese of Troyes the important work of the missions which has been particularly recommended to us by the Sovereign Pontiff. . . . So reanimate your fervor and double your prayers...”³²²

On December 2 -the rapidity is to be noted- the missionaries left for the parish of Bouilly where they found work for the whole group, of six or eight, for seven weeks. However, we are not going to deal here with these missions, whose spirit and methods

318 HL, *Pièces justificatives*, no. 100 (Oct. 17, 1820).

319 BP, 653. HL, *op. cit.*, 396.

320 BP, 654.

321 HL, *op. cit.*, 397.

322 BP, 662, *Missions*.

are much discussed today. What is of interest to us is to point out for the moment what they meant for Father Coudrin and his community on their departure from Paris.³²³

Conducting missions was an absorbing occupation, of course, which filled up the winter months between October and March or April, especially during the first years at Troyes. In the first four years, about twenty missions were given.

The missions were taken on by the Founder as an inspiring task and as a sign of the love by which Providence favored the community, at a time when the diocesan authorities of Paris seemed to be striving to make life difficult for it.

On October 31, Father Coudrin took over his new office of Vicar General. The following day he wrote Mother Aymer: “twelve hours ago, as lawful Vicar General, I settled down in the first place to the left and officiated at Matins.”³²⁴

The Founder was not fond of honors, but the “lawful” office of Vicar General -that is, recognized by the government- made his situation secure in the Church of France, precisely when he had just lost the confidence of the Bishop of Paris.

Confidence on the part of Bishop de Boulogne, who on his first offer of August 23 of this year, intended to allow him to develop his foundation, was for Father Coudrin indispensable. This was so especially since he did not have the approval of the government, and the Bull *Pastor Aeternus* would not be enforced. His congregation continued in a semi-clandestinity which brought along with it many inconveniences. Among them, not the least odious was that of not being a juridically recognized legal entity, which would qualify it to own and administer the goods of the community more expeditiously, since they were becoming more important.³²⁵

But what was essential for the Founder was to have a canonically recognized jurisdiction over his priests who externally passed as “diocesan clergy”; otherwise, the recognition of autonomy depended exclusively on the goodwill of the bishops. Especially he himself, in his responsibility as Superior General, needed the recognition of a bishop, and not having it in Paris, as we have seen, led to tragic consequences. He had to be able to have his students ordained “as religious,” without having them installed in a diocese.³²⁶

Now, as Vicar General of Troyes, with the full support of Bishop de Boulogne, he had all the guarantees needed for going on with his work as Founder.

On December 13, the Bishop of Troyes gave his approbation in writing for a house of the sisters. In it he recognized the exemption from parochial jurisdiction, which had

323 HL, *op. cit.*, II, 419. •See V. II, Ch. 5, for more information.

324 *Ibid.*, BP, 659.

325 BP, 635.

326 BP. 474.

just been denied in Paris. This document is the fourth in which a bishop mentions the Roman approbation and the Bull. On October 13, 1818, the Bishop of Rennes granted a similar approbation; on October 17, 1819, the Archbishop of Tours and on November 18 of the same year the Bishop of Sees did likewise.

As to what has been represented to us by Mother Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie, Superior General of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary and of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the said Congregation was already established in Paris and in many other towns of the kingdom that the Constitutions and Statutes of this Congregation were approved and confirmed in perpetuity by a Bull *cum plumbo* dated November 17, 1817.

...We have authorized and we authorize by this document the said Mother Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie ... to found a residence of it in our Episcopal City, and to enforce the same rules, statutes and usages as are observed in the other residences in conformity with the Bull of November 17, 1817. We grant to this establishment exemption from all curial jurisdiction for the sisters, the boarding students and all other persons dwelling in the residence etc.³²⁷

Thus, most of the bishops in whose dioceses the community had residences, and who had confidence in the Congregation, gave written approbation to the establishment of religious houses. They acknowledged the Bull and approbation of the Pope, and also granted the communities exemption from the jurisdiction of the pastors. It was all that could be desired in these circumstances.

In the period following Father Coudrin's coming to Troyes, a house was opened in Mortagne (Orne), at the request of Bishop Saussol of Sées. Adoration began on August 19, 1821.³²⁸

Meanwhile, the principal house of the Congregation was still the residence in Paris. So the Superior General had to travel to the capital frequently for the effective government of the Institute which was now rather large. Only a person as active as Father Coudrin, with the ability to make and carry out decisions quickly and the ability to maintain a strenuous schedule in spite of being over fifty, could have accomplished this.³²⁹

In the absence of the Founder, recourse was had, for matters of the administration of the residence of Picpus, to Mother Aymer, who, in fact, with an assistant took care of all the material concerns of both residences of Paris.³³⁰

327 HL *Pièces justificatives*, 113.

328 HL, Mem. C.II, 456.

329 *Ibid.*, 494, 496, 497.

330 BM, 749, 754, 771 etc.

3. *The Final Perfecting of the Constitutions: 1819-1824*

The Roman approbation had been given with the express order to complete the Constitutions. This was stated in various provisional articles, which entrusted to the General Chapters of 1819 and of 1824 the responsibility for so doing. For reasons we shall see, the Chapter of 1819 could not have its decisions approved by Rome, so that the work of both Chapters was, in fact, studied and approved in Rome, in one negotiation. Thus, we have preferred to refer here to both, which will enable us to better appreciate the continuity of its work.³³¹

a) *Chapter of 1819*

We must treat simultaneously the Chapters of the brothers and of the sisters. Father Coudrin sent a circular letter to the superiors dated July 20, 1819. Mother Aymer wrote diverse letters to the superiors, on different dates, bidding them attend the Chapter. It was ordered that the superior of the brothers and the superior of the sisters of Rennes, a residence recently founded in 1818, should remain in their posts. The date the Chapter began was September 1.³³²

The members of the Chapter of the brothers were: 1. Father Coudrin, Founder and Superior General in office; 2. Father Hilarion Maigret, Prior of the Main Residence; 3. Father Isidore David, Master of Novices; 4. Father Philip Fezendé, General Bursar; 5. Father Hilarion Lucas, Dean of the Missioners; 6. Abraham Armand, Dean of Professor; 7. Joachim Guilmard, Counsellor chosen by the Superior General; 8. Father Ambrose Penel, Counsellor chosen by the Superior General; 9. Father Felix Cummins, Counsellor chosen by the Superior General; to these were added the local superiors: 10. Father Philibert Vidon of Sées; 11. Father Régis Rouchouze of Mende; 12. Hipolite Launay, of Cahors; 13. Father Zosimo Chrétien, of Le Mans; 14. Father Joachim Delétang, of Sarlat; 15. Father Antonine Bigot, of Poitiers; 16. Father Robert Gibrat, of Laval.³³³

It is useful to observe that the mean age of the brothers was rather low: five of at least thirty years, and six between thirty and forty. The oldest was Father Zosimo, 54, and the youngest the Prior General, 27.³³⁴

The members of the Chapter of the sisters were: 1. Mother Aymer, Foundress and Superior General in office; 2. Sister Philippina Coudrin, Prioress; 3. Sister Alix

331 ANN., 1961 Const. Art. 20, 25, 36, 58, Statutes: Art. 9, 38-45, 49.

332 BP, 87. HL, *op. cit.*, 306.

333 HL, *ibid.*

334 LE and *Registre* (Archives des Sœurs).

Guyot, Mistress of Novices; 4. Sister Clemence Mouton, Administrator; 5. Sister Clotilde Tanqueret, Counsellor; 6. Sister Euphrosyne Collet, Counsellor; 7. Sister Therese Peturet, Counsellor; 8. Sister Irene Jouanet, Counsellor; 9. Sister Isabel Collet, Counsellor; local Superiors: 10. Sister Gabriel de la Barre, of Poitiers; 11. Sister Françoise de Viart, of Cahors; 12. Sister Justine Charrais, of Sées; 13. Sister Antoinette de Boussay, of Le Mans; 14. Sister Adélaïde Prieur-Chauveau, of Laval; 15. Sister Théotiste Brochard, of Mende; 16. Sister Adrienne de Bocquency, of Sarlat.³³⁵

The capitulary assembly of the brothers opened up on September 1. The sisters could not do so because two superiors were absent –Sister Françoise de Viart and Sister Adrienne de Bocquency– and the sessions did not begin until September 3.³³⁶

In both residences of Picpus, there was great activity in these days, but especially at the nuns' residence. Each superiors brought along with her a group of novices, and some, as Sister Théotiste Brochard, as many as ten, so that altogether there were thirty novices who had recently arrived.³³⁷

Elsewhere we shall give an account of the legislative task of these chapters. We shall only note here what happened with some of the more obvious consequences.

In Paris, while relations with the diocesan Curia continued as has been described, the community gathered closely around the Founders, and in spite of discussions which as usual were lively, especially among the brothers, the impression of a unanimous enthusiasm for the common vocation was impressive.

Relations with the bishops in the rest of the residences were as a rule good.

It may be said that the Chapter signified, beyond its strictly canonical value –in suspense until approbation from Rome was obtained– a manifestation of solidarity which must have contributed much to encourage Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer, who were engaged in a painful conflict with the meanness of Father Lemercier and with the Gallican stubbornness of the Curia of Paris.

The closure of both assemblies was carried out in one single ceremony, which Sister Gabriel, a most reliable witness, has preserved for us in her *Mémoires*:

The day of the closure, October 10, the feast of St. Denis, the Good Father assembled his entire little family in the small chapel of Picpus, around eleven o'clock in the evening. The novices, some sixty or eighty, were placed on the steps

335 HL, Mem. C.I, 306.

336 *Ibid.*

337 GB, Ecr.Div., 285.

at the back of the chapel; the professed nuns were arranged along two lines, eighty of them; the brothers occupied the sanctuary; there were forty or fifty professed of all classes, a few less novices. Some priests who were not members of the Congregation assisted at this ceremony. The Good Father recalled the early days of the Congregation when there was so much fervor and so much suffering! He exhorted us to persevere, to be united, to have confidence in God who had already performed so many miracles to sustain the Work. He received the resolutions of some novices and the vows of three sisters. One of them, Sister Barbault, had finally decided to consummate her sacrifice publicly and take the religious habit. All the brothers and all the sisters then renewed their vows before the Good Father and the Good Mother. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and the *Te Deum* and the *Salve Regina* concluded this memorable ceremony.³³⁸

The work has been intense, but the joy was greater. The communication and interchange of so much minute information about how life went on in each residence, and the feeling about how the community was developing and consolidating itself everywhere, especially since the Roman approbation, resulted in the Chapter diffusing throughout every residence a spirit of confidence. and serene enthusiasm.

And so the good efforts of the Chapter were experienced even prior to the canonical approbation.

One important result was the information which, at least the superiors obtained, about what was going on in the residences. There had been communication through correspondence but it was not sufficiently abundant or regular for assuring adequate information.

From the interchange of experiences resulted the trend toward a greater uniformity which would facilitate not only a unity of spirit but also an acceptance of change in the members, who would find everywhere a picture of a like manner of living.³³⁹

An important point of this activity was the knowledge the superiors acquired of the Constitutions approved by Rome in 1817. It may seem strange to us that this knowledge had not been acquired before. Perhaps the explanation is that there was a reluctance to publish the text which, on the one hand, was provisory and destined to be modified at the General Chapters, and, on the other, came inserted in a pontifical Bull which, according to the law, could not be published in France so long as it was not recognized by the government. Also, there was required the

338 GB, *ibid.*, 293.

339 HL, *op. cit.*, 312, note 1. BM, *Règle Generale*, 3.

difficult task of copying the Constitutions by hand in order to communicate them to the various communities.³⁴⁰

Another effect of great consequence was the organization in both residences of Picpus of a single novitiate for each branch of the Congregation. This was already a directive which was beginning to be observed, as we have seen, but which, starting out from the Chapter of 1819, became a decision affecting the whole community.

Father Coudrin took advantage of this opportunity to make a change of superiors, which not only had the foreseen effect in the community itself, but also had value as a proof of the Congregation's independence from episcopal jurisdiction. This was especially important when, right in Paris, the relations with the diocesan Curia were going through so serious a crisis. The Curias of Poitiers, of Cahors, and of Mende at least complained about this but finally accepted it, and always respected the independence of the community and of its Superior General. It was already a great step forward.³⁴¹

Mother Aymer followed another policy, and kept her superiors in their posts. Despite the fact that Sister Gabriel de la Barre praises it highly, it does not seem to have been a good decision, especially since it contributed to making superiors an immovable elite.

The documents of the Chapter were sent to Rome, and the Superior General wrote the bishops in whose dioceses there were residences of the Congregation, requesting them to receive the new superiors.

On October 5, Father Coudrin sent a circular letter which announced the closure of the Chapter to the whole Congregation:

The foundations of the edifice have been laid; it is for you, my well-beloved sons, to strengthen it by an exact observance of the rules.³⁴²

After prescribing prayers of thanksgiving to be said, he ordered that the Constitutions be read in each community to the members assembled for this purpose. Besides, in the daily community reading, there was always to be included an article of the Constitutions approved by the Holy See.³⁴³

b) General Chapter of 1824

Five years later, on July 19, 1824, Father Coudrin sent to all the residences the

340 GB, Ecr.Div., 279.

341 HL, *op. cit.*, 324.

342 BP, 594.

343 ANN 1960, pp. 186-187.

letter of convocation of the second General Chapter, which was to open in Picpus on September 1 of this year.³⁴⁴

The members of the Chapter of the brothers were: 1. Father Coudrin; 2. Father Hilarion Maigret, Prior; 3. Father Felix Cummins, Master of Novices; 4. Father Philip Fezendié, Administrator; 5. Father Hilarion Lucas; 6. Father Abraham Arinand; 7. Father Anselm Salacroux, Counsellor; Father Enrique Lacoste, Counsellor; 9. Father Jerome Rouchouze, Counsellor; 10. Father Isidore David, Superior of Tours; 11. Father Régis Rouchouze, of Cahors; 12. Father Hippolyte Launay, of Poitiers; 13. Father Zosime Chrétien, of Rerines; 14. Father Joachim Délétang, of Mende; 15. Father Ildefonse Alet, of Sées; 16. Father Antoine Bigot, of Laval; 17. Father Cesareo Carre, of Sarlat; 19. Father Xavier Balinelle, of Mortagne; 20. Father Philibert Vidon; 21. Father Raphael Bonamie; 22. Father Cyril Pigassou.³⁴⁵

The mean age of the members of the Chapter had been kept low: four under thirty; eight between thirty and forty; five between forty and fifty; five over fifty. The eldest this time was fifty-nine: the youngest, Father Anselm Salacroux, was twenty-five.³⁴⁶

The Chapter of the sisters was made up of: 1. Mother Aymer; 2. Sister Eudoxie Coudrin, Prioress; 3. Sister Meraidec Gourgas, Mistress of Novices; 4. Sister Clemence Mouton, Administrator; 5. Sister Celeste Tanquerel, Counsellor; 6. Sister Euphrosyne Collet, Counsellor; 7. Sister Isabel Collet, Counsellor; 8. Sister Gabriel de la Barre, superior of Poitiers; 9. Sister Françoise de Viart, of Cahors; 10. Sister Justine Charry, of Sées; 11. Sister Antoinette de Bouassay, of Tours; 12. Sister Aura Cambon, of Le Mans; 13. Sister Adélaïde Orieur-Chauveau, of Laval; 14. Sister Hilde Lacoste, of Rennes; 15. Sister Philippine Courdin, of Troyes; 16. Sister Alicia Guiot, of Mortagne; 17. Sister Adrienne de Bocquency, of Sarlat. The superior of Mende, due to illness, was unable to travel to Paris.³⁴⁷

In its place we shall see the formally legislative work of this Chapter, as of the prior one. Furthermore, it was restricted to completing what was already done in 1819, so that it took only twenty days to finish its work. The Founder closed it on September 20. Hilarion says, summing it up:

Everything in the Chapters, both of the brothers and of the sisters, went along as peacefully as in 1819. The death of Louis XVIII in no way interrupted our work.

³⁴⁴ BP, 963. HL, *op. cit.*, 548.

³⁴⁵ HL, *op. cit.*, 549.

³⁴⁶ LE

³⁴⁷ HL, *ibid.*, 549.

Solely occupied in the well-being of the Congregation, we only were thinking of putting the final touches to our Rules, in order to assure the stability of the Institute, at least in the measure in which it was possible for us. For that reason, neither the brothers nor the sisters intended to determine the Rules in such a way that some articles might not be necessary later on, matured by experience and sometimes changed in matters which might present inconveniences.³⁴⁸

On the twenty-fourth of the same month of September, Father Coudrin proclaimed the formation of the New General Council, which invites attention on account of its youth. It was made up as follows: Father Felix Cummins, Prior (33 years old); Father Alexander Sorieul, Master of Novices (26 years old); Father Philip Fezendier, Administrator (44 years old); Father Joachim Délétang, assistant to the administrator in charge of lay brothers (34 years old); Father Anselm Salacroix, Counsellor (25 years old); and Father Enrique Lacoste, Counsellor (27 years old). This gives a mean age of thirty-one years.³⁴⁹

Hilarion, writing years later, says in his *Mémoires*:

On September 24, 1824, our Superior General, obliged by the circumstances to make some changes in the residence of Paris and to withdraw from it many brothers needed elsewhere, by a formal act designated the members of its Council. Absent for four years from the main residence, perhaps he was not well acquainted with the particular qualifications of those he employed. It is certain that this appointment later on had very painful results, and the new Prior was far from winning general confidence. I have no intent to condemn him, but divisions are always disastrous and leave traces behind them for a long time.³⁵⁰

Perhaps it was a mistake to leave the fate of the residence of Paris in the hands of someone who had but little experience. Nor can it be forgotten that Father Cummins, no matter how well he adjusted to living in France, apart from being young, was a foreigner, an Irishman. Consequently, he had to overcome much greater difficulties than a Frenchman in order to gain what Hilarion calls “general confidence.” We must keep in mind that the residence of Picpus had been converted into a hive of activity, with its major seminary and its college. In 1827, the seminary had eighty students, and the college many more. So, it is understandable that the Superior General’s absence from the ordinary life of his headquarters resulted in time in discontentment. The mere decision to appoint so young a counsellor seems to us now a gesture of audacious confidence in the youth of his community, and it

348 *Ibid.*

349 *Ibid.*, 558. Cf. BP, 982.

350 HL, *ibid.*, 558.

was natural it would have its risks.³⁵¹

Once the Chapter was over, the month of October saw the beginning of the new parish mission season, which monopolized the attention of all the personnel of the Congregation in the diocese of Troyes, and of Father Coudrin more than anybody else. This was so since, outside of the parish mission works, he had to devise ways to intervene personally in the preaching of various places. Missions were given at Chaussigny, Ste. Cyre, in October-November of 1824; at Chaource, in December-January; at Bar-sur-Seine, in February-March, with prolongation at Vitry-le-Croise, Ville-s-Arce and Bourgignon. The proximity of Easter, which fell that year on April 3, obliged the missionaries to spread themselves among the various parishes in which they had already preached, to help the parish priests prepare for the festivity.³⁵²

Once Easter was over, Father Coudrin began to get ready for his journey to Rome, since after the Chapter he had decided to go there. In his circular letter of May 16, 1825, he wrote:

For a long time we had the desire to visit the tomb of the Holy Apostles to implore their help for ourselves and our Congregation. If we have not yet sent to the Holy See the regulations of our Second General Chapter, it is because we intended to go ourselves and submit our Rules and our Constitutions to the Holy Roman Church, to that principal Church, the center of Catholic unity, the ever-pure source of doctrine, to that indefectible chair of St. Peter, whence all spiritual jurisdictions emanate. It is to carry out this twofold end that we leave for Rome...³⁵³

Intending this, the Founder arrived in Paris on Wednesday, May 4, 1825. Bishop de Boulogne was at that time in the capital, and, of course, the Founder wanted to take leave of the bishop before departing for the Eternal City, which he did on the tenth. That very night, the elderly bishop of seventy-eight, had an attack of apoplexy. Father Coudrin ran to his side, postponed his departure for Rome, tended the dying man, and administered the sacraments. On Friday, the thirteenth of the same month, Bishop de Boulogne died. The funeral was held at Saint Sulpice.³⁵⁴

The canons of Troyes, on learning of the death of their bishop, confirmed in their offices all the vicars appointed by him, so that Father Coudrin continued being dean and president of the Council. Monsignor Arvisenet, also a vicar, informed him of this in a letter of May 15, in which he urged him to return to Troyes. We do not have Father Coudrin's reply. Hilarion says in his *Life of the Founder*:

351 *Ibid.*, III, 32.

352 *Ibid.*, II, 561-562.

353 ANN., 1960, p. 215.

354 HL, *Ibid.*, 573. VBP, 231.

Monsignor Arvisenet was unable to change any resolutions of our Founder, the powerful motives which had made him determined to make the journey to Rome remained as firm as ever.³⁵⁵

These “strong motives” can be summarized as the urgency to present in Rome the Constitutions and documents of the Chapter of the previous year. Father Coudrin must have thought that there was not as much need of him in Troyes as there was for obtaining approval of the legislation in Rome.

But it is likely that this choice, under these circumstances, did not create much sympathy for Father Coudrin in the diocesan curia of Troyes.³⁵⁶

c) *The Founder’s Journey to Rome in 1825*

On Thursday, May 19, Father Coudrin left for Rome, accompanied by Hilarion Lucas and by Brother Severino Coulonges. In Lyon, he stayed a while to celebrate the feast of Pentecost on May 22. The twenty-seventh he was in Turin and the thirtieth in Genoa. On June 5, he passed through Siena and on the sixth he reached Viterbo, where he greeted Bishop de Castellane, and arrived in the Holy City the eighth of the same month.³⁵⁷

He brought with him, in addition to the text of the new Constitutions, composed in the Chapters of 1819 and 1824, a series of reports and petitions addressed to the Holy See, either by the Chapter of 1824 -not only of the brothers but of the sisters as well- or by himself. They all together amounted to ten.³⁵⁸

The next day he visited the ambassador of France, Duke Laval Montmorency, who received him very amiably and offered him Saint Louis of France, the dwelling which Bishop de Castellane occupied when he came to Rome. That same day he began his visits to the holy places to make the stations for the Holy Year.³⁵⁹

He had left France feeling like a pilgrim. During the journey he did nothing but pray and read Scripture, so that, according to our chronicler who accompanied him, he read almost the entire New Testament while traveling. Thus, on Thursday, June 9, when he went out, he wanted first to visit Saint Peter’s through the Holy Door.³⁶⁰

Next he wanted to obtain the approbation of the Constitutions. On Saturday, June 11, he visited the Cardinal Secretary of State, and the next week, on Monday

355 *Ibid.*

356 A conjecture based on later reactions of some of the clergy of Troyes.

357 HL, VBP, 231-233.

358 ANN., 1963, pp. 242-284.

359 HL, VBP, 234.

360 *Ibid.*, 238.

the eighteenth, he was received by His Holiness Leo XII. On Sunday, June 19, he finished visiting basilicas for gaining the indulgences of the Holy Year.

On Wednesday, June 22, he handed over the text of the Constitutions and the documents to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. On Wednesday, July 6, the Sacred Congregation of Rites approved the “Formal Offices” of the Congregation. On Friday the fifteenth of the same month, the Founder visited the Sacred Congregation of Propagation of the Faith and handed over a memorandum requesting foreign missions for the Institute. The next day he gave Cardinal Morozzo a memorandum with all the documents of approbation received from the French episcopate. Since he was not able to wait for the end of the negotiations, he left Rome on July 21 by way of Loretto. By Monday, August 8, he was on his way back to Troyes.³⁶¹

The negotiations proceeded slowly, at least in Hilarion’s judgment, but this did not prevent the Sacred Congregation from issuing the decree of approbation of the Constitutions on July 19, which Leo XII confirmed some days later, on Friday, July 26. On September 27, the Sacred Congregation of Rites approved the Congregation’s own ceremonial. Briefly, the desired approval was very soon obtained. Only in order to have the decree in his hands, the Founder had to wait still some more months. Only on December 26 did he receive from the hands of Marquis Eugene de Montmorency the document which he himself brought him from Rome.³⁶²

On Saturday, February 11, 1826, Father Coudrin sent a circular letter presenting to the Congregation the new Constitutions which he had printed by the bookseller of the episcopate of Troyes.

It may be said that the legislative endeavor of the Chapters bore fruit at this moment. The community now had its legislation and its liturgy approved, and the whole lengthy procedure of recognition on the part of the Holy See was concluded. Now a new stage in the life of the Congregation began.

D. FOURTH PERIOD: 1826-1840

This was the period in which the community founded by Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer began a more determined process of institutionalization by the application of the Constitutions. It was at the same time the period of its greatest numerical growth and of its greatest geographical expansion.

³⁶¹ HL, *Ibid.*, 234. Cf. Mem. C.II, 574-576, 579.

³⁶² HL, Mem. C.II, 582. BP, 1055.

Though the Rule was approved and its authority and personality recognized within the universal Church, and in practice also in the Church of France, despite the conflict with the diocese of Paris, it was still ignored by the State. But the community itself no longer sought its approval. It knew that non-recognition by the temporal power would produce for it many very unpleasant consequences since it had already experienced the complications which resulted from the administration of property, for instance, but, despite all this, it preferred to preserve its evangelical independence intact and very early kept itself distant from the policies of “His Most Christian Majesty.”

During this period, the community would lose its Founders, and on seeing them go, begin to become aware, somewhat late -it must be acknowledged- that the recently approved Rule was too linked to their presence, and that it would be necessary to prepare a “recasting” of the Constitutions, which would enable it to get along without them. That would be the task of the Chapter which came after the Founder’s death in 1838, and which would result in the Constitutions promulgated in 1840, a date which marks the end of our study.

The sociopolitical circumstances of France in those years were like a return to what happened during the Revolution. The crisis of education controlled by the Church, starting from 1826-1828, was but a symptom of a social fermentation which ran its course, more or less subterraneously, until it came to power in the days of May 1830.

The community suffered the impact of this social explosion, not only in the sacking of its main residence, but in the closing of its schools and seminaries. This has a positive consequence, however, for it freed many personnel, which would largely increase the active missionaries, enabling them to extend their evangelical influence on much wider horizons.

1. *The Foreign Missions: 1826-1828*

On July 15, 1825, Father Coudrin had presented personally to the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith in Rome a petition requesting a missionary territory for the community. On September 29, the Nuncio in Paris transmitted a communication from Cardinal Caprano requesting that the Congregation provide missionaries for the Sandwich Islands, now Hawaii. The Founder answered right away, accepting the request in a letter he wrote to Rome on October 6 of the same year.³⁶³

At this time, the Prior General Father Felix Cummins got information from authorities and shipowners about the future voyage of the missionaries even before they

³⁶³ BP, 1065. HL, *op. cit.*, 581.

were assigned.³⁶⁴

Father Coudrin intended to put one of his most promising religious, the young director of the minor seminary of Tours, Father Alexis Bachelot who was hardly twenty-nine years old, in charge of the first mission. On October 17, he wrote him a letter from Troyes. He told him that he had received the request of the Sacred Congregation and had been informed that a ship would leave for the islands in November-December.

I have promised the Propagation three missionaries, and I set my eyes on you to be one of the three. I do not, however, intend to oblige you by virtue of holy obedience. Reflect before God on this proposition and answer me very promptly. These isles have never seen Catholic priests; they have a population of around 500,000 souls. The Propagation offers this mission to our Congregation as its own mission. I have every reason to think that divine Providence has provided us this means for carrying out all our duties, in particular that of bearing everywhere the torch of the faith. Goodbye, dear Alexis, I await your prompt reply.³⁶⁵

Father Bachelot offered to go, if necessary alone, but the first passage was cancelled because of the ship captain's superstition that having priests as passengers was a bad omen. He had to put off the voyage for a better occasion.³⁶⁶

On November 12, the Founder wrote to Rome presenting the missionaries, who, in addition to Father Bachelot, were Father Abraham Armand, fifty years old, and Father Patrick Short, who was thirty-four. He asked that Father Bachelot be nominated Prefect Apostolic. The response was prompt. On February 1, 1826, the Nuncio of Paris put it in the hands of Father Coudrin with all the corresponding documents. They had come to him during the period of the Nativity of 1825, but he could not deliver them since the support of the government for the mission could not be depended on.³⁶⁷

In reference to this, Hilarion wrote in his *Mémoires*:

Our Very Reverend Father replied to him that when we accepted the offer of Cardinal della Somaglia, we were well aware of the difficulties and disappointments awaiting us. We had not thought of neglecting the protection which could be provided us by the government, but did not want to rely on it too much. He added that after having examined and weighed everything thoroughly before God, he had decided, since the authority of the Holy See would be had, to have the missionaries leave even though there would be no hope of protection. Those who resolved to devote themselves to such an important work would put all their confidence in the Lord and in the Lord alone. He begged his Excellency to make known in Rome the feelings animating him.³⁶⁸

364 HL, *op. cit.*, 584, 608, 610, 611.

365 BP, 1069.

366 HL, Mem. C.II, 615, 616.

367 *Ibid.*, 609.

368 *Ibid.*, 612.

When the Nuncio delivered the documents, the missionaries were already in Paris, and on returning to the residence of Picpus, the Founder brought them together and made the assignments public in a ceremony which Hilarion also relates in the Life of Father Coudrin:

They knelt, recited the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and after a few minutes of silence, the Good Father granted Father Alexis Bachelot his authority as Apostolic Prefect, asking for his blessing. He, greatly moved, could not help but burst into tears, nor control the feelings agitating his heart on seeing his superior, the Founder of our Institute, prostrate at his feet begging for his blessing. Since the Good Father insisted, he obeyed and the Patriarch Jacob received Benjamin's blessing.³⁶⁹

The attempt to sail failed, and the missionaries had to wait a few more months, until it was agreed they would embark on the "Comète", of a shipowner of Bordeaux.³⁷⁰

Father Coudrin added to the group three brothers, two lay brothers, Brother Eustache Hurel, forty-five years old; Brother Melchior Bondu, thirty-four; and a scholastic, Brother Theodosius Boissier, twenty-four. Father Bachelot was appointed religious superior of the mission on September 8. On Wednesday the thirteenth, the missionaries put on white habits, a first in the history of the Congregation, in a ceremony which was engraved in the memory of everyone. They bade goodbye to the superior who was leaving for Rouen, and on Monday the twenty-fifth, they went by stagecoach to Bordeaux.³⁷¹

They passed through Tours and Poitiers, and in Bordeaux they ran into unforeseen difficulties. Two of the brothers fell ill, and Brother Hurel had to be replaced by Brother Leonard Portal, twenty-seven years old, at the last moment. Finally, they embarked on the seventeenth, and could set sail on Monday, November 20, 1826.³⁷²

This missionary undertaking was a great adventure, not only for the little group which set out to conquer an unknown archipelago- across storm-tossed seas. The whole community felt it had consecrated to the work a handful of its best men, and regarded itself as committed to the enterprise.

In his circular letter of September 7, Father Coudrin expressed the spirit in which the Congregation engaged itself in the task:

For a long time we yearned for the happy moment when we would be able to begin the important work of the foreign missions. . . . We are happy to say, our dearly beloved brothers and sisters, and it is a great consolation for us, that when it was necessary to

369 HL, VBP, 252.

370 HL, Mem. C.II, 617-618.

371 *Ibid.*, 620-627.

372 *Ibid.*, 628.

assign those who were to be the first to take up this holy and painful career, our only problem was whom should we choose. This was difficult for a large number of our brothers had earnestly demanded as a signal favor, permission to consecrate themselves to a task so painful in the eyes of nature, but so meritorious in the eyes of faith. On thanking the divine Bounty we must also, our dearly beloved brothers and sisters, help by our prayers those who are going to open up this nascent mission. . .³⁷³

In fact, the whole community felt involved in the missionary endeavor, and when all the houses were informed that they had set sail, a certain anxiety was felt by everyone. Days, weeks, and months passed, and nothing was heard from the missionaries.

The account of the voyage from Bordeaux to Lima was received by the Founder a year later, on November 30, 1827. So it was learned that they had reached Valparaíso on February 8, after eighty-one days at sea. They had stayed in this port until February 24. By March 8, they had reached Quilca, a port of Arequipa in Peru, and after a few days stay had continued on the twenty-fourth to Callao, where they had disembarked February 29 to visit Lima. There they waited until April 27 for the ship to leave. Father Bachelot's diary is filled with observations on nature, on the landscape, on the towns he had come to know, and their social and political situation. The account shows that everything interested him but especially contact with the missionaries or the clergy of these new countries, recently independent of the Spanish crown, and still very unstable.³⁷⁴

In April of the same year, an event occurred which made a great impression on the whole community. There arrived at the residence of Picpus an eighteen-year-old Hawaiian named Kami, who, filled with a spirit of adventure and without any knowledge of European languages, secretly embarked to know the world, and arrived at Bordeaux on March 10. Father Coudrin offered him the hospitality of the residence of Picpus. From that moment on his name spread through all the residences, and everyone wanted to know something about him. So, on April 19, 1827, Father Felix Cuinmins wrote to Father Raphael Bonamie:

We have here young Kami, a native of the Sandwich Islands, 18 to 20 years old, and the first of these islanders who ever set foot on French territory. . . The young foreigner is a very gentle native, amiable in his manners and quite, lively. He has a rather graceful physique and an interesting appearance, which reveals a more than ordinary intelligence. He has bright slanted eyes, his complexion is dark but not black, his forehead, nose, mouth and chin like Europeans, no trace of black in his face, long black hair like ours. He is already quite accustomed to Picpus. Everyone shows him the greatest kindness and he is appreciative...³⁷⁵

373 BP, 1152.

374 BP, 1297.

375 HL, *op. cit.*, 665.

Kami (“the great”) had been instructed in Christianity by the Protestant ministers of Hawaii, but he had not been baptized. He was instructed and baptized at Rouen by Father Coudrin some months later. He was prepared for his First Communion only at the end of 1828, and received it on December 25 with edifying piety, according to the account.

After this date he was sent to the residence of Poitiers where he stayed until 1838. At this period, he returned to his native land on a merchant ship, too late perhaps, and after having been spoiled rather than educated. The religious of this period were still so ignorant of the way of life of the natives of Hawaii, of their culture and of their religion, that it was difficult to ask them for a more fitting form of instruction. His presence in France had served to enliven the feeling of responsibility for the missions within the whole community and to create a real common enthusiasm for this work.³⁷⁶

In this same period there occurred something important in the history of the Congregation in France. Father Coudrin had resigned as Vicar General of Troyes, and had accepted to become Vicar General of Archbishop Prince de Croy of Rouen, opening up missions in Rouen, without abandoning thereby those of Troyes.³⁷⁷

The new bishop of Troyes delayed the official confirmation of Father Coudrin’s appointment for some months and did not pay him the corresponding stipend. The worst perhaps was the silence. As happens after some years of governing, there are persons who are discontented, and the Vicar knew this. This explains why he interpreted the new bishop’s silence as wanting to get rid of him. Father Coudrin was greatly agitated by this situation and, when on the instructions of the archbishop of Rouen he was offered the post of First Vicar, he accepted it.³⁷⁸

The Founder left Troyes on July 26, 1826, and arrived in Rouen on September 15.³⁷⁹

2. *The Closing of the Schools: 1828-1830*

During the Restoration, but especially under the pious Charles X, the display of power by the clergy at times reached the level of real provocation. The coronation on May 29, 1825; the law against sacrilege in April; the law censoring the press, gave the impression that there was an intent to impose on the people a return to medieval life. The reaction was not long in coming, and it was helped along by the abundance of incitement

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 665, note 1.

³⁷⁷ HL, VBP, 251-256.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

which was provided. After the elections of November 1827, which brought about the downfall of the Villèle ministry, this reaction conditioned the policy of the government more and more. There came the Martignac ministry.³⁸⁰

The next year, the regime had become extremely weak, and the king, poorly advised and as scrupulous as his brother Louis XVI, capitulated and signed the ordinances, which are dated June 16, 1828.³⁸¹

The first of these ordinances was directed especially to the Jesuits who, although not approved by the government, had eight important schools in France. This ordinance required all teaching personnel to sign a declaration that they did not belong to an unauthorized congregation. The second ordinance limited to 20,000 in all France the number of students receiving secondary diocesan education, and imposed the wearing of the ecclesiastical habit after two years of attendance in an institution of this type. Moreover, it stressed the “seminary” character of diocesan instruction.³⁸²

Father Coudrin’s community was still a “nonapproved Congregation” and the ordinances fall like lightning on his schools. Those in Paris, Cahors, Mende, Poitiers, Laval had to close one after the other. Precisely at this moment, in which the horizons were opening up for the foreign missions, the coming of a persecution was felt at home, and the first point attacked was the work of the schools, which were the preparation grounds for recruitment to the community.³⁸³

With the closing of the schools, a good portion of the personnel lost their jobs within a few months, and it was necessary to prepare them for new occupations. The diocesan missions, serving some parishes, at least temporarily, but, above all, the foreign missions would open up new fields of apostolate for all this personnel.

This happened at the beginning of the school year, in October-November 1828.

On February 10, 1829, His Holiness Leo XII died and Cardinal de Croy was obliged to go to Rome for the conclave. He wanted to bring along with him his First Vicar, Father Coudrin. Father Isidore David, who was then Vicar General and rector of the major seminary of Tours, took his place with the permission of Bishop de Montblanc of Tours, a friend of the Congregation and of the Founder for many years. In Picpus the prior was Father Raphael Bonamie, who had substituted for Father Cummins since September 24, 1828.³⁸⁴

380 Dans., pp. 202-219.

381 *Ibid.*, p. 218.

382 Lestr. III, p. 178.

383 *Ibid.* HL, VBP, 268.

384 HL, Mem. C.III, 39. VBP, 273.

On Thursday, February 26, Father Coudrin left for Rome, with no one of the community accompanying him. On March 3, he passed through Monte Cenisio, and reached Rome on Wednesday the eleventh, entering the conclave on Friday the thirteenth. The election of the new Pope took place on March 31; Cardinal Castiglione was chosen and took the name Pius VIII.³⁸⁵

Cardinal de Croy delayed returning; he brought his Vicar along with him everywhere he went, made things pleasant for him, and had him visit places of interest to him. The return was postponed until after August 15, when the Founder decided to leave alone and arrived in Rouen on September 12.³⁸⁶

During this long stay in the Eternal City, which involved no special negotiations, he had one constant preoccupation, which can be seen in his correspondence of this time: the imminent persecution in France. The letters we have of this time show that he also foresaw the possibility of being expelled from France. To have a refuge in Rome for this emergency, he bought a house on la Strada delle Cuatro Fontane on August 19, 1829, shortly before leaving the city.³⁸⁷

The notice of the death of Sister Gabriel de la Barre, on May 16 in Poitiers, which he received in the Eternal City in mid-June, must have affected him profoundly. She was a friend from the time of his youth, and one of the pillars of the Congregation.³⁸⁸

During Father Coudrin's absence, the Foundress had not wasted time, and in two trips had founded two houses in the diocese of Rouen, on March 4 in the city of Rouen itself and on July 2 in Yvetot.³⁸⁹

At the beginning of the school year, at the end of October 1829, Father Coudrin appointed Father Isidore David director of the major seminary of Rouen. Father Isidore retained his title of Vicar General and took charge of the seminary, assisted by Father Martin Calmet and Father Enrique Lacoste. The Congregation would keep this responsibility until July 17, 1900.³⁹⁰

Shortly after Father Coudrin's return from Rome, on October 4, 1829, Mother Aymer had an attack of apoplexy which in the very first moment made her think of death, and left her with a hemiplegia of the right side until she died. For some years a decline, gradually more and more accentuated, made everyone concerned about the Foundress. She walked bent over, without energy, making enormous efforts to fulfill her obligations,

385 HL, VBP, 274-275.

386 *Ibid.*, 278.

387 BP, 1477, 1485.

388 BP, 1493, 1494.

389 VBP, 271-272.

390 HL, Mem. C.III, 81; Isidore David, ASP, 23.

at times not even being able to climb the stairs. But no one ever thought there would be such a tragic outcome, so it was a pitiful shock for all the members of the community when a sister found her stretched out, motionless, on the floor of her room.³⁹¹

For Father Coudrin especially this was a terrible trial. He wrote on October 26 from Rouen to Father Philibert who was in Tours: “This poor Good Mother is not any better and we lose everything if the good Lord calls her to Him.”³⁹²

At the beginning of 1830, the Foundress’ health had stabilized and although she could not get out of bed, she was interested in everything and devoted herself to everything. As we judge now so much later, it seems that it was not good for the community that Mother Aymer did not give up her leadership, at least at this moment, since she did not do so at the Chapter of 1824, when she had already begun to feel her health was failing. Yet everyone experienced a kind of worship of her, and such confidence in her virtue and in the power of her prayer that it was thought that, despite so many limitations, nobody would guide the destinies of the Congregation with greater sensitivity to God’s designs. Apparently, the thought never crossed their minds to turn over the administration to others.³⁹³

Seventy bishops, with Archbishop de Quélen of Paris at the head, had formed a front of resistance to the Ordinances of 1828, which practically restricted the teaching dependent on the Church to minor seminaries, to which as we have seen, they fixed a limit. Before this opposition, the government of the King had recourse to Rome, and Leo XII, after reminding them that there was nothing in the ordinances which would threaten the power of the bishops, ordered Cardinal Latil, the Archbishop of Rheims, to transmit his decision that “they must trust in the eminent piety and wisdom of the King, and move in accord with the Throne.” Father Coudrin must have found it hard to obey this. However, the policy of forces sustaining the regime of the Restoration began to disintegrate totally.³⁹⁴

3. *Resurgence of the Revolution. Missions in Smyrna and Boston: 1830-1834*

The first half of 1830, under the Polignac ministry, was a period when the Restoration made a supreme effort to maintain itself in power. The cause was lost. Unpopular men,

³⁹¹ HL, VBM, 307, 311.

³⁹² BP, 1505.

³⁹³ HL, VBM, 312 ff.

³⁹⁴ Dans. 219.

and an unpopular policy without means to detect the direction of the historical evolution of society, committed one wrong after another. When the electorate was consulted in the elections of June 23 and July 3, the response was a rebuff. Then there was an attempt, in the Ordinances of July 25, to gag the protest and to restrain the latent revolution: the freedom of the press was terminated, the Chambers dissolved, the electoral system remodeled. It was a policy which someone has called “the suicide of the Monarchy.”³⁹⁵

The result was that the opposition took to the streets resulting in the riots known as the “Marches of July” which wound up with the abdication of Charles X and of the Dauphin on August 2, and with the election by the Chambers of a new king, in the person of the Duke of Orleans, on August 7. The new sovereign was enthroned on August 9, and took the name of Louis-Philippe I, King of the French. With him there came to power the ideas and the men of the Revolution, which had continued underground during the fifteen years of the Bourbon restoration.³⁹⁶

While Father Coudrin and the Archbishop of Rouen were considering the effects of the tensions between the new government and the Church, the residence of Picpus had a harsh experience of the change of political climate. On July 28, 1830, there was a revolutionary raid on the residence, fortunately without consequences. On the thirtieth, they came again, under pretext of looking for weapons. On Thursday, August 5, some “Volontaires de la Charte” came at one a.m. and spent twenty-one hours looking for weapons in every corner and had to leave without finding more than a few brooms. On November 1, at two p.m., the Commissary Leclerc came, sent this time by the Prefect of Police, to make a thorough investigation, which lasted until seven p.m.³⁹⁷

At the beginning of 1831, Louis-Philippe promulgated a decree of December 25, 1830, in which he reenacted the revolutionary legislation against religious congregations. In February anticlerical agitation surfaced, On February 7, there were the riots of Saint Germain l’Auxerrois and the destruction of the archiepiscopal palace. The residence of Picpus was assaulted on the sixteenth. This time, the damage was great.³⁹⁸

Hilarion, who was in the house, leaves us this narration in his *Mémoires*:

A wild band scaled the walls of the brothers’ residence of Picpus and carried off whatever they put their hands on, broke all the doors, windows, and furniture. In a half hour, they committed damage that cost 50,000 francs. Father Robert, Father Olympe, Brother Ireneus, and Brother Vital were abused and struck violently, but not wounded. When they broke in so unexpectedly the Blessed Sacrament was

395 Jardin Tudesque, *La France des notables*, pp. 114-127.

396 *Ibid.*

397 HL, VBP, 286-287.

398 *Ibid.*, 291.

still in the chapel of the seminary. Father Abraham, who had put off too long removing the tabernacle, as soon as he saw the rioters going everywhere, wanted to carry away the ciborium containing the sacred hosts. He did not have enough time. One of these scoundrels tore it out of his hands. This was a profanation, but even greater impieties were to be feared. Father Francis of Assis was present. Armed with great courage, he went to the one who looked like the head of the band, and who more than anyone else wanted to destroy everything. He begged him, he entreated him to have the sacred vessel containing the Holy Eucharist put back. This brigand was touched and ordered the one who had taken away the ciborium to put it back. Nevertheless, his destructive gang tore or stole the sacred ornaments. In the meantime, they had called on the national guard which finally arrived, but did not show itself less impious than those it was called on to repress. A detachment of this guard led Father Abraham, Father Francis of Assis, and Father Maurice to their barracks at Faubourg St. Antoine. One of these armed men then took the ciborium again and carried it off under pretext of preserving it. When they reached the barracks, he wanted to give it to the captain who, still having some faith left, did not want to receive it and ordered him to give it back to Father Abraham. The agitation increased. Some men of the post shouted blasphemies. Father Abraham, not knowing what was going to happen, consumed the sacred hosts in the guardhouse and purified the ciborium. The mayor arrived a few moments later. He himself put Fathers Abraham, Francis, and Maurice in a carriage and they took refuge at the home of a pious person in the capital. Both Fathers Francis and Maurice two days later ran into awful dangers. Having left their refuge dressed as laymen, they were recognized as priests by some agitators who wanted to throw them into the Seine. However, they let them go despite the efforts of a woman more frantic than the others.³⁹⁹

While the sisters' residence was intact, that of the fathers was ruined, and not only materially. All the personnel were dispersed and not being able to return home because of the destruction and insecurity, had to find asylum in various residences of the province. Perhaps the work which suffered most was that of the formation of the clergy for Ireland. There were at this time, according to Hilarion, no less than sixty Irish seminarians who returned to their country permanently. Our students, according to the same source, were around forty, and had to continue their studies as best they could in various places of France.⁴⁰⁰

The missionaries of Troyes had to put an end to their work in the parishes on this same date.

Father Felix Cummins was replaced as prior in Picpus by Father Raphael Bonamie after October 1828 and was transferred to Tours where he worked in the seminary

³⁹⁹ HL, Mem. C.III, 96.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

and became Vicar General after Father Isidore David left for Rouen. Shocked by this revolutionary outbreak, he received very promising offers from the United States. With the Superior General's permission, which he received on September 4, 1830, he left for New York where he stayed until 1832. Then he returned to France and again with the Founder's permission retired to Ireland where he died in 1839.⁴⁰¹

Another Irishman accompanied Father Felix on his voyage to the United States. However, on his return in 1832, he lost contact with the Congregation and, after he went back to Ireland, was never heard of again.⁴⁰²

These two instances of Irishmen returning to their country will help us realize what the end of the work of formation of clergy for Ireland on the part of the Congregation meant for them, and the frustration they must have felt at this time of social crisis and of the rebirth of revolutionary ideas, even before the sacking of Picpus.

During this year of 1832, fresh missionary horizons were opened up for the community. The episcopal see of the diocese of Babylon, which was customarily held by a Frenchman, became vacant, and the Holy See asked Cardinal de Croy to present the required three candidates. The archbishop appealed to his vicar to give him the names of three of his religious. The Founder put in the first place the name of Father Raphael Bonamie. On July 19, he sent him the Bull which had recently arrived from Rome, and on November 18, he was consecrated in the Eternal City by Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith.⁴⁰³

The bishop of Boston, in the United States, requested of the Propagation of the Faith of Lyon, two missionaries for the indigenous tribes of the northern coast of his diocese, on the Canadian border. The secretary transmitted the petition to Father Coudrin, who responded affirmatively on December 19, 1832. On July 17, 1833, the missionaries left for Le Havre, and embarked on the twenty-sixth.⁴⁰⁴

Bishop Bonamie left for the Orient on October 16, 1833,⁴⁰⁵ almost a year after his consecration.

4. *The Founder Returns to Picpus. Death of the Founders:* **1833-1837**

From October 1828, when Mother Aymer was stricken by an attack of apoplexy which left her semiparalyzed, Father Coudrin travelled more frequently to Paris. The

401 LE, no. 87. HL, Mem. C.III, 90.

402 Father Benignus MacCahill, LE, no. 163.

403 HL, Mem. C.III, 124 ff.

404 *Ibid.*, 143-151.

405 HL, *Ibid.*, 142.

crisis of the community of Picpus after the sacking of the residence, the greater and greater development of the foreign missions, all obliged him, even though fatigued, to take the stagecoach to Paris several times.⁴⁰⁶

The Founder felt quite burdened in this year of 1833; this was due not only to the preoccupations of governing his religious community, together with the responsibilities of the diocese of Rouen, but also because he did not feel well and his sixty-five years weighed heavily on him. His hand trembled when he had to write a lot and sign many documents. It was this that made him feel older than he actually was. It was the weight of years of hectic activity without sufficient rest which began to make itself felt so cruelly and so inexplicably.⁴⁰⁷

Added to all this physical fatigue, and the growing anxiety over his responsibility as Founder, was the discovery at this time that in the curia of Rouen there was someone who was conniving to supplant him. He whom Lestra calls the “Machiavelli of the sacristy” was none other than Father Fayet, who owed his return to Rouen and the office he held to Father Coudrin.⁴⁰⁸

The cardinal, on his part, had complete confidence in him. The greatest proof of this is that on June 29, 1833, he made a new division in his diocese of archdiaconates, with a vicar at the head of each one of them. Over all of them, with universal jurisdiction throughout the territory of the diocese, he had appointed Father Coudrin First Vicar.⁴⁰⁹

This act of confidence must have moved the Founder who regarded the cardinal not only as his bishop but as a cordial and sincere friend, incapable of any deceit. This very gesture must have increased in him the feeling of responsibility, a responsibility he no longer thought he had the strength to maintain.

For this reason, perhaps, the discovery of Fayets machinations was not alleviated by the certainty he had of the archbishop’s confidence in him, but rather might well have been the last straw.

Father Coudrin decided to leave his post as Vicar General of Rouen and return to Picpus, and did so in his own peculiar way. He had but few personal effects to carry, so, saying nothing to anybody –the cardinal was not in Rouen– he took his little suitcase, got on the stagecoach to Paris on Thursday, November 7, 1833. On Friday the fifteenth, he wrote to the archbishop, presenting him his resignation.⁴¹⁰

406 HL, VBP, 309-310.

407 HL, Mem. C.III, 102.

408 Lestr. III, 300 ff.

409 *Ibid.*

410 *Ibid.*, 329 ff.

A lot of work awaited him in Picpus. By November 20, he was already teaching theology to his seminarians, and in December he bade goodbye to another group of missionaries who left for Oceania. They were Father Jean Chrysostome Liausu, twenty-six, who went as Prefect Apostolic of Southern Oceania, Father François of Assisi Caret, thirty-one, and Father Honorat Laval, twenty-five. They set sail from Pauliac (Bordeaux) on February 1, 1834.⁴¹¹

At the end of 1833, the second missionary bishop of the Congregation was consecrated in Rome, on December 22. He was Bishop Rouchouze, Vicar Apostolic of Oceania. In October 1834, he embarked at Le Havre on his way to the Pacific.⁴¹²

The bishop of Chartres had requested the Congregation to set up a residence in the city of Châteaudun. On November 15, Father Coudrin with a group of nuns left to open the residence. When he returned to Paris on Saturday the twenty-second of the same month, Mother Aymer was in agony. The Thursday before, Extreme Unction had been administered to her and it was evident that her last moments had arrived.⁴¹³

The next day, on Sunday the twenty-third of November, at 5:30 p.m., she passed away, assisted in her dying by Father Coudrin.⁴¹⁴

On December 10, Mother Françoise de Viart was chosen as Mother General. She was sixty-two, one of the first companions of Mother Aymer, and from her youth a friend of the Founder. On Saturday the twentieth, she came from Cahors, where she had been superior since 1817, to take over her office.⁴¹⁵

In March 1835, Father Coudrin went to Poitiers which he had not visited since 1817, and spent some time at Coussay where he had put his brother Charles in charge of the construction of a residence for the nuns of his Congregation. He returned to Picpus on April 28.⁴¹⁶

When the moment for the foundation arrived, in June, it was Sister Françoise de Viart who made the journey accompanied by the sisters. Father Coudrin was too exhausted.⁴¹⁷ Nevertheless, on September 5, he made another trip to Le Mans, which took several weeks.⁴¹⁸

At the end of the year, he received news from the missionaries of the South Pacific. They disembarked in the Gambier Islands in August 1834 and successfully began the

411 HL, VBP, 311; Mem. C.III, 169-170.

412 HL, Mem. C.III, 152-153, 174-176.

413 HL, Mem. C.III, 184.

414 HL, VBM, 366-377; Mem. C.III, 193.

415 HL, Mem. C.III, 197.

416 HL, VBP, 322.

417 *Ibid.*

418 HL, VBP, 329-330.

work of evangelization.⁴¹⁹

In Valparaíso a house was established in May of 1834 which would be a support center for all the missions of the Pacific.⁴²⁰

On Sunday, March 20, 1836, Father Coudrin was again in Coussay-les-Bois, this time to give a mission, which would long be remembered by the people. Only on May 17 did he come back to Picpus, after visiting the houses on the way.⁴²¹

August was a difficult month for the Founder, who lost his young niece, a sister of Picpus, Sister Henriette Coudrin, whom he called the “staff of his old age.” She died on the twenty-fourth, after some months of painful illness, which she accepted patiently. Almost at the same time the mother of the young wife of Charles Coudrin, the Founder’s brother, died in Coussay-les-Bois. A sentence of the postscript addressed to Sister Philippine Coudrin, superior of Troyes, sums up the Founder’s feelings at this moment: “God loves us, for He afflicts us so much!”⁴²²

Trials did not slow him down. Towards the end of that year he made two more journeys, one for a week in September to Troyes and another to the new establishment in Coussay-les-Bois in November.⁴²³

In the winter of 1837 an epidemic of grippe wrought havoc in Paris, and Father Coudrin had it twice, but his weakened condition did not prevent him from preaching all during Lent. On Thursday, March 9, the feast-day of the Superior General of the sisters (Sr. Françoise de Viart), although fatigued, he sang the Mass. But he was preoccupied with the thought of his approaching death and concerned about the problem of his successor. However, events did not permit him to do anything about it, so he entrusted it all to God.⁴²⁴

That Holy Week was his last. On Palm Sunday, March 19, he could not say Mass, although with the greatest of effort he recited the whole Office. The first days he spent in bed, and on Holy Thursday he got up for a few hours, but he had a crisis which made him return to his bed. On Saturday they administered Extreme Unction to him. He was able to renew his vows for the last time on Easter Sunday, and the following day, March 27, at 7:15 in the morning, he died, blessing the distant missions. His last understandable words were: “Valparaíso... Gambier...”⁴²⁵

419 *Ibid.*, IV, 42, 73, 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 87, etc.

420 HL, Mem. IV, 92.

421 HL, VBP, 331-332.

422 *Ibid.*, 333.

423 *Ibid.*, 334-335.

424 *Ibid.*, 337.

425 *Ibid.*, 338-343.

5. ***Bishop Bonamie, Superior General. Revision of the Constitutions: 1837-1840***

On the very day of the Founder's death, the council of the residence of Picpus met. The prior, Father Aymard Amat, was absent, and the meeting was presided over by Father Jean de la Cruz Amat, his brother, who, as Master of Novices, was entitled to take his place. Having verified that Father Coudrin had not appointed a vicar, he assumed responsibility and informed the Congregation. He requested the superiors of all the residences to send, within eight days, their votes for Superior General, in conformity with what was in the first chapter, art. 13 of the Constitutions.⁴²⁶

According to art. 11 of this same chapter of the Constitutions, the electors were: 1. the local superiors; 2. missionaries, teachers, and choir brothers who were residents of the main residence at the time of election, on condition they were thirty years old and had been professed for five years. The council made a list of those eligible and sent it to the superiors, along with the communication. At the end of the list a note was added:

You must not be surprised that the Archbishop of Smyrna and the Bishop of Nilopolis are not on this list since, being directly dependent on the Head of the Church so long as they have a title, they are not eligible.⁴²⁷

It seems that this note caused some commentaries, for on April 10, while waiting to receive the votes for the election, the council felt obliged to send to all the residences another letter, clarifying the situation. In the first place, the letter explained, in saying that bishops were not eligible, the council did not intend to impose its own opinion, but simply to express it. In the second place, it helped to call attention to the urgency of the election and the evils resulting from a prolonged vacancy, especially under the political circumstances which were threatening: "placed on a volcano which may at any moment erupt." In the third place, the bishops would not be available, except to the extent the Holy See would permit them to be.⁴²⁸

The atmosphere must not have been good in the communities of France when, on April 19, the majority of the council, presided over this time by the prior, Aymard Amat, who, on April 7 had returned to Paris, sent a letter which reflects a certain confusion and shows a division in the council itself. Out of eight members, three did not want to support the decision taken, nor sign the letter: Hilarion Lucas, Joachim Délétang, and Stephen McArdle.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ HL, Mem. C.IV, additional documents

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 1.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 3.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 5.

Council of the main residence, Paris, April 19, 1837:

You expected perhaps to read in the present communication the name of the newly-elected Superior General. Unfortunately, your expectations will not be realized. It is true that the responses requested in the last letter have arrived except for one we are awaiting every day. The election then could take place in a few days but you must know that the council does not think it should go on to the balloting. Many persons, in fact, both in the provinces and in the main residence, have pointed out that even the last letter presented certain difficulties, not only regarding the secrecy of the voting, but also because of the influence it could exercise on the voters. These difficulties, of course, would not nullify the election of the Superior General but might well sow in the Congregation a seed of discontent which would impair the unity of the members and the authority of the superior forever. The council, impressed by these considerations inasmuch as they are dictated only out of concern for the objectives of the Congregation, was convinced that it was infinitely more advantageous to delay the election a few days. This proposal it was thought would result in bringing about among us that perfect peace which our Good Father exhorted us to have even on the eve of his death. It also held that postponing the election would be better than gaining a few days at the risk perhaps of causing pain to many of our brothers. So the council, putting aside every purely human consideration, believes it should make the following decisions:

1. The two letters already addressed to the brothers chosen as electors are abrogated and their contents are to be without influence and without effect.
2. The votes which have already arrived have been returned to the respective electors.
3. A new request for the votes of the brothers electors nonresidents in Paris will be directed to them in order that they can reply in full and entire liberty.

As a consequence of this new decision, the council entreats and at the same time enjoins on you that you send your vote as soon as possible.

The brothers who are members of the council, whose signatures are not found on this letter, have stated that they do not wish to take part in the present deliberation, which is contrary to the preceding deliberations.

Brother Philippe Fezendié, Brother Césaire Carré, Brother Philibert Vidon, Brother Jean de la Croix Amat, Brother Aymard Amat.

The voting procedure remodeled, the electors of the residence of Picpus went on retreat for three days, as required by art. 13 of the first chapter of the Constitutions on May 1, the day when the last vote arrived. At the end of the retreat, Thursday the fourth, the feast of the Ascension, the electors of the main residence alone, plus Father Isidore David, who had wanted to bring his vote personally from Rouen, assembled in the Chapel

of St. Benoit. Father Philibert Vidon brought the sealed box containing the votes of the superiors. The prior immediately collected the votes for appointing those who were to count the votes. They were Father Aymard Amat, Father Hilarion Maigret, and Father Alexander Sorieul.⁴³⁰

After the box of the superiors' votes was opened, the votes of those present were counted. Father Prior, who directed the procedure, did not have the right to vote because he had not yet reached thirty years of age. When the votes were all collected, the count began. Father Aymard opened the box and read the votes, and the other counters reviewed and recorded each one on his list. There was the following result:

- Father Raphael Bonamie, Archbishop of Smyrna, 18 votes.
- Father Martin Calmet, 12 (Vicar General of Rouen).
- Father Isidore David, 11 (Vicar General of Rouen).
- Father Hippolyte Launay, 1.

The Constitution did not require an absolute majority, so that the Archbishop of Smyrna was elected. The proclamation was made and also a decision was taken to have recourse to the Holy See for his confirmation.⁴³¹

To obtain the confirmation of Rome, Father Alexander Sorieul and Francis de Sales Vieillescazes left for the Eternal City. On June 13, in an audience with Gregory XVI, they succeeded in obtaining his assent, and Father Alexander left for Smyrna to inform Archbishop Bonamie that he had been elected.⁴³²

Meanwhile, Archbishop Bonamie, as of June 2, had already given his reply to the council, saying that he put himself at the disposal of the Holy See. He had told the same thing to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith.⁴³³

When Father Alexander arrived, he decided to sail with him to Italy in order to treat personally of the matter with the Holy See. A pestilence broke out in the East and prevented him from disembarking either in Naples or in Civitavecchia. He could only do so in Livorno, where he had hardly landed when he was quarantined. From there he wrote to Rome, and on August 12, received a confirmation from Monsignor Mai, secretary of the Propagation of the Faith, that his resignation had been accepted.⁴³⁴

Bishop Bonamie then tried to travel to Rome overland, but the officials of the sanitariums built at the boundaries on account of the cholera which decimated the city

430 HL, Mem. C.IV, additional documents doc. no. 8: *Procès Verbal de l'Élection du Sup. Général*, May 4, 1837.»

431 *Ibid.*

432 *Ibid.*, doc. no. 9, *Supplique du Conseil au S. Père*, May 8, 1837.

433 Stanislas Perron, *Mgr. Bonamie*, ANN., 1902, pp. 366-373.

434 *Ibid.*

prevented him from doing so. He decided to wait no longer and left for France by land. Before leaving, he signed in Florence his first letter addressed to the entire Congregation, on September 16, 1837.⁴³⁵

In this letter he says frankly:

Our manner of thinking on the subject of the government of the Congregation is the same as we had during the time we carried out the functions of prior in the main residence. On this point our feelings have in no way changed, that is, constantly to tend, through the exact observation of the rules, toward the four aims our Congregation has, to give insofar as possible to each one of the members the opportunity to utilize the talent Divine Providence had endowed him with, be compassionate in dealing with weakness, encourage those of goodwill, strongly resist any prideful insubordination, and leave nothing undone to make reign among us the peace and union which are the fruits of good order. Such is the course we intend to follow and with God's grace we will follow it to the end.

It is a mode of conduct which reflects clearly the spirit and temperament of the new Superior General, and which he always would follow with scrupulous fidelity.

One of the first acts of Father Bonamie's government was the convocation and preparation of a General Chapter, which had not been held since 1824. The Constitutions, in art. 1 of the second chapter, directed that the Assembly was to be held every five years and no later.⁴³⁶

The Founder's reasons for not convoking the Chapter for so many years are varied and complex. There is no doubt that they were greatly influenced by the political situation of hostility toward religious. Perhaps, too, they were also influenced by internal difficulties, due to the growth of an opinion which favored changes in the Constitutions and which had been expressed particularly during Prior Raphael Bonamie's government in Picpus.⁴³⁷

Perhaps no one knew better the difficulties of the enterprise than Father Bonamie himself, who took great care with the preparation of the urgently desired Chapter. The first practical step in this sense was the ordinance given at Bordeaux on May 24, 1838. It was addressed to the members of the council, instructing them to make a study of the project, while he carried out his obligation of visiting the houses. The council was composed of Father Leonce de Sales, Prior; Father Hilarion Lucas, Philibert Vidon, Hilaire Maigret, and Alexander Sorieul. The request of the Superior General in his letter was as follows:

⁴³⁵ *Registre des Circulaires*, pp. 4-8.

⁴³⁶ *Constitutions 1824*. Published at Troyes, 1826.

⁴³⁷ A. Hulselmans, *La Règle de la Congrégation des SS.CC.* (unpublished, p. 165).

The approach of the General Chapter which we intend to convoke in the month of September imposes on us a duty, my dearest brothers, of preparing the matters which will have to be considered, and of facilitating the conclusions by a clear and precise exposition of the additions and corrections our holy rules require. Since our obligation to make visitations of our residences prevents us from doing this, we urge you to do so and suggest you follow this procedure unless you unanimously prefer another method.

You are to meet three times a week, on the days and at the hours you will determine immediately after having been informed by this letter.

You will read in common, at each meeting, a certain number of articles of our Constitution, Statutes, and Rules. Together you will examine what would be proper to explain, to add and to revise. You will then work, each one individually, on what will have been the subject of the reading and of the deliberations, and at the next meeting, each one of you will bring in writing the articles he will think useful to add, the corrections he will think proper to make, and explain why he did so. These various documents will be sent to our brother Hilarion, who will be pleased to transcribe them and send them to us after our return to the main residence.⁴³⁸

In a letter of June 25, 1838, he convoked the Chapter to be held according to the Rule on September 1, asked suggestions from everyone, but did not say what would be worked out in the revision of the Constitutions.⁴³⁹

On the date indicated the Chapter met, and its main task was that of revising the Constitutions, using as instrument the fruit of the council's work, that is "the new plan of Rules, presented by the Council of the Main Residence, and discussed as ordered by our Very Reverend Father during his Visitation of the Residences." This work, according to Father Hulselmans, comprised no less than 82 pages in quarto and treated, in seventeen chapters, with 127 articles, all the points of the Rule. Sixteen chapters are on the Rule of 1824, plus a new chapter, "Chapter IV. Concerning the Provincial Brothers." In each article, there is specified the views of each one of the counsellors.

Here is what Father Hulselmans has to say about this work:

The articles are very long, at times more than a page in quarto, written in small script. There is little order and some articles treat of ten different rules. The Rule of 1825 is not logically structured, and does not serve as a model for clear and simple regulations. The Program of Regulations drawn up by the General Council was even less so, and hardly serves as a text of the Rule.⁴⁴⁰

438 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

439 *Registre*, pp. 14-16.

440 A. Hulselmans, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181.

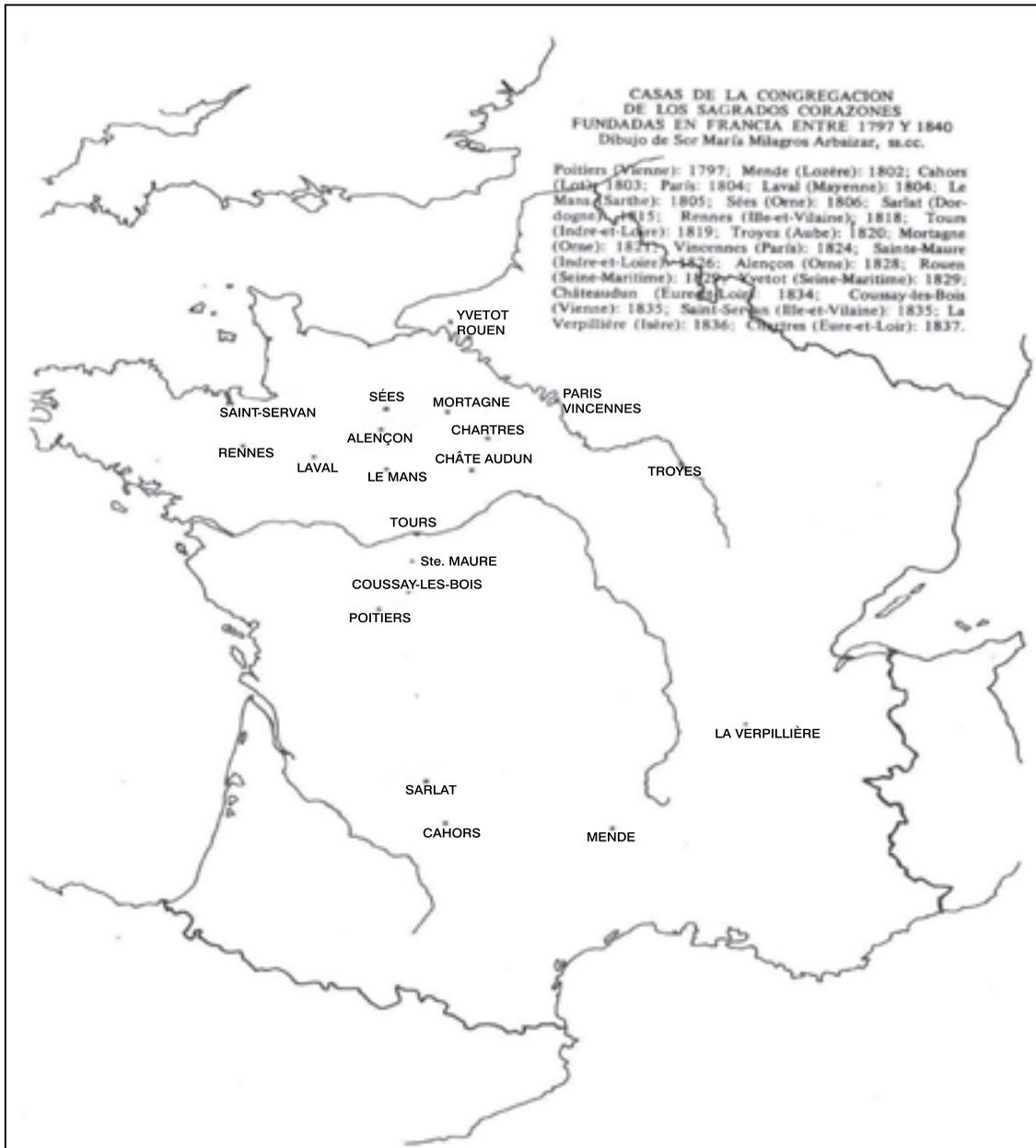
The Chapter worked for more than a month and drew up a text, which, again according to Father Hulselmans, satisfied all members of the assembly and of the Congregation. So, it is clear that at that time the controversy which was to break out later was not foreseen. The controversy arose from rather unreasonable motives, but an explanation would require a study which is beyond the objective of these pages.⁴⁴¹

The new Constitutions were approved in Rome by Pope Gregory XVI in a decree of August 22, 1839, and were published in the first months of 1840. With this, we conclude the historical period we have studied.⁴⁴²



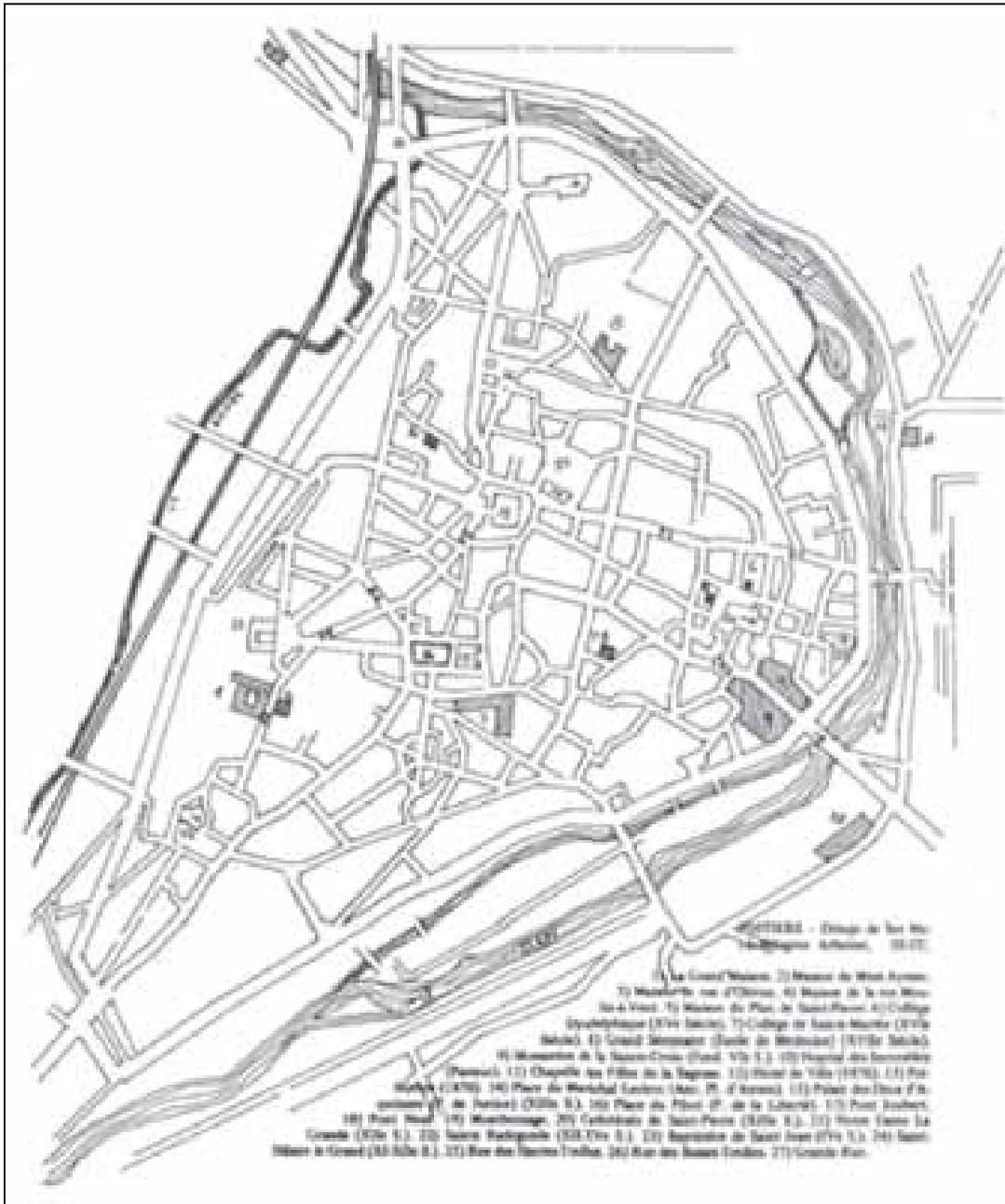
441 *Actes des Chapitres Généraux*, pp. 106-237.

442 These documents are found in the copies of the Constitutions published in 1909, pp. XXVII-XXXI.



**Map of FRANCE with the indication of the cities
where houses of the Congregation were founded between
1800 and 1840**

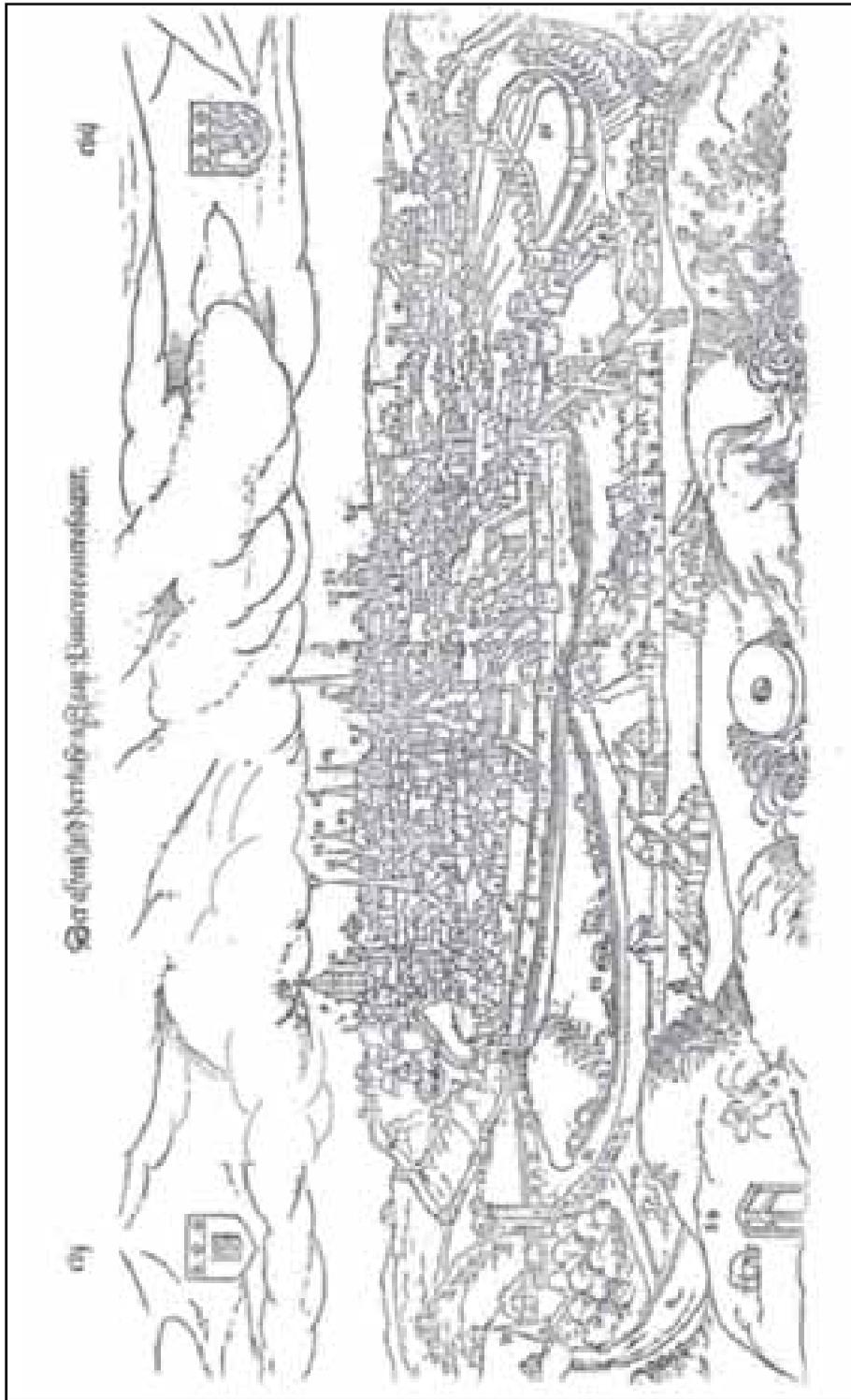
(Drawing by Sr. Milagros Arbaizar ss.cc.)



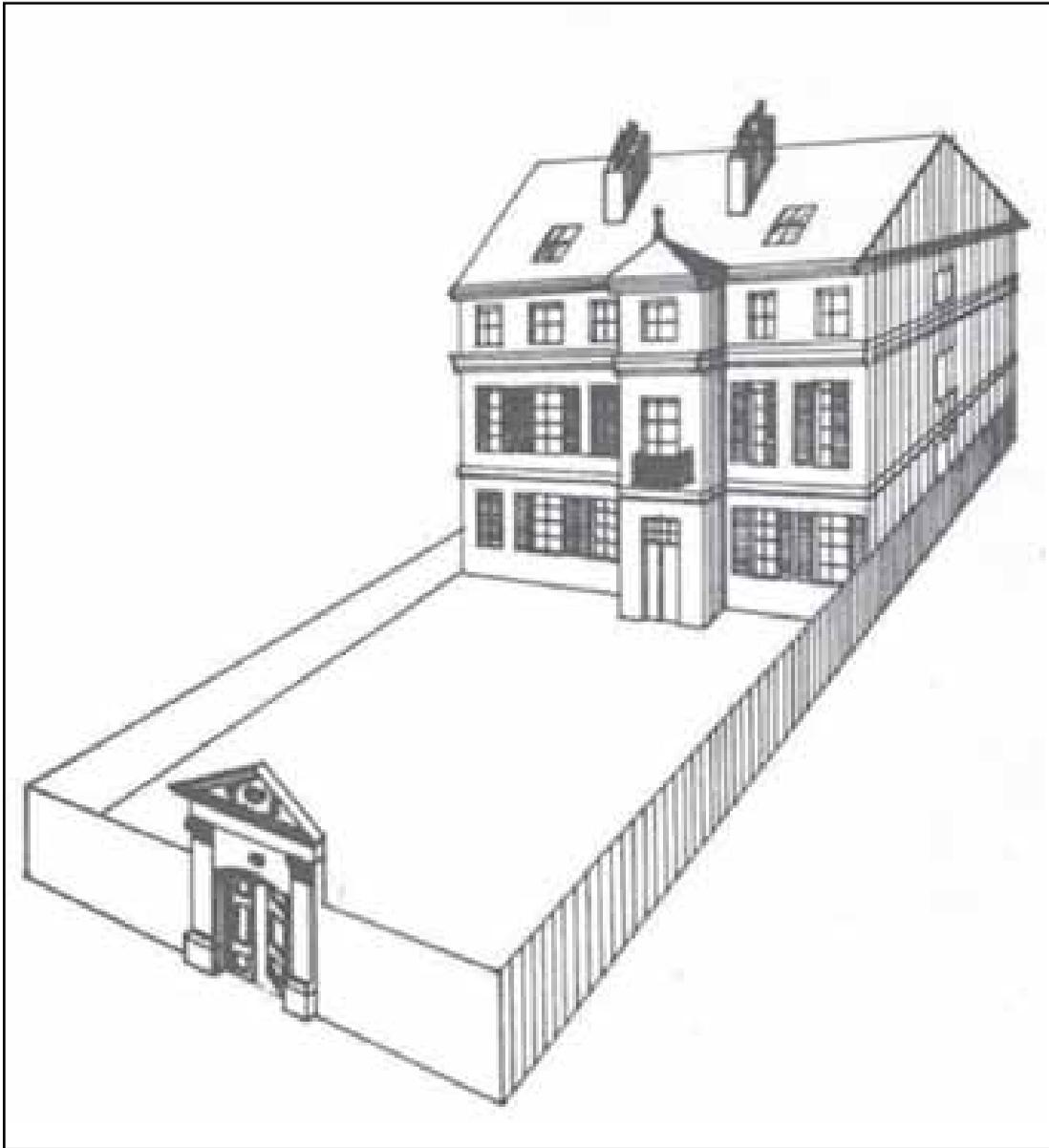
POITIERS.

**Map of the city, with the indication of the most interesting places
for the history of the foundation of the Congregation.**

(Drawing by Sr. Milagros Arbaizar ss.cc.)



POITIERS: wood engraving of the 16th century



La Grand'Maison of Poitiers. Reconstruction between 1797 and 1802

(Drawing by Sr. Milagros Arbaizar ss.cc.)



Part II

In the Service of God and Humanity

The picture of the daily life and geographical expansion of the community that emerges from the documents in the period we are studying is most impressive relative to its activity in the service of God and humanity. Of course, we are aware that we cannot present an adequate picture of the whole until all the elements of the historical life of the community have been reconstructed. Just as in a living organism each organ can only be understood in relation to the whole organism of which it is a part, so to fully appreciate each aspect of the life of this community, we must know the whole.⁴⁴³ Yet we think it useful to present here in advance something about the spirit which animated its service of God and humanity.

It is to be noted that the community was mainly concerned with developing a clearly defined and coherent spirituality based on the Gospels, but its theological expression was left for other times.



443 Cf. Part IV.

Chapter I

THE ZEAL OF FATHER COUDRIN AND HIS DISCIPLES

In his request for diocesan approval of the congregation addressed to the Vicars General of Poitiers in May 1801, the Founder wrote:

Acknowledging your zeal for the Kingdom of God and your ardent desire to see it grow in all hearts, we request your approval of the association and way of life of the priests and laypeople forming a society under the name of Zealots of the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.⁴⁴⁴

This text of Father Coudrin expresses his conviction that, in order to understand and approve his community, “zeal for the growth of the Kingdom of God” was a prerequisite. So, we shall explain briefly: 1. what zeal meant for the Founder and its importance for the apostolic spirit of the community; 2. the object of this zeal, “the Work of God”; 3. spirit (courage), a quality demanded not only of Father Coudrin himself, but also of his community.

1. Zeal and its Importance

From his youth the Founder believed deeply that zeal was necessary for the very profession of Christianity. Its very first manifestation was that of living a genuine Christian life. We quote the pertinent paragraph from a sermon he preached on faith a short while before 1800.

... But it is not enough to know and enjoy happiness (that of being in the bosom of faith despite unbelievers). As you know we have commitments: submission, which makes us listen with docility; affection, which urges us to love tenderly; zeal, which impels us to defend its interests with ardor; action, which makes us love and honor it by our works... My dear friends, how do we testify to our faith? By our zeal in defense of its interests. Could a reconciled Christian do this without zeal? We think we have it, but do our actions prove it? Our faith has commandments, laws, practices... There is Zeal! Can we pride ourselves on being animated by it? Our faith has its interests. Do we have them in our hearts? Our

444 ANN., 1963, p. 184.

faith has enemies to fear, persecutions to bear, conflicts to wage. We know this, but how do we react? Does zeal for the house of God consume our hearts as it did that of the prophet? ...⁴⁴⁵

This manner of thinking characterized every facet of Father Coudrin's conduct during the Reign of Terror and the persecution under the Directory. What happened only strengthened the ardor and fullness of his surrender to the service of the cause of God and of the Christian community of Poitiers.⁴⁴⁶

How he welcomed a communication from Mother Aymer of December 22, 1800: "We will have the name Zealots, chosen by the Blessed Mother." Two days later he made his first vows:

I, brother Marie-Joseph, make the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience following the light of the Holy Spirit for the good of the Work as a Zealot of the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in whose service I wish to live and die. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.⁴⁴⁷

In the Founder's eyes, zeal was so important for his community that it deserved to be part of its name and of the very formula of the vows: "Zélateurs de l'Amour; Moi, frère Marie-Joseph, fais vœux ... comme zéléateur de l'Amour." Under this title the community lived the seventeen years of its existence as a "Diocesan Congregation". In his report to Rome of December 6, 1818, he insisted on the value of the name "Zealots" for the community. Though it arrived too late to be considered, we do have a copy of the document which we shall try to summarize.⁴⁴⁸

Zeal is defined in the New American Bible as "an ardent emotion, inspired by our love of God, which moves us to glorify Him through active propagation of the faith and the sanctification of souls"; and in secular dictionaries as "ardent endeavor and devotion." For him, zeal was "a divine calling" which put the religious at the service of the cause of God and Christ, in the service of men. It was a resource and an impulse which would bring the members of his community to the attainment of the objective it proposed the secret of the efficacy of its service. Love must reign, and zeal is a guarantee of being under its power and of working under its influence.

The Founder intended this word, included in the very title of his community, to serve as a spur. It would arouse every member daily from the slumber of selfishness which lies in wait and threatens everyone in this world. He said:

445 BP, 2199.

446 Cf. supra. Part I.

447 BP, 2320, 2281.

448 ANN., 1963, p. 220.

We need a title which reminds our brothers every day of their duties and obligations, which makes them remember at each instant they must sacrifice themselves out of zeal for the Lord. It is a title which will make them aware they will violate their most essential vow from the moment they want to live for themselves alone and not for the salvation of their brothers. It will also teach them that they are not to enter into the silence of the cloister save for drawing there from fresh strength to combat more courageously the enemies of religion. It will make them realize, finally, that their vocation is all zeal, a burning zeal. This is what the members of our Society should think about! This is what they cannot forget as soon as they bear the title of Zealots! Should they do so, their very name would cry out against them! ...

Further on he added:

The same applies to our sisters, even more forcefully. Of course, the daughters of Zion might feel themselves induced to devote themselves exclusively to the sweetness of contemplation. Thus they would soon seek to free themselves from the laborious tasks of teaching the young, if their title Zealots did not recall constantly the obligation to practice a more extensive charity.⁴⁴⁹

In the first paragraphs of the same document Father Coudrin explained the motives and roots of the zeal he wanted burning in his community. He reduced them to two: the historical circumstances which demanded great zeal on the part of a Christian, and the contemplation itself of the mystery of Love, the Redemption. He wrote:

For almost half a century a false and odious philosophy combated religion and succeeded in extinguishing in almost every heart zeal for God's glory... (an allusion to Voltaire and his disciples). At times they even speak of respect for the Supreme Being, but they no longer know what the Love of the good God means. Under such circumstances, we desired to bring men back to trust and love of Jesus Christ. So, dedicated by our vows to this good work, we had to take on a name which of itself impresses minds and brings back better feelings for making them understand that they must open their hearts to a divine flame...

Touching on the true source of zeal, he continued:

If we are truly penetrated by the loving concern that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has for the salvation of souls, will we not, then, be enflamed with zeal in response to the love of so good a Master? If we think of the maternal love of the Heart of Mary for men who became her children in the person of St. John, will we not again feel our souls aglow with a holy zeal in honor of the Virgin of Virgins?⁴⁵⁰

Another text eloquently brings out the Founder's thinking on this point. It is a prayer which, according to Hilarion, goes back to the time of Father Coudrin's first vows

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 221, *3.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 220, *1.

in 1800. He used to recite this prayer before celebrating Mass and at the Chapters held by the community twice a week. It is a petition for the grace of zeal for the community.

Here is the text:

O Jesus Christ, behold the children of Your Divine Heart. We are in confusion in Your presence because of our sins and the innumerable iniquities flooding France and the world. Although we are unworthy, we present ourselves as victims. Take hold Yourself of the sacrificial sword until, buried in Your hidden life, zeal for Your divine house consumes us, and we can live and suffer with You, who are ever our center and our life. Amen.⁴⁵¹

Here there is indicated as a source of zeal a contemplation which, not only tells us about the “feelings” of Jesus Christ, but helps us penetrate them, immerses us in His life, and which leads to identification or oneness with Christ the Victim, or as we would say today, with the servant of Yahweh, of Isaiah.⁴⁵²

In substance, Father Coudrin felt that zeal is dynamic. It has its source in participation in the very life of Christ and constitutes a guarantee of acting under the direction of the Spirit. He would like his children to receive the same commendation that the martyrs of Lyon gave to Pope Eleutherius in honoring St. Irenaeus: “He is a zealot of the Testament of Christ.”⁴⁵³

2. The Work of God

Perhaps we should go back to the experience that Father Coudrin had at La Motte in the summer of 1792 which convinced him that he was doing a task which was not a “work” of his own but of God. At any rate, in 1800, precisely in the formula of vows mentioned above, he says they are to be taken “following the light of the Holy Spirit for the good of the Work, as a zealot of the Love of the Sacred Hearts...”⁴⁵⁴

From this moment on, “the Work of God,” or simply “the Work,” became the most common name for the community, especially during the years 1800-1814. It appears throughout the documents. The community shared the Founder’s conviction and it may be said that for them it was much more than a pious title; it was an expression of the profound essence of the community itself.⁴⁵⁵

451 PAC, 1141, 90, note.

452 Cf. Phil 2:5; Is 52:13; 53:12.

453 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.*, Sources Chrétiennes 41, p. 28. “We have undertaken to hand these letters over to our brother and comrade Irenaeus, and we ask that you respect him as a zealot of Christ’s testament. If we knew that the situation would bring about justice for anyone, we would have begun by presenting him to you as a priest of the Church as he actually is ... “

454 12 BP, 2281.

455 BP, 28, 32, 33, 39, 43, 53, 57, 58, 59, 66, 110, 113, 114, 124, 130, 136, 144, 145, 147, 154, 169, 186, 192, 209, 209b, 211, 218, 228, 240, 244, 258, 590, 591, 598, 609, 628, 649, 670, 675, 718, 740, 745, 820, 1044, 1064, 1123, 1191, 1197, 1211, 1249, 1279, 1331, 1358, 1387, 1547, 1681, 1671, 1675, 1732, 1793, 1935, 1976, 1998, 2020, 2039, 2081, 2246, 2281, 2295, 23H, 2320, 2324, 2325, -2328, 2287, 2322.

When Father Coudrin arrived in Paris on August 4, 1804, the unstable situation endangered his office of superior general as well as the canonical status of his clandestine community and made the immediate future uncertain. He wrote to Sister Gabriel de la Barre in Poitiers:

Feast of St. Dominic, who underwent the crucible of tribulations for a similar work which, despite my exile, makes up all my happiness. Yes ... I live only to advance, though at great cost, the work of the Sacred Heart of this loving Master who showers His favors on me... Be as pillars of your home which nothing can make you leave. They may well prevent you from reserving (in your house) the Spouse of your souls, but they can never stop you from adoring and loving Him wholly. Do not rely on any human help. At best it is but noise and its very flame at the height of its effort produces but smoke. Experience is teaching me that all here below is untrustworthy...⁴⁵⁶

Later, in 1816, he wrote to Father Vidal who was his procurator in Rome during the negotiations for approval of the Congregation: “My heart will ever appreciate your zeal for a work we have thus far believed to be that of God.”

In 1820, he wrote to a priest of Paris: “I am in charge of a Work which I have reason to believe is the work of God, for He has supported it up to this day.”⁴⁵⁷

The community lived its first twenty years in a restricted situation; it was in constant danger of being dissolved, of having its members imprisoned, and before 1800, in danger of their lives. This created among them the feeling of living a miracle, thanks to the constant protection of divine Providence.⁴⁵⁸

In the letter of the Founder announcing the approbation of the Congregation there is a reference to this experience:

You know, our beloved brothers and dearest sisters, that our Institute ... began in times when the blood of God’s servants flowed over the scaffolds. We have now existed for twenty-three years, so the marvels of the divine goodness must have sustained us during these tempests. The Lord ever shone on us through his miracles. Each day we received proofs of His protection. We were preserved during the Reign of Terror. During the persecution under the Directory and the fourteen years of (Napoleonic) oppression, with God’s help we were able to conceal from an astute and perfidious police (allusion to Fouché) what our Institute is and above all the relationships between our various establishments.⁴⁵⁹

Such testimonies as to the daily activities of the community as a “Work of God” are abundant. They are given by various members and are a common topic of the community

⁴⁵⁶ BP, 192.

⁴⁵⁷ BP, 509, 649.

⁴⁵⁸ GB, Ecr.Div., 113.

⁴⁵⁹ ANN., 1960, p. 176.

literature of this period. We have quoted some of the Founder's texts, so now we shall complement them by some texts by his disciples.

Father Antoine Astier wrote to Father Coudrin in April, 1805 from Cahors, the third foundation of the Congregation of which he was the superior. Speaking of its religious he said:

I found my journey well repaid by the pleasure I had on finding my friends in excellent health and so kind. They seemed to me filled with zeal for the Work of God...⁴⁶⁰

Father Hippolyte Launay wrote to the Founder in 1806 wishing him a very happy new year: "... May (the good God) give you ever more and more the means for accomplishing His Work."⁴⁶¹

In 1825, Father Hilarion wrote to Father Bonamie, apropos of the approbation of the Constitutions which he was seeking with Father Coudrin in Rome: "... We have reason for hoping the Lord will bless our Work which is His own."⁴⁶²

Sister Justine Charret, who belonged to the first group which made profession at Picpus in 1805, sums up the sentiment of the community in her *Notes sur la Vie du B. Père*:

The works of the Good Father also seemed inspired by God to persons truly attached to the interests of the Church. They marveled at how, unaided, a man had conceived the founding of an Order on humility and poverty, at a time when faith and charity seemed to have disappeared... At the residence, hearts did not doubt about the future of the Work!⁴⁶³

Sister Gabriel de la Barre presented the founding of the Congregation as a work of Divine Providence, when at the beginning of her *Mémoires* she said: "The means which Divine Providence used in the beginning and in the growth of the Order of Zealots ... are known to but few persons..."

She made the same assertion throughout the various moments of the life of the community until 1824, which marks the end of her literary work.⁴⁶⁴

Father Hilarion Lucas, in his *Mémoire* presented to the Holy See in 1815, summing up the historical attitude of the community during Napoleon's domination and under the Revolution, said:

... in the midst of this general turbulence, filled with confidence in the Lord, we believed we had to abandon ourselves to His mercy ... (instead of entrusting

⁴⁶⁰ Cahier No. 10, 274.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.* 275.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.* 278.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.* 282.

⁴⁶⁴ ANN., 1962, p. 172.

ourselves to the power of the Emperor's civil authority). We only desired to found an establishment which could serve the Church and bring about our salvation and that of others. We only ask for what will enable us to be useful.

He continued:

... for consolidating this establishment which is sustained amid so many outrages by the Lord's mercy alone, what can we seek? We need but one thing ... the approbation of the Apostolic See.⁴⁶⁵

Although there are many others, the texts cited suffice to show the common feeling of the community. Remember that this sentiment was due partly to the effect of Mother Aymer's revelations. To say it was due to this alone would be an exaggeration, for the decisive factor was faith in Providence. Yet it is undeniable that the Foundress' charism of prophecy contributed to the development of faith in the divine initiative in the foundation, and in the assistance of Providence in the continued existence of the community.⁴⁶⁶

In fact, many characteristic elements of the community were due to Mother Aymer's revelations which she communicated to the Founder in the early days of the Congregation. The revelations of this nature ceased around 1802. Those intended for enlightening the governing of the community (already characterized by daily discernment of God's will) were always confided exclusively to Father Coudrin, and came with varying frequency. However, throughout Mother Aymer's life, they testified to God's concern for and the Virgin's protection of the Congregation. Thus they were of great influence on the development of faith in God's intervention in the daily life of the community.⁴⁶⁷

Before concluding this section on "the Work of God," we must bring out a very important point. When we say that Father Coudrin's Community firmly believed that the daily course of this community represented a constant intervention of God, it would be unfair to think that this intervention was regarded as a sort of family monopoly.

The Congregation was always, and very decidedly, an apostolic congregation, in which serving the Church and serving men held an important place. Through this "service" was experienced doing the "Work of God," and its realization was not—in the concrete reality of daily life—something diverse from the course taken by the community. The community was for the religious of the first period the "Work of God" because it was a cell of the Church, a place in which there was lived out the great history of salvation—as we would say today—in solidarity and interchange with all the communities of the Church.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ ANN., 1963, p. 211.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. Part III.

⁴⁶⁷ BM, 18-52; BP, 2317-2326, may serve at least as an example.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. following chapters on "works" of education, formation of clergy, etc.

Identification of the religious and of the apostolic existed in the life of the early community, but had to await Vatican II to find a more adequate expression.

In such communities the very nature of the religious life requires apostolic action and services, since a sacred ministry and a special work of charity have been assigned to them by the Church and must be discharged in her name. Hence the entire religious life of the members of these communities should be penetrated by an apostolic spirit, as their entire apostolic activity should be animated by a religious spirit.⁴⁶⁹

3. Courage

The recommendation “animer”, “take courage”^{470*}; which appears in more than two hundred writings of the Founder, is truly revelatory of a characteristic trait of the zeal he succeeded in enkindling in the early community of his Congregation. Sister Gabriel de la Barre, speaking of the early works of the foundation of Cahors in 1803, uses a sentence which in its simplicity is suggestive: "The numbers were quite small, but courage was great." This was true, not only of Cahors, but of the whole community and of the whole period we are studying.⁴⁷¹

Father Coudrin was without doubt a courageous man, almost to the point of recklessness, as may be seen by going over the history of his thousand adventures during the Reign of Terror and the Revolution. The prolonging of clandestinity until 1814, practically for twenty years, made of this quality an article of prime necessity for the community founded by him, so it is not too strange that the members of a small group, which managed to survive defying the investigations of Fouché throughout the Napoleonic domination, showed themselves so courageous.

Despite this, it would be erroneous to think that the “courage” so constantly preached by the Founder was but a result of circumstances and a component of his character.

In our opinion, the answer closest to the truth would be to attribute this insistence to an intuition, perhaps helped by character and circumstances but which is of the order of faith, and which at the proper time we shall study. For now, we may sum it up by saying that it consisted in the awareness that, to do the “Work of God” in Christ, the attitude of Christ Himself on carrying out the great “Work of God” which is the Redemption needed to be adopted. This is the attitude of the “Servant of Yahweh,” to condense it all in an expression not used at that period, but which for us says everything. This entering into

469 Vat. II. Council, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 8.

470 The term *animer* is translated here as ‘take courage’. ‘Heart’ or ‘spirit’, however, seems to be a preferable translation. Please keep this in mind when reading pages 136-138 (Editor’s note).

471 GB, Ecr.Div., 117.

the “kenosis” of Christ, his annihilation, assumes –and there is no need to prove it– a great deal of courage.⁴⁷²

In fact, what was of concern to Father Coudrin was to see rooted in his apostolic family what he called “the courage of the saints.” This would be proved above all in the tribulations, which must be undergone for accomplishing the “Work of God,” beginning with the austere life of the community.

“Our life frightens everybody (in Mende, 1802)... however, we have resolved to bear up under all,” he wrote to Father Isidore David. Many years later he said something similar to Sister Ludovine: “Have the courage of the saints ... in God and through God we will always be strong.”⁴⁷³

The Founder knew that only a living spirit of faith could put his religious in contact with the source of this “courage” he wanted them to have. He wrote in 1825:

May the spirit of faith give us the consolations of which so many others are deprived through their fault, encourage us then and strengthen us constantly in the midst of the infirmities which unexpectedly come upon us.⁴⁷⁴

Therefore he exhorted them to expect from God the grace of this courage: “May the good Master whom you serve sustains you, give you courage and strengthen you,” he said to Sister Ludovine in 1807. “Let us expect all from the good God ... and above all courage and peace,” he recommended to Father Isidore. “If we begin as the saints (he alludes to the sufferings from lack of human understanding), we will have, I hope, the same end as they.”⁴⁷⁵

For Father Coudrin, a source of courage under trials and tribulations was the conviction that such trials are a condition of true success, and at the same time a means of purification. “Have courage ... God who wishes to purify you every day, prepares a crown for you to wear on giving you crosses to bear,” he said to Sister Gabriel in 1803.⁴⁷⁶

Some months later, he returned to the same subject:

God is our all, and see how He proves us as He does the saints. So have courage. We will have consolations. Of course, all these tribulations are going to be followed by some benefits for the Work.⁴⁷⁷

Underlying all this, he knew that in this world there can be no hope of a definitive liberation from suffering, and therefore it is necessary not to lose sight of the eschatological. In this sense, he gave advice such as that he gave to Sister Alix, begging her “to keep up

472 Cf. Part IV.

473 BP, 73, 320.

474 BP, 1011.

475 BP, 299, 110.

476 BP, 135.

477 BP, 154.

her courage, envisioning constantly the crown, which is promised to conquerors and not to the conquered.”⁴⁷⁸

According to him, the very history of the community is an incentive to be courageous. He said as early as 1803:

We have so many proofs of the Good God’s special protection over our establishment that we would be most ungrateful if we ever came to lose confidence! So, do not any of you lose courage.⁴⁷⁹

Father Coudrin considered this interior courage to be an indispensable condition for success in the apostolate. To Brother Leonard Portal, who was getting ready at Le Havre to travel to California and to the Hawaiian Islands, passing through Mexico –an adventure filled with strange and risky possibilities– he wrote in August 1833:

Courage, my dear Leonard. Do not let yourself be downcast! Do not listen to all the thoughts of sadness and woe the enemy of all good will not fail to arouse in your mind in order to turn you away from the pious project you have undertaken in the interest of the holy Work to which you have been devoted for such a long time.⁴⁸⁰

This “courage” should permeate the atmosphere of the community and constitute one of the riches of the religious family. To Father Hippolyte Launay he said as early as 1808: “Encourage everyone of them and may the holy Love of the Good God sustain you and strengthen you even on the cross.”⁴⁸¹

4. In the Service of God and Humanity

On studying the Founder’s life closely, our attention is called particularly to the constancy and tenacity with which he maintained throughout his life the great options of the period of his vocation. This is found in his zeal in the service of God, putting himself always at the service of people, beginning with the poorest.

When he left La Motte on October 20, 1792, he did so in order to put his priesthood at the disposal of the Church, even at the risk of his life. What was the Church, which called, in his conscience, for this self-surrender? It was a flock of sheep without a shepherd driven off its pasture; a community scandalized by the desertion of a notable part of the clergy, who submitted to take an oath which the pope immediately condemned; a community which saw most of the priests who were loyal to their vocation go into

478 BP, 1309.

479 BP, 123.

480 BP, 1827.

481 BP, 345.

exile. In short, it was a community of faithful deeply disturbed by the revolutionary phenomenon, whose true extent could not be accurately explained, and disoriented by a passionate and cruel schism. It was, at the same time, exposed to the pressure, not only of a campaign of explicit dechristianization, but also to a process of secularization of the state, of society, of daily life. The orthodox community, which remained loyal in the midst of the tempest, was reduced to going underground, and the persecution despoiled it of all power. It was a community of the “poor,” even when a good part of it was made up of nobles in disgrace.⁴⁸²

Father Coudrin recognized Christ’s presence in this “community of the poor,” which in His Body continued His agony, according to the expression of Pascal, and which he was prepared to serve at all times. For him, “serving God,” “serving the Church,” did not mean organizing brilliant enterprises, which were unimaginable under the circumstances, without trying to imitate Christ’s example through an evangelical attitude, which reflected Christ’s attitude.⁴⁸³

This situation continued for almost seven years –1792-99, the first years of his ministry– and marked it profoundly. Under these same circumstances, his community was born and received from him this example as an indication of its destiny.⁴⁸⁴

To a priest of the diocese of Lyons who wanted to enter his Congregation and met with very understandable objections from his curia, Father Coudrin made these reflections in December 1822:

See the good which will result from your religious consecration. You will assure your holiness, you will bring about the salvation of a great number of souls. Others will do in the parishes what you were doing there; the number of those who wish to follow the evangelical counsels is so small, especially among priests, that no one will take your place among the poor of Jesus Christ.⁴⁸⁵

Father Dumonteil entered the novitiate and took the name Simeon. He was professed at the age of forty-one, worked in the diocesan missions of Troyes and of Rouen, and later was a teacher in the seminaries the Congregation had in France. In 1843 he went to the foreign missions, returned in 1853, and died in 1872 in Paris.⁴⁸⁶

Yet the best way to explain not only the zeal but also the activity of service of the community is to consider the various works, which were undertaken. Thus we avoid the danger of theorizing on things, which have their principal value in the facts, providing

482 Cf. Part I.

483 Cf. *Ibidem*.

484 Cf. *Ibidem*.

485 BP, 805.

486 LE 171.

the reader with more adequate material to form a more accurate judgment of them.

In order to develop this theme better, the various types of service engaged in by the community in the fifty years covered by this history will be studied.

These services were: teaching, formation of the clergy, priestly ministry, diocesan missions, and foreign missions. Each will be treated separately in the chapters, which follow.



Chapter II

TEACHING AND EDUCATION OF YOUTH

Later on the portrayal which the documentation presents of the teaching and training of young people in the apostolic spirit of the Congregation will be examined; here, an attempt will be made to give a complete overall view of the educational endeavors which developed in the various houses of the Congregation from the earliest times.⁴⁸⁷

1. The First Period: 1794-1802

During the years of the Revolution, one of the social services, which suffered most, was the education of children and young people. In the Old Regime, education was assured by the clergy and especially by religious. When the religious congregations were suppressed, in February 1790, and ecclesiastical properties confiscated in April of the same year, education in France became chaotic. Not only was it disorganized, but it lost its entire personnel and was deprived of all its finances simultaneously.⁴⁸⁸

From the suppression of the religious congregations until the Assembly agreed on a new system of education, and from the time of this consensus until its actualization, a considerable time elapsed –many years in fact– during this time, children had no one to teach them.⁴⁸⁹

The religious formation of conscience, of course, was the most anguishing problem for parents of Christian families in a country which was not only devastated by the violence of the Revolution itself, but which was also rent by schism.⁴⁹⁰

Sensitive as it was to the needs of the Church, it is understandable that one of the earliest concerns of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts was the education of children and young people of both sexes, in particular to give them the Christian formation they lacked and to teach them at least the rudiments of faith found in the catechism.

487 On this point, we were not able to examine the local civil archives nor even of the episcopates, and we restricted ourselves to finding out what there was on the subject in the main dossiers of the Roman Archives.

488 Godeschot, pp. 444ff., 536ff.

489 *Ibid.*

490 Dansette, Bk. III, 3.

a. *L'Immensité*

Referring to “*L'Immensité*” (the society of the Sacred Heart whose president was Miss Geoffroy), Sister Gabriel de la Barre, writing about 1795 in the fragment known as *Réponse à mon frère*, said that one of the many responsibilities of the Society was “to teach the duties of religion to young hearts whom ignorance might hurl into the abyss of heresy and vice...”⁴⁹¹

In the Statutes, which are preserved, we read in Ch. IV:

Bureau of Education: Disastrous circumstances have forced almost all Catholic shepherds to absent themselves from their flocks. The result of this forced absence is a truly alarming ignorance of all the mysteries of our holy religion in the hearts of the majority of children. This is the motive, which induced the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to set up a bureau of education, which will be organized in the following manner:

I. This bureau will be composed of twelve members, and of their superioress, who will be a permanent member. II. It will be presided over by one or more priest members and by the above-mentioned superioress. III. All the members of this bureau will be distributed in pairs in the different sections of the city, and will engage on certain assigned days of each week in teaching the children of both sexes in private homes. They will teach them the catechism of the diocese, prayer and other acts of religion, and thereby prepare them for their First Communion. IV. When some of these children are sufficiently instructed to make their First Communion, the members of the said bureau will procure for these children some Catholic priests who may wish to put the finishing touches to their instruction, and prepare them more immediately for this holy practice. V. This bureau will be elected, as the preceding ones, by the priest members, the superioress, and the substitutes. VI. The members of this bureau will meet every three months, or even more often if necessity demands it, to come to an agreement on the means of instruction; to discuss how much will be suitable to spend for books, rosaries, catechisms, etc. and on all other subjects pertinent to this bureau.⁴⁹²

It would be interesting to have information on the actual functioning of this “bureau” during the period of the Thermidor and the Directory, but there is not much available. However, everything indicates that, within the limits of the discretion imposed by the circumstances, not only was much accomplished but it was done in a very heroic manner in those difficult years.

Considering the widespread and deep-rooted social crisis that existed in eighteenth-century France, to live “underground” even in an adult environment was certainly

⁴⁹¹ PAC, 1146.

⁴⁹² GB, Mem. 1160.

difficult, but the situation was even more dangerous and required special prudence when children and adolescents were included.

b. *La Grand'Maison*

The young women who were part of the new Congregation, practically starting from 1797, were all members of the Society of the Sacred Heart and worked under its organization, until the separation made in 1801.⁴⁹³

The period of development of the formal “religious community” in the small nucleus of the Solitaires was, obviously, a period of dreams rather than of actualities. It was an effort, which did not always have definitive results. We have information on various sets of “regulations” belonging to this period which never seem to have been applied strictly, but which are a testimony to the orientation, which they wished to imprint on the life of the new community.⁴⁹⁴

There is no doubt that the effort made to differentiate itself from a simple beneficent institution or pious confraternity, which “L’Immensité” was, led the group of “Solitaires” to stress practices which expressed their religious consecration. This gives rise to the impression that at the beginning a monastic institution was developing. We have an explanation of this in the account given of the earliest plan to draw up the rules of the community. The plan was drawn up by Father Coudrin himself but the account we have is in the handwriting of Sister Gabriel de la Barre and was surely written prior to 1800. In the introduction it says,

The motive for the institution of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is Charity under all its aspects... charity extended to fellow human beings by almsgiving and teaching will be the basis of its occupations...⁴⁹⁵

In article 8, a “bureau” in the style of those of “L’Immensité” was established and called “des classes”; the working day was divided into two periods of two hours each. The practice of going to various areas throughout the city teaching catechism in homes was discontinued. In article 9 a section of *La Grand'Maison* was set aside for doing this and the personnel assigned.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ GB, Mem.; Ecr.Div.; HL, Mem.; VBM; VBP.

⁴⁹⁴ These Rules are a) of PAC, 1160; b) Rule drawn up by the Good Father, BP, 2197; c) Father Perrin’s project, PAC, 1148; d) Ideas for a “Rule” entitled *Pious Reflections*, of Gabriel de la Barre, Arch. Sœurs, SS.CC.; e) Rule in the handwriting of Gabriel de la Barre, Arch. Sœurs, SS.CC., Rome; f) so-called rule known as Rule of la Trappe, PAC, 1163-1164; g) First Rule drawn up by Mother Aymer, in collaboration with Bernard de Villemort, Arch. Sœurs, SS.CC., Rome; h) General Rule of the Order of Zealots, Arch. Sœurs, SS.CC., Rome.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. note above.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. note above.

In the *Rules and Regulations* dictated later by Mother Aymer to Bernard de Villemort –possibly in the spring of 1800– Chapter I, article 3*6 states,

(The objective of the Institution is): 6) to educate in each house, gratuitously, the greatest number of children possible of the sex of the house (*sic*) always choosing them from the poorest. The number will be proportionate to the resources and site of each house.⁴⁹⁷

In the *General Rule* drawn by up Mother Aymer before 1802 there are two articles which refer to this topic:

- 3) The Zealots (brothers) will teach boys in their houses and will instruct them in religious practices and in their duties as Christians according to the vocation to which they will seem to them to be called. These boys will have to depend on them in order that they be not troubled by the whims of their parents in the education that will be given them.
- 4) The Zealots (sisters) will teach girls in the same way. The rule of the sisters will be the same in everything as that of the brothers, perpetual adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.⁴⁹⁸

So went the endeavors of the early years. Actually, any thought of opening up schools in Poitiers in 1800 was out of the question, so it was decided to bring small children to the house in order to realize in some way the apostolic rule of the community. Apropos of this Sister Gabriel de la Barre wrote in her *Mémoires*:

The education of the young was one of the projects of our superiors, but they did not yet attempt to carry it out. In the first days of December (1800) they decided to do so, taking one little girl for instruction. Shortly thereafter another one was taken and soon the number increased beyond our resources. Yet trust in God left us unperturbed. If we did not have such trust the difficulty of boarding them alone would have made us stop. In fact the dormitories were so crowded that there was hardly room to pass between the beds. All the other places in the house presented the same inconvenience. We experienced in a profound way that under zealous superiors courage provides the means, and that the spirit of mortification makes possible and easy what seems humanly impractical. It is certain that we boarded more than twenty in a space which seemed too small for many less.

Further on she adds: “Father Marie-Joseph took charge of two children, his nephews, who showed great inclination toward virtue, and began thereby the exercise of one of the objectives of our Institute.”⁴⁹⁹

Hilarion gives further details not only in his *Mémoires* but also in his *Life of Father Coudrin*. Among them, that the first child received was the daughter of Augustin Bernard

497 Cf. note 8.

498 Cf. note 9.

499 GB, Mem. 66, 86.

(“Cinq-Pieds”) and the famous “Guste”, a hero and heroine of the resistance during the Reign of Terror in Montbernage. The little girl was about ten years old at the time. Later on she made her profession in the Congregation. During this same period the daughter of the baker Vinais, likewise a participant in the resistance of Montbernage, also entered. She was obviously older, for she made her profession in December 1802, under the name of Sister Fortunata.⁵⁰⁰

Augustine Coudrin, the Founder’s nephew, when he was old –certainly after he was seventy– wrote notes called *Souvenirs*, in which despite some unavoidably inaccurate details, he preserved for us a lot of interesting information on his first experience of education as a child.⁵⁰¹

A point to remember is that at the end of 1800, both branches of the community lived in the same house. Augustine was received along with two brothers, one older than he, Athanasius, who was almost seven, and one younger, Philippe, who was not yet five. He kept an indelible impression of the generosity of the sisters. At any rate, separation from home was hard, and the younger one could not take it, and died that same year, for he was sent back to his family too late.⁵⁰²

Everyone’s goodwill was magnificent, but the preparation for the satisfactory administration of a children’s home under these conditions was inadequate, and the awareness of this brought about many sufferings. Augustine, among other things, says:

No time was lost in teaching me the alphabet. My uncle at that time only had two disciples who were the first two brothers of the Congregation: Father Isidore David, and Hilarion Lucas, who was still too young to be ordained but who had finished his theology courses. It was from them I received the first lessons in reading. I could hardly read anything in French yet they wanted me to learn to read in Latin and they taught me how to write at almost the same time. They did not waste any time but gave me a Latin grammar.⁵⁰³

Today this seems excessive to us, but it was not the only torture inflicted on such young children. Augustine gives us a harsh picture of Father Isidore and of his discipline which was very strict. Yet, there was a basic need to balance the joy given the Founder’s nephew by the nuns with some discipline.

We do not have more extensive information about those early efforts, but what we know for certain is that everything began over again when the Founders left for Mende in 1802.

500 HL, Mem. 61; VBP, 99; cf. Courzac, p. 22.

501 Archives de la Famille a Coussay.

502 Aug. Coudrin, *Souvenirs*, pp. 6ff.

503 *Ibid.*

2. Second Period: 1802-17

The Founders' departure for Mende opened up a new period for the community, coinciding with the new times which were opening up also for the Church of France with the regime of the Concordat. The "underground" activity of the noncompliant clergy came to an end and Napoleon wanted a reconciled Church, a social force at his service. In this climate, and always maintaining strict secrecy about the "religious" character of the communities, there came about the first expansion of the Congregation, which at the end of Napoleonic domination, in 1814, had eight establishments, with as many schools for girls and five for boys.⁵⁰⁴

a. Education in France

Public education at the beginning of the nineteenth century was entrusted to the municipalities or districts, and in fact turned out so unequal that even though in some areas it reached rather high levels, what Lucien Bonaparte asserted in March 1800 was probably true, that education was "a peu près nulle en France." (There was almost no education in France). With this failure of decentralized education, the plan to centralize it completely which began under the Consulate and continued under the Empire in an ever-growing form was justified.⁵⁰⁵

The law of May 1, 1802 under the Ministry of the Interior created a "Direction de l'Instruction Publique". Fourcroy was the "Director." He saw how difficult it was to control private education which was developing much better than public education, and conceived the idea of state "monopoly." Napoleon wanted this monopoly to be decidedly "lay".

My principal objective in the establishment of a teaching body is to have a means of directing political and moral opinions. This institution will be a guarantee against the reestablishment of monks. I want to hear no more about it. Without it (the state monopoly) they would be back some day or other.⁵⁰⁶

To make this "lay monopoly" effective, Fourcroy, inspired by the organization of the University of Turin, thought that the best means for this state monopoly would be an "imperial university" which in fact was created and completed by two main laws, of May 10, 1806, and March 17, 1808.⁵⁰⁷

In this way all male secondary and higher education was made dependent on the state, while the schools and colleges for girls were free of such control. These laws did not

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Lat. II, pp. 55ff.; Dansette, III, 1.

⁵⁰⁵ Godeschot, pp. 732ff.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 732.

suppress private education but they paved the way for its gradual asphyxiation, especially financially.⁵⁰⁸

Directors of private institutions were required to obtain a license valid for ten years, paying between 200 and 600 francs, depending on the importance of the establishment. Besides, they had to pay a yearly sum of fifty francs, plus a twentieth of the tuition of each student, the amount of which was also fixed yearly by the state.⁵⁰⁹

Louis de Fontanes was appointed grand master of the university with an excellent salary and full powers. Nominally dependent on the Ministry of the Interior, he enjoyed in practice full autonomy, which enabled him to proceed with the independence to which his character inclined him. Actually, he applied the monopoly very mildly and permitted the growth of many private institutions.⁵¹⁰

The “Imperial University” was composed of twenty-seven academies throughout France, each presided over by a rector appointed by the “grand master” for five years. The rector had as subordinates one or two academic supervisors, and was assisted by an “academic council” of ten members, appointed by the “grand master”. This council took care of the schools, their functioning, etc.⁵¹¹

These are, in very broad lines, the legal circumstances in which the educational work of the community developed. It is difficult to present a complete picture of these works because of the very fragmentary and incomplete documentation available, so a presentation will be made of the more general information the documents preserved in the archives provide.

b. Geographical diffusion

Shortly after Mother Aymer’s arrival in Mende, at the end of July 1802, the Foundress busied herself with the organizing of a free school for poor girls. This work was what made her known in the city, and justified her presence in the eyes of the people. The report spread rapidly, and in 1803, not only the mayor but also the bishop of Cahors, more than 170 kilometers from Mende, asked the Founders to do something similar in their city. The request was granted, and the sisters arrived in Cahors in July of that year. During the same period a priest of Laval, learning about the work being done in Poitiers, also asked for a foundation; his request could not be granted for the moment.⁵¹²

508 *Ibid.*

509 *Ibid.*

510 *Ibid.*

511 *Ibid.*

512 Founding of Mende (29 VII 1802): BP, 31-85; BM, 66-87, 114; GB, Ecr.Div., 97, 104, 105; HL, Mem. 92, 97, 98; FV, 1, 2, 11; founding of Cahors (4 VII 1803): BP, 102ff.; BM, 126-154; GB, Ecr.Div., 116-119; HL, Mem. 110, 113, 118; FV, 9.

In 1804, Father Coudrin's preaching at St. Roque resulted in vocations to the community, and the Founder called Mother Aymer to the capital. A residence was founded in September of that year, although the school was not started until the next year when the community was transferred to Picpus. In October of 1804, the residence of Laval was opened, which very soon had a free school. On June 3, 1805, the school of Pont-Lieu, near Le Mans, was founded, the sixth of the Congregation. In 1807, another was opened in Sees, and then after some years of unavoidable delay, the last residence of this period was founded in Sarlat, on July 4, 1815, under the Restoration.⁵¹³

These residences were situated in widely separated geographical areas so frequent contact with the central residence in Paris after 1804 was quite difficult. Mother Aymer visited many of them, especially during the early years of Napoleon, but Father Coudrin could only do so infrequently. The result was a variety of forms of teaching. However, this variety was due not only to lack of centralization due to geographical dispersion, but also to the caution needed to avoid a uniformity which might lead the civil authorities to suspect it to be an insidious attempt to restore religion.⁵¹⁴ This varied pedagogy, dependent on the capability and initiative of superiors and religious in the schools of each locality, makes research in this field particularly difficult. We do have, however, some information through documents about two or three of these schools.⁵¹⁵

In these schools there was elementary or "primary" education: the three "R's"—reading, writing, and arithmetic— as well as catechism. In Poitiers in 1800, in Mende and Cahors, and later in Paris schools for girls and boys were opened simultaneously. Secondary education was given only to those who had taken the elementary courses if there was room for them at the residences. In some, the elementary education given was inadequate for advancing to the secondary level. Sister Gabriel de la Barre tells us that once at Poitiers the students were taught reading but not writing and parents refused to send their children to the residence. This may be hard to believe today.⁵¹⁶

Male secondary education sought implicitly to be a substitute for the minor seminary. Father Coudrin, on May 20, 1801, in a petition to the capitular vicars of Poitiers, says:

Beyond these (ascetical and religious) obligations, each individual in this society has particular duties... Some are assigned to missions in the country ... others

513 Founding of Paris (3 IX 1804): BP, 165ff.; BM, 176-209; GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 147-151; HL, *Mem.* 126, cf. 133-135; founding of Laval (X 1804): BP, 117, 123, 124, 168, 200, 209, 210, 231, 777; BM, 126-267; GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 122, 142; HL, *Mem.* 112, 128, 140; founding of Le Mans (3 VI 1805): GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 122, 142, 263; HL, *Mem.* 130; founding of Sarlat (4 VII 1815): BM, 453-510; GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 235; HL, *Mem.* 229.

514 HL, *1ère Mémoire présentée à Rome*, ANN., 1963, p. 200.

515 Chronicle of GB and of HL are on this very dissimilar in the information given. It gives the impression they sought collaboration and that many residences did not send documents, which explains these gaps.

516 GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 298.

to teaching children, preparing them to be priests or zealots or good Christians living in the world.⁵¹⁷

This is equivalent to saying that importance was given to what might be called “classic humanities,” to Latin and Greek and to what was included under the term “rhetoric,” imparting some knowledge of mathematics, science, geography, and history insofar as the competence of the personnel permitted it.

The “secondary” education of girls was less demanding in those times. The state was not greatly concerned about it and the families wanted a morally sound formation and one that imparted a solid piety to their daughters. They wanted them to learn to read and write and, above all, be prepared for the tasks of their sex, supplemented to some degree by music or drawing and painting if this were possible. Very little information is available as to what was done in these areas in the various houses.⁵¹⁸

Apropos of this, what the prefect of Vienne wrote to the councilor of state who asked for confidential information about the residences on “la Rue des Hautes Treilles” is interesting:

Poitiers, February 8, 1812.

Your Excellency, ... The little girls are, as a rule, very young. They are taught according to their station either a skill or a profession. Besides learning, reading, writing and arithmetic they also learn a little geography, French history and sewing. Their principal occupation, however, is the study of religion and it is their main, not to say, sole task for there is a crucifix in every classroom and they attend Mass every day.⁵¹⁹

The education of boys and girls was entirely gratuitous especially in the beginning and had as a priority the service of the poorest. Sister Gabriel notes in Part II of her *Mémoires* (which are still unpublished) that:

the Good Father could not be unmindful of the poor children of the most underprivileged class of society. He opened up small schools and one or many brothers were charged with teaching them religion and reading. Very many good works were carried out quietly and unostentatiously. The houses were poor and nothing was charged.⁵²⁰

The report of the prefect of Vienne, part of which was quoted above, has also a valuable piece of information about the free education of the students. Referring to the fathers’ house, he wrote:

517 ANN., 1963, pp. 184-85.

518 Neither programs nor texts preserved.

519 Arch. Postulation SS.CC. Rome.

520 GB, Ecr.Div., 196.

I noted that there were no servants at this residence. The youths do everything themselves and they are formed in a way that is thrifty and even rigorous. Their food is prepared in the women's residence which evidently supports the establishment. Except for a vineyard which yields some ten barrels of mediocre wine per year there is no other revenue. Income from lodgings is nil in this residence as well as in the other...⁵²¹

The picture depicted by this document seems to be very faithful to the truth. It corresponds to what was being done, not only at Poitiers, but in all the other schools of the Congregation at that time.

Little by little, male and female students who could pay their board were also accepted, which served to help but did not fully finance the work. Sister Gabriel de la Barre relates the difficulty she encountered when she wanted to open up a "boarding school" properly so-called, because everyone in the city thought that the residence was for poor children. So, parallel schools were formed, one free and the other charging tuition.⁵²²

c. *Teaching personnel*

The personnel of the Congregation at this period of the early expansion was numerically rather low, especially when it is taken into consideration that they had to be distributed in eight houses. The sisters, always more numerous than the brothers, hardly averaged twenty-three in each residence in 1817, while the brothers averaged only five in each house.⁵²³

If the minimum qualifications required for making a professed member a "teacher" are also taken into account, the situation was very distressing for them. Often the opening up of a school or of a "boarding house" was held up due to lack of qualified personnel. Some of the sisters, especially those who entered at the beginning, had gone through the educational chaos of the Revolution, and simply had not had any schooling. In the male community, at least the priests had a sufficient formation for teaching, although, at times, some of them were not competent. But in January 1817 there were just twenty-three priests teaching.⁵²⁴

Given the scarcity of priests in France at that time, it was impossible for the priests to confine themselves to teaching. They had to combine it with other activities of the ministry, such as preaching, hearing confessions and spiritual direction. The work

521 Cf. note 33.

522 GB, *ibid.* 276

523 LE. in which there are found the members according to profession.

524 *ibid.*

of education, although it demanded certain heroism, could not reach the level of a specialization. Furthermore, we know that modern pedagogy was in its infancy in those days.

Briefly, the personnel available in this early period were scarce and unspecialized. Despite all, it may be said that in these difficult times, sufficient formation was given to those who would later become the brothers and sisters of the Congregation as well as to the many Christians prepared either to be the laity of the Church in various places, or to be clerics, as we shall see further on.⁵²⁵

Nonetheless there were moments of uncertainty and of crisis, as Hilarion recounts of the school of Cahors in 1811:

In the same year 1811, the Lord wished to test the brothers of the residence of Cahors. There were very few vocations. Many brothers had been removed to cover the needs of other residences. The small number of those who still remained was overburdened. In 1811, especially, there was an absolute lack of candidates, and besides hardly any result came of the efforts made to teach poor children. Some were completely closed to the good advice given them by their teachers. Brother Hippolyte (Launay, the superior) was tempted to abandon the good work to which it seemed God did not will to grant any blessing. He was at the point of closing down the free school. Brother Macaire Cavalier, who was at the time ill, was opposed to it and made strong objections against it. He promised that more candidates would come after his death. God called him on May 17, 1811, and his promise was soon kept. A few days after his death, Brother Ambrose (Penel) and Brother Raphael (Bonamie) entered as novices; some other brothers also entered and later went to the novitiate. It has always been the conviction that Brother Macaire prayed in heaven for the establishment of Cahors and that the flourishing state of the residence there, after he had passed on to a better life, was due to his intercession.⁵²⁶

d. Student enrollment

Statistics are not available for these years and the information available is insufficient to satisfy our curiosity but is valuable in enabling us to find out the number of students in the various schools –eight of the sisters and five of the brothers– which the Congregation had between 1802 and 1817.⁵²⁷

As a result of the Founders' presence in Paris, the schools of the capital were the best served insofar as teaching personnel was concerned. Due to this there was a larger

⁵²⁵ Cf. *infra*.

⁵²⁶ HL, Mem. 176.

⁵²⁷ Always a difficulty due to the practice of writing the least possible due to the required clandestinity. Perhaps there might be found in the departmental archives some information about the number of students, especially starting out from the organization of the Imperial University.

number of students attending. According to a *Mémoire* of Hilarion of 1814, addressed to the Holy See, there were 150 boarders and 150 day students.⁵²⁸

In Poitiers, we know from a letter of Sister Gabriel de la Barre that in 1810 there were fifteen First Communions. The report of the prefect, previously quoted, gives the number of girls as twelve and fifty-one students in the boys' school in 1812. Father Isidore said that in 1814 the boys numbered thirty.⁵²⁹

About Mende we know that very soon the girls were "very numerous," though we do not know how many there were. The sisters in 1805 had some eighty boys, when Father Coudrin withdrew the personnel to open up the school in Paris. Father Regis did not want to send the young students back to their homes since they showed signs of religious or priestly vocations and alone undertook the task of forming them. The only thing we know is that from this school came the twenty professed and novices who were at the residence of Mende at the end of 1816.⁵³⁰

As for Cahors, which seems to have been the best-attended school after that of Picpus, Hilarion says in his *Mémoires* that the free school for girls alone already counted on December 5, 1803, more than a hundred students. The school of the brothers in 1816 had more than three hundred students.⁵³¹

The only information available about Laval is that in 1807 there were a dozen students in the girls' school and in 1814 the enrollment in the boys' school was over sixty.⁵³²

What is remarkable is that there was some transferring of students, especially in the girls' schools, with students going from the provinces to the capital but also to other provinces. For instance, in 1809 a girl from Picardy and another from Poitou were sent to Sees in Normandy.⁵³³ However, this was done discreetly, with due attention to the attendant circumstances.

e. Spirit and methods

As we have seen above, from 1802 Mother Aymer thought that in order to educate children properly they had to be apart from their parents. In 1809 she wrote to the superioress of Cahors, who had just become nineteen: "Miss Sainton needs a change

528 ANN., 1963, p. 203.

529 ID 41 (24 XI 1814).

530 20 professed of Mende: BP, 540.

531 HL, Mem. 116, 282.

532 GB, Ecr.Div., 161; HL, Mem. 281.

533 Example of the mobility of students: BM, 286*2*3; 385*1.

of air; the boarders who remain in their own town do poorly.”⁵³⁴ This probably is the explanation of the movements mentioned above.

Beyond this, her principles were simple, and she never tried to systematize them. She had no use for corporal punishment of children, a practice then quite common. Kindness had to be the basis of relations with students. She said to a young teacher of Poitiers:

Let your little ones have some fun, give them a day of recreation for me. Do not scold them too much. Never say you will punish them without doing so, but threaten them rarely.

The main things were left up to those responsible, and there was neither time nor means for devising a more scientific pedagogy.⁵³⁵

Gabriel de la Barre tells us what was done at Father Isidore’s school in Poitiers:

Our Father had entrusted to him the education of two of his nephews but transferred them to his own residence in 1806. This separation was painful for Father Isidore but he replaced them by many other children who gave him a modest amount for boarding but often nothing at all. He taught them and although his other occupations did not permit him to hold regular classes, many made rapid and astounding progress and are today holy priests engaged usefully in the diocese. Some joined the Congregation and are today its consolation. The best spirit reigned in this little school; poorly lodged, dressed and fed, these children were contented. The older ones looked after the smallest. Almost all went to confession every fifteen days, many received Communion often. A misbehaving student was soon found out and sent away.⁵³⁶

An instance of these “misbehaving” children is found in the chronicles. In 1808 one of Father Isidore’s boarding students started a fire in the residence while Compline was being said. The fire was extinguished in time, and the arsonist confessed and asked for mercy. Father Isidore pardoned him but later on had to expel him when he tried to poison the food of the whole community.⁵³⁷

Augustin Coudrin’s testimony about his experience as Father Isidore’s student enables us to see things from the viewpoint of the students. He says:

For keeping us in line Father Isidore had an iron hand, yet he did not lack affection. He sincerely loved us and I returned his feeling, despite the state of fear in which I lived. His greatest concern was the religious guidance of the establishment of “La Grand’Maison” and so the administration of the affairs of the Congregation occupied him more than anything else. He did not have time to teach us according

⁵³⁴ Cf. General Rule, supra p. 20 and BM, 368*3.

⁵³⁵ Corporal punishments: BM, 257*4; 276*3.

⁵³⁶ GB, Ecr.Div., 172.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 176-178.

to a well thought out system of education. All that he required was that we learn Latin well or poorly and obeyed.⁵³⁸

f. *Relations with the authorities*

All the boarding schools and day schools of the community began and developed under the protection of the local bishops. In the documents we have been able to consult, there is no trace of conflicts between the community and the curiae of the various dioceses in this period. Furthermore, the community could not found a school in a diocese without the full confidence of the bishop.⁵³⁹

With the civil authorities, the situation was different: starting out from the legal aspect, there was a state monopoly on education. Nevertheless, the concrete situation of the cities, especially in the provinces, was so depressed that any institution which could fill the vacuum was welcomed. So it was that Bishop de Chabot offered the services of the sisters of Mende in 1802 as an “educational establishment,” and the Minister of the Interior, Chaptal, in answer to the bishop’s letter, says:

I highly praise the motives which led Your Excellency to procure for the town of Mende so useful an establishment for the youth, and I thank you for the efforts you made to ensure its success.

At the same time, however, he took advantage of the opportunity to remind him that the institution was under the vigilance of civil authority:

However, I remind you that the laws have placed education and the establishments engaged in it, under the surveillance of the civil administration...⁵⁴⁰

On August 3 of that same year, Sister Françoise de Viart wrote from Mende:

Everybody is delighted and happy about our arrival here... At first it was just the people, but yesterday the Prefect and the Mayor invited our Fathers (Bishop de Chabot and Father Coudrin) to dinner.⁵⁴¹

Later, in 1804, Mother Aymer testified about the good relations with the authorities of Mende:

I could also tell you (the news) about the Prefect, the Mayor, the Counselors of the Prefecture, the Secretaries; all came dressed in splendid uniforms to pay us a friendly visit. They conducted themselves perfectly and found nothing to criticize.⁵⁴²

538 Souvenirs, p. 12.

539 Not only the requirements of canon law, but those of clandestinity imposed this condition.

540 HL, Mem. 101. Note.

541 FV, 1.

542 BM, 164.

In Cahors, the mayor had some objections to the brothers' institution, which were then settled, and the required autonomy was respected. Moreover, from the very start of the negotiations, at the instance of the bishop, the civic magistrates had offered the sisters the residence of the old Mirepoises, which in fact they occupied while they were there, and they gave the brothers a rather small place, but centrally located for their school.⁵⁴³

In Laval, we know from Sister Françoise de Viart's correspondence that at the end of 1806 the prefect demanded the communities to present their constitutions. The superioress observes: "I think our statement as to who we are will not be lengthy: persons of the world, but Christians, we carry out our duties as Christians." This letter is of January 1, 1807. In another letter of January 10, she says:

If there be an inquiry (on the part of the prefect) about our means of livelihood, I will say: our income, without being common, serves, so long as we wish to be together, to carry on the good work of feeding poor little ones, teaching them to read, write and work. If you ask what is our title, I will say that we do not have any, until it please you to choose one and let me know it. If you ask us about our superior, I will give his name. Our Constitutions? None, except that of living according to the maxims of the Gospel, as is proper in all homes...⁵⁴⁴

At the end of 1807, the mayor of Sees informed the bishop that the government did not approve of the sisters' foundation, since it did not have civil approval. Bishop de Boischollet was intimidated and suspended permission to reserve the Blessed Sacrament at the residence, despite the high regard he had for the Congregation, but fifteen days later he restored the permission, and nothing further happened.⁵⁴⁵

The residence of Picpus was denounced in 1812. Hilarion tells us about it in his *Mémoires*:

During the same year 1812, the residence of the Brothers of Paris was denounced by the Council of State, as a dangerous body, and was to be dissolved. We were informed of this. This new attack did not surprise us at all. We had expected it, but what did surprise us was that in the Council itself we found some defenders. They declared we were obscure, insignificant priests who used all that we had for teaching poor children. They added that people who ruin themselves were not at all dangerous and that we should be left free to eat the little we had. They were listened to, and Napoleon, who was present, concluded we should be let alone. So the denunciation had no harmful effect.⁵⁴⁶

543 HL, Mem. 118; cf. *ibid.*, 110, 113.

544 FV, 51-52.

545 HL, Mem. 156.

546 HL, Mem. 179.

Preserved in the departmental archives of Vienne is the text of a confidential report sent by the prefect to the Councilor of the Royal Estate, after a careful inspection of the residences on “la rue des Hautes-Treilles” had been made. It is a minute and thorough report. It confirms the suspicions of a restoration of religious life, but there is nothing in it directly objecting to the work of teaching.⁵⁴⁷

In summary, the Napoleonic authorities did not cause major difficulties insofar as education was concerned, and we have summed up all we found in the documents. The “academies” of the various places facilitated exemption from taxes, since the schools were free and had no resources of their own.

g. Finances

Teaching presupposes personnel who devote time to the task, classrooms, furnishings, books and stationery, and, in the case of boarders, lodging and food for the students. All this involved considerable expenses, and we would like to be able to explain how the community found the funds needed for doing the job, no matter at how modest a level it was done. However, documentation on the finances is more meager than on the other aspects of its work. Especially, the distinction between the receipts and expenditures of the work of education and those of the community itself does not appear clearly.⁵⁴⁸

Most of the religious came from families which did not have a large fortune, but those who did have properties put them at the disposal of the community. From the beginning this was done by Mother Aymer and Sister Therese de Beuvier who had great fortunes, as we will note later.

The community never wanted to adopt the attitude of a “beggar,” and Sister Gabriel de la Barre says with a certain pride that what was done in Poitiers was done “sans demander rien a personne” (asking nothing from anybody). Above all, there was fear lest dependence on an influential person might change the evangelical orientation of the activity of the community.⁵⁴⁹

Therefore they preferred to stretch the available resources by the austerity of the life of the religious, who tried to spend on themselves the least possible.

Of course, unsolicited aid given by pious persons who wanted to cooperate in the work was accepted. This was so in Le Mans (Pont-Lieu), where the initial work was

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. *supra*, note 44.

⁵⁴⁸ A system of bookkeeping did not exist in practice and the documentation is excessively fragmentary.

⁵⁴⁹ GB, Ecr.Div.

financed by a donation given to Mother Aymer.⁵⁵⁰

Once free education –which coincided with the founding of most houses– was established, male and female students who paid a certain tuition to help finance it, were also accepted. This tuition, in the case of Poitiers in 1812, was judged to be clearly insufficient: 200 francs a year at most. Only partially, and as a later practice, were boarding schools established where the girls who paid occupied separate premises.⁵⁵¹

3. Third Period: 1817-28

The Restoration saw itself forced to preserve practically intact the Napoleonic University, because there was no institution to substitute for it in the task of public education. Sister Gabriel de la Barre wrote in 1824, speaking of the first years of the Restoration:

The King was on his throne; Pius VII took the road back to Rome; but the Revolution was not over. The doctrines which it had produced were still dominant. Religious congregations then were far from being protected; they were not even free...⁵⁵²

The university, although it had an archbishop at its head, preserved some of the aspects of the Napoleonic and totalitarian spirit, and, actually, was more aggressive than when under Fontanes' direction. Religious congregations, even when not recognized, as in the case of the Sacred Hearts, and despite the resistance their teaching encountered, at least were not under a regime of open persecution, and took advantage of it to develop. The Congregation of the Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Hearts showed signs of a new vitality, and founded, at the end of the previous period, the residence of Sarlat (Dordogne).⁵⁵³

a. *New foundations*

During this period the residences of Tours (1819), Rennes (1818), Troyes (1820), Mortagne (1821), Vincennes (1824), St. Maure (1826), and Alençon (1828) were founded. The residence of Rennes did not have enough space until 1819 for opening a school. That of Troyes did not have enough room until 1828, when it bought the house of St. Martin-des-Aires. In the remaining residences, it was not long before schools for girls were opened. But in none of them was a similar school for boys founded, if we exclude the minor seminary of Tours which was taken over, along with the major seminary, in 1818 under great difficulties and which belonged to the diocese.

550 Cf. founding of Le Mans, *supra*, note 27.

551 GB, *Ecr.Div.*

552 GB, *Ecr.Div.*, 224; cf. Dansette, pp. 202ff.

553 Cf. *supra*, note 36.

At the end of this period, the Congregation had then fifteen schools for girls, five schools for boys, and a minor seminary.

Although the community continued as “non-authorized” by the state, it was common knowledge that a new religious congregation was involved; at least the clergy of the dioceses concerned knew it, and were informed about the pontifical approbation and about the bull.

Why were new schools for boys not opened up during this period? The royal ordinances made it difficult, and it was preferred to utilize the personnel which was beginning to increase, even though at a slower rate than that of the sisters, in order to stabilize the already existing schools, especially those of Picpus and of Cahors. The work of diocesan missions, which began in Troyes at the end of 1820, absorbed many of the personnel, who, prior to this date, would have gone to the schools.

b. Personnel

From 1815 to 1817, with the return of the Bourbons and with the approbation of the Congregation, the number of the professed increased in both branches of the community although much more in the female branch, which in the beginning of this period numbered about 200 sisters, while the brothers had 57 professed of whom only 21 were priests.⁵⁵⁴

What was extraordinary was the rate of increase of both branches. Between 1816 and 1820 the brothers, who had a more moderate increase than the sisters, increased by more than 16 professed each year so that, at the end of the period, there was a total of 120 men, 40 of whom were priests.

The increase in the number of personnel was one element in the progress of the various works of the Congregation, but the preparation of the personnel was more decisive. This is where major improvements were made in this period, which began to reap the fruits of the obscure and painful labor of the previous period. Practically all the sisters who were professed were graduates of the various boarding schools, in particular Picpus. The same can be said of the brothers. Studies in the humanities improved, especially in Cahors and Picpus, and Father Coudrin took special care of the formation at the major seminary of Picpus. There all took regular courses in philosophy and theology under professors devoted to these subjects.⁵⁵⁵

If it is not possible in this period to expect specialized teaching staffs, at least the proficiency of the students and the median level of the formation of the personnel,

⁵⁵⁴ LE and HL, *Tableau Général des Profès* . . . Arch. Rome. MS 91,1.

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. *infra*.

especially of the sisters, were notably superior to what it was before.

At this same time recourse was had for the first time to assistants from outside the community in the school of Cahors. These assistants were former students of Picpus who had finished their courses in the humanities; Father Launay paid them by teaching them Latin. We do not know how many they were.⁵⁵⁶

c. Student enrollment

During the previous period which was strictly clandestine, the lack of statistical data was justified by the necessity of not producing documents which might betray the unity and organization of the various residences of the Congregation. Once the regime of persecution was over, it might be expected that there would be a greater and more systematic abundance of data, but it is not so, and to the extent that the educational institutions multiplied, the available information about them becomes more summary.

The school of Picpus, which seems to have had the greatest number of men, had 160 boarders in 1828. During the same period Poitiers had some forty boarders. Cahors already had around 140 students in 1818, and some reports indicate that there were more, but this is not clear. These reports say there were 68 boarders and 130 in the free school, all in the same period.⁵⁵⁷

It is more difficult to establish the number of female students. In Poitiers we know that in 1828 there were 50 girls who were boarders, and 60 outsiders. At Cahors, more than 60. It seems that at the end of the period there could not have been less than 800 to 900 students attending the thirteen schools.

d. Methods and programs

There is nothing special to add in this matter to what was said about the previous period.

e. Relations with the authorities

During the Restoration, the University gave a great deal of trouble to the main schools of the Congregation, especially the boys' schools. In August 1817 Mother Aymer wrote with good reason: "The University torments us everywhere."⁵⁵⁸

Until 1828, suffering from this censure was least in Paris itself. The first assaults on Laval were after 1817. In his *Mémoires*, Hilarion relates:

⁵⁵⁶ HL, Mem. 285.

⁵⁵⁷ Lest. III, 178; HL, Mem. 283, 284, 285; GB, Lett. 198.

⁵⁵⁸ BM, 567*5.

The pious inhabitants of this town had no confidence in the public school of Laval. Those assigned to teach were in no way the type to quiet consciences. Religion had almost no place in their system of education. When our brothers agreed to take charge of the instruction of youths, a great number of families felt obliged to have their children board at the new institution. The number of boarding students soon reached sixty, while not many more than that remained in the boarding school of the University. This was enough to bring about hatred. All means were taken to make the brothers stop running the school. The director of the Academy threatened to use force to make them close the residence and dismiss the young students instructed there. The superior of the residence of Laval replied that many of the students were poor and paid no tuition and would be deprived of all means for their education if he were forced to send them away. He added that no matter what was done, he was determined to await the gendarmes who would be sent to expel the unfortunate youths who had no refuge to which they could go if they forced them to leave. The firmness of this reply surprised the director. He made a few more threats but that was all, and the school of Laval was undisturbed until 1828.⁵⁵⁹

At Cahors, the difficulties were greater and the conflict harder. Hostilities had begun as early as 1816, when the rector of the Academy wanted to force Father Hippolyte Launay to send the students of the boarding school to the public school. Father Launay replied moderately but firmly, saying that in addition to the free school with three hundred poor children, the boarding school itself had mostly poor students. He said: "We ourselves take care of their needs," and added a remark which at the time must have had an effect: "The Usurper himself and his agents never dared to trouble us. Would it be possible we would be persecuted under the legitimate king?"⁵⁶⁰

The rector, to protect himself, had recourse to the Commission of Public Education, but what he reported was really a commendation of Father Hippolyte's work, and gives a resounding testimony of him. He wrote:

This priest, who acts with a strictness of behavior worthy of the early centuries, enjoys full confidence in Cahors. He not only directs a community of ladies established at Mirepoises and the boarding school of which he is the superior, an immense task and one which it would seem many priests would hardly suffice to do/but also, if there are any who are ill and reject the help given by religion. Father Launay is called on, and his zeal overcomes the dying person's stubbornness. If there be need of a priest in the prisons to give the consolation of hope for a better life, or a prisoner condemned to death who needs to be inspired with feelings of penitence, on whom do they call? Again it is Father Launay. He never refuses to do something good. The whole town admires him, he is cherished by the very

⁵⁵⁹ HL, Mem. 281.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

many who are poor, whose children he teaches....⁵⁶¹

The rector reported that it was not possible to close the establishment without provoking strong protest in the city. It was a member of the Commission in Paris, the Abbé Eliçagaray, a friend of the Congregation and of the Founders, who wrote a letter in support of the rector of Cahors' report. This is where matters stood for a while, but in May 1817 the rector of the Academy was changed. The new rector, Payen, asked Father Launay for further reports and took a more aggressive position. Father Hippolyte replied with his usual moderation and firmness, and the rector succeeded in getting the Commission of Paris, on September 5, 1817, to decree that if the school of Cahors did not wholly conform to the law –paying taxes– it would have to be closed. This decision, however, went astray on its bureaucratic passage and was buried in a mass of papers.⁵⁶²

This did not calm the rector and at the end of the year he requested the prefect of Lot to lodge a complaint before the Commission. Neither reluctant nor lazy, the prefect did more than he was asked to do. He put in a claim against both schools, that of the Carmelites, directed by Father Launay, and that of Mirepoises, directed by Sister Françoise de Viart, known by these names since they occupied former convents of these orders. According to the prefect, the members of the Congregation were very controversial and diffused the same attitude throughout the city. Hilarion notes: “Basically the prefect was correct. It is true we did not nor could we accept the policy of the University and above all we in no way wanted to contribute to the spread of liberal ideas.”⁵⁶³

On January 23, 1818, the Commission met in Paris and decided to close the school right away. On February 9, the director, Payen, notified Father Hippolyte in writing in a threatening tone. The teaching of Latin to assistant teachers had to be stopped and his authorization as “institutor primario” which was necessary in order to continue the free school had to be obtained prior to March 1.⁵⁶⁴

The news spread rapidly about the city. Hilarion wrote: “Consternation was widespread. The whole town, all the authorities except the prefect and including the headmaster of the Royal College, had decided in our favor.” The bishop, the counselor of the prefecture, and the mayor agreed to send a singular document, signed by the three of them, on February 12, to Paris in order to obtain the revocation of the decision. On his own account the bishop wrote, on February 14, to the minister of the interior urging

561 HL, Mem. 282.

562 *Ibid.*, 283-286.

563 *Ibid.*

564 *Ibid.*

him to prevent the closure of the school. Father Hippolyte sent a memorandum to the Commission. The Abbé Eliçagaray defended, as usual, the cause of the school. As for the Commission, the liberals, in the face of this agitation, only smiled without any thought at all of changing their decision.⁵⁶⁵

None of these interventions seemed to produce the least result, when another man appeared on the scene, M. de Rastignac, deputy of Lot, to whom all the documents had been sent. He was enraged and threatened M. Royer-Collard, president of the Commission, to present the matter directly to the king, while the minister of the interior complained about the stubbornness of the president, who yielded, at least temporarily. The Commission extended the deadline to May 1.⁵⁶⁶

On April 1 of the same year Father Coudrin wrote to Father Launay:

My dear friend, you as head of the boarding school will make a request of the rector immediately. You have what is required for a primary school. There is no special favor involved. You will ask the rector to send at once your petition and his views, so that you might obtain your certificate for May 1.⁵⁶⁷

Father Hippolyte submitted by making some concessions, and sent some of his students from the boarding school to the state school. He did so in such a way that they were isolated from the other students and so now we find it difficult to approve of what he did. Perhaps we do not have an exact picture of the aggressive sectarian environment which animated not only the clerics but also the “anticlericals” in those years.⁵⁶⁸

The work of education did not stop but the tension remained until the Ordinances of 1828.

At Sarlat, Father Caesarius Carré, superior from 1819, founded a boarding school which soon became the target of attacks by the University. It was Father Bernard Jaussen, superior in 1824, who was the target of attacks by the liberals of the city who accused him before Bishop de Hermopolis, Grand Master of the University (Frayssinous). The king’s procurator received the order to close the school. A priest of the city sought to convince Father Bernard to concede, telling him that this was the opinion of Bishop de Perigueux in whose diocese Sarlat was. Actually, the bishop thought he should also close the free school, as a sign of protest, and his vicar general, Msgr. de Locqueyssie, supported him.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁷ BP, 547.

⁵⁶⁸ HL, Mem. 286.

⁵⁶⁹ HL, Mem. 447, 469, 570.

The liberals, frightened by the protest of almost the entire city, and not being able to give in completely, demanded that six students be dismissed. At the instance of the bishop and his vicar Father Bernard accepted this condition, provided the municipal council designated the ones to be dismissed. This caused scenes of sorrow and indignation on the part of the families concerned. This expression of opinion, and the favor the bishop openly showed to the school, intimidated the enemies who decided to go no farther lest they provoke the city against them.⁵⁷⁰

At the schools of Mende and Poitiers, where the superiors obtained the very indispensable certificates in time, matters did not go to extremes as at Cahors and Sarlat, but there were also conflicts and in various cities there were attempts to cause trouble for the sisters, too.

f. Finances

What was said about the financing of education in the previous period is, in general, true of this period also.

Perhaps the only new factor is that during the Restoration the extensions were added to various houses. Although these buildings were often quite sizeable, they could be constructed thanks to the unselfish labor of the lay brothers, who counted among them not only competent workers but also some very skilled tradesmen who, if not exactly “architects,” nonetheless did draw up blueprints, as did, for instance, Brother Athanasius Rouchouze. What is certain is that the construction was done, without costing more than the price of the materials and the meals and clothes of the workers who, belonging to the community, did not have to be paid.

4. Fourth Period: 1826-40

This last period was marked by the simple and simultaneous closure of all the schools for boys which the Congregation had in France.

In Part I of this work, we saw under what circumstances the disaster was brought about. Here we are interested in recording what was the reaction in the Congregation to the “Ordinances” and how the closure occurred in October-November of 1828.⁵⁷¹

Of course, Father Coudrin’s judgment on this matter was decisive and left no room for doubt. More than anyone else he saw the serious consequences the closure had for vocations to the Congregation, and so for its future, but he trusted in Providence. Faith

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷¹ Lest. III, pp. 178ff.

that the “Work” was of God and not his own kept him calm.” No matter how much our hearts are affected, let us abandon ourselves to Providence. It knows well what it must do for us and for our children,” he wrote to Father Regis Rouchouze, superior of Mende, in January 1829.⁵⁷²

The first ordinance of June 16, 1828 obliged all the teaching and administrative personnel to sign a declaration that they did not belong to a “non-authorized” religious congregation. The liberal and anticlerical move was directed against the Jesuits but the general formulation affected many, including the religious of the Sacred Hearts.

There was no doubt that no member of the community could sign this declaration without lying and for the Founder it was evident that to do so would be wrong. In the letter already cited he said:

We can never serve God by means of which He disapproves. The first oath (that of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy during the Revolution) was disastrous for priests. This one to which a reservation is proposed will require being observed simply and completely. Judge whether it can be permissible for a child of the Sacred Heart to submit to it.⁵⁷³

The “reservation” alluded to was the proposal by the Abbé Fayet, for saving the school of Mende: that there be a simple statement that “they were not Jesuits,” in the hope that this formula would satisfy the University. This seemed to Father Coudrin to be an injustice against the Society of Jesus, and he refused to consent. He felt under all these machinations of the anticlericals, another outbreak of the same forces he had seen bring about so much havoc during the years of the Revolution. He felt a visceral repugnance against giving them the least cooperation or in any way at all taking any part in their game. His letters of this period testify to his intransigent position.⁵⁷⁴

To Father Caesarius, superior of Cahors, he said:

My very dear friend, you will make no statement which is equivalent to an oath, which would be impious coming from your mouth. You will do well to open your residence and receive your students as in previous years. Stand firm, without saying anything, until the gendarmes come to expel them themselves.⁵⁷⁵

The Founder had not lost any of his youthful courage, and convinced of the iniquity of the law, dictated by the fomenters of a “democracy,” imposed by an absolute authority, wanted to make the evil come out into the open and force it to appear in the eyes of the city in all its monstrosity in the act of violent repression of the gendarmes.⁵⁷⁶

572 BP, 1453.

573 *Ibid.*

574 BP, 1406-1440 especially.

575 BP, 1407 (27 IX 1828).

576 Cf. note 97. (Translator's note: there is no note 97, but it has been impossible to trace the actual reference in-

These were the directives sent to all the superiors concerned and we still have some letters, such as those already quoted, which show this. The future of France was clouded. To Father Caesarius Carré, who suggested a foundation in Toulouse, he made this rejoinder which is quite eloquent under the circumstances: “This is not quite the time to go to Toulouse to found a residence there. It would be better, perhaps, to go to the United States of America.”⁵⁷⁷

The enforcement of the law was quite dramatic as was foreseeable, although some optimists thought the gendarmes would not dare to intervene if they saw the parents of the students supporting the school and realized that the victims would be the children.

We have eight or ten letters of Sister Gabriel de la Barre to Mother Aymer, in which is preserved as it were a film of all that happened outside and inside the school directed by Father Hippolyte Launay, who for ten years had continued the work begun by Father Isidore David.⁵⁷⁸

(October 4) Father Hippolyte is under a terrible strain. He does not know how the rector who arrived here on the 1st is going to act toward him. There is a certain rumor in town about all this. Oh my God! in what times are we living? ...

(October 10) The rector and his party harass Father Hippolyte. What will the result of the conflict be? He counts on being able to resist, despite the advice of all the pious friends of Poitiers (the pastors) who are not, in any aspect, successors of St. Hilary.

(October 20) Father Hippolyte ... is too concerned about what will be the outcome of the conflict with the rector, M. de la Liborlière. God will be merciful if he does not protect the children.

(October 24) Father Hippolyte ... is cruelly tormented at this moment. The ecclesiastical and civil authorities have attempted to make him give up his enterprise by persuasion, since they want to avoid the odium of using force on him. I think he wrote all this to the Good Father.

(October 31) Father Hippolyte is waiting for the gendarmes. Will they dare to send them? I still doubt it. Nevertheless it is certain they fear the effect that will produce among the people. So, to make him give in they will do anything except send the gendarmes... The bishop has not become involved yet.

(November 7) Father Hippolyte has brought together some forty children. The rector is furious. During these days he must have denounced him to the minister, and he loudly proclaims everywhere that there is no doubt at all he will have orders for the gendarmes to close the residence. I really think that such will be the outcome of all this uproar, and we shall have twenty more men to feed, who will

tended here by the Spanish original.)

577 BP, 1416.

578 GB, Lett. 221, 222, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 230, 232, 233.

consume as much as another lot of children. Besides, they will not be satisfied ... so it is impossible to know where we are under such circumstances....

(November 12) Our position here has not yet changed. All the more distinguished families' children of the district still go where Father Hippolyte is. There has been an attempt made to intimidate the parents, threatening them with the vengeance of the government. This has succeeded with some. The Academy is enraged; it threatens but does nothing yet. I think it is planning some vigorous measure to attain its ends... .

(November 24) Father Hippolyte has not changed his stand at all. He keeps on just the same and still bears up under threats.

Finally, came the decisive blow: Sister Gabriel in her letter of December 17 relates:

Yesterday, before 8 o'clock in the morning, the procurator of the king, dressed in palatial robes, with two police commissioners and seven attendants, surrounded our neighbors' homes to take the children away and bring them to the Lombard boarding school (Paschal Lombard, formerly a priest of the Congregation, became a secular priest of Poitiers). This school was at the residence of M. Lagoustière who was permitted by Father Paschal Lombard to use his name for the school since Lagoustière did not have a diploma. Father Hippolyte protested and was permitted, out of the king's procurator's favor, three days to close down his school and send the children where he wished. This was the end of a tragedy which claimed the attention of the people of Poitiers for six weeks. There are other details I might bring out which are worthwhile but I do not feel able to do so... Profound consternation reigned among us and throughout the district ... expecting the worst to happen.

Then, the final touches are given to this account:

The way Father Hippolyte acted in this matter affecting his school had a great effect on the public. He was praised in every large and small salon, and even in the shops. After all, the glory was all his, the money and the shame belonged to the others.

Further on she says: "Already the evildoers are saying they are delighted with the fall of the school, for it will make us starve to death."

We have information about Cahors through letters of the superioress of the "Mirepoises," Sister Françoise de Viart, who wrote often to the Founders.⁵⁷⁹

On August 4, 1828, she wrote to Father Coudrin on the subject in a somewhat apocalyptic imaginative style.

Good Father, what do you think of these ordinances? Many bishops are speaking out; others are silent. Father Ladevèze (vicar general of Cahors) seems to think

579 FV, 1416.

the same as Feutrier (bishop of Beauvais and minister of ecclesial affairs). He said only this: "I am pleased that some bishops are opposed. This will keep the partisans of the new system in suspense. It must be seen how *La Quotidienne* puts this poor Bishop Feutrier in his place!" Provided that our France does not fall into schism! O! No! I do not believe this because we are at a time when all schisms and heresies will be destroyed. England will finally be converted and the Turks will be wiped out. If the Antichrist is a society of apostates, as I believe it is, and there are others who think this also, it is now on earth. The Jews will soon be converted, and the end of the world will come. Pardon my disordered thoughts, but I cannot get them out of my head.

On December 26, Sister Françoise wrote to Mother Aymer:

Father Caesarius intended to write to you himself on his arrival, but not being able to wait a moment longer, I do in advance what I know he would want me to do for him... What he will have to do is present himself before the Correctional Tribunal at nine o'clock on the day after Christmas. He began by dismissing the day students and choosing a lawyer. He counts on asking for time to dismiss the boarders. He will undoubtedly let you know the result. Today many efforts were made to prevent his appearance. The prefect who wants peace and is conciliatory would favor this; he even sent someone to beg him to do so. Father Caesarius informed him that he would prefer to present himself in his own defense, but if two months delay were permitted him, he agreed not to be too insistent. The answer is not yet known... Not having been able to finish my letter at one sitting, here is what happened in the meantime. On Christmas Day, Father Caesarius went to see the prefect who urged him to ask the rector for a delay. He did that, telling him at the same time that he would endeavor to keep the house. In the evening the prefect wrote to Father Caesarius requesting him to go the next morning at eight o'clock to the prefecture office where the rector would also be present, because the hearing would be held that day at nine a. m. A very lively altercation took place there and Father Caesarius defended himself very well. They appeared before the tribunal and the rector who did not want to postpone the closure beyond fifteen days was overruled by the judges who granted a month's delay. No appeal was permitted. This did not please the lawyer who was ready to do so, but he did not press the issue. Strong public opinion in favor of this longer delay produced some good. The evildoers said that the residence would be closed down the very next day but actually classes will continue for a month. Through your encouragement of Father Caesarius you have contributed to this good result. Father Caesarius asks you to tell the Good Father all about this.

On December 30, she wrote to Father Coudrin giving him a New Year's greeting in the name of the community of Cahors, and touching on the present subject, said:

Here we are, Good Father, almost back again to the period of the little granary (that of *La Motte d'Usseau*, property of the Viart family). Everything brings it back to me. We hope that the time will not be as long, and that it will be but a

short period of purification. The prophecies tell us peace will come about in 1830 (!!). The good folk of this town deplore the loss of the Carmelites (the school of Father Caesarius), even the liberals who had their children there.

Father Hilarion Lucas in his *Mémoires* tells us about Paris:

If we should credit the rumors of that time, the government had first decided to ignore our establishment at Picpus, but the insistence of our Very Reverend Father in the diocese of Rouen irritated the ministers. On November 24, an inspector of the Academy of Paris, M. Rouvieux, went to Picpus and notified Father Philippe, about the order to carry out the provisions of the ordinance or to close our school. The reply was negative. On the 27th of the same month, he prescribed in writing the same orders, declaring to him that should he fail to submit, the school would be closed on December 4. We had done what we had to do. All further resistance would have been futile. The same day we were obliged to close our school and even the school we had opened from the beginning for the poor children of the neighborhood in which they received free instruction. Since we had in our school some students whose families lived outside the capital, and in particular many young Irish students. Father Raphael (Bonamie) who ran the residence under these difficult circumstances, requested a delay, in order to have time to inform the parents. M. Rouvieux replied December 6 (1828), that the minister granted a delay of six weeks. Some days later, we saw arrive in Picpus a deputy of the procurator of the king who came to verify the closure of the school. Father Raphael told him that he would much prefer that both his hands be cut off rather than submit to the ordinances. The deputy drew up a verbal process and asked Father Raphael and two other priests of the residence who were present to sign it. They formally refused to do, adding that they were yielding to violence on sending their students away, but that they would sign nothing. One of them even remarked to the deputy that what was being done was illegal. Actually, the law of May 10, 1806, the regulations of the so-called University, were only based on decrees or ordinances of the government, without any law. Thus all the subsequent dispositions were contrary to the laws and null in their origin.⁵⁸⁰

We have less data on the rest of the educational institutions which the Congregation maintained in France, but the summaries given concerning some of them give us an idea of how at the end of 1828 all were forced to close. Sarlat had closed down two years before due to the hostility of the civil authority, and at this time in addition to Poitiers and Cahors, Mende and Laval had to close, including St. Maure, in which a small school had just been opened. As for the schools for girls, there was a moment when it was feared the full rigor of the ordinances would be extended to them also, but in fact they were not affected and went on developing.

⁵⁸⁰ HL, Mem. III, 57.

At the time of the Founders' death, the community had twenty-one residences in France and all seem to have had schools for girls. But the references we have found to date are wholly insufficient for adding anything to what we already know, except those concerning the new foundations of Rouen, Yvetot, Châteaudun, Coussay-les-Bois, La Verpillière, and St. Servan.

In a letter of Sister Françoise de Viart, we find a brief note on what was taught at the Mirrepoisses of Cahors in 1832, and she tells us this apropos of the attacks against the school:

There are two factions which are concerned about us in the municipal council of this town. Though both have the same view in substance, they have nuances. One would like to throw us out mercilessly; the other is willing to keep us. As a result the speakers of both parties have vehemently discussed the matter. Our antagonists allege we only teach religion, excluding all other subjects, and only produced ignoramuses. The parents of the girls who had been taught in our residence protested, maintaining the opposite, and some of them suggested that their children be compared with girls trained in any other school. Let them confront these others in the fields of French, history, geography, or in any other course: They were not afraid to face the test. It is undoubtedly due to this vigorous defense that our establishment owes its conservation after the new order, but it was unable to prevent the fact that the majority, by saying nothing, condemned us to pay 600 francs rent and an assessment of 184 francs. We still do not know whether we will have to pay for the repairs, which are quite considerable in this residence, since it is so large, so old and in a very poor condition.⁵⁸¹

It may be concluded, although an actual comparison was not made, that the teaching of the Mirepoisses was, more or less, at the same level as the other schools in the city. So it seems legitimate to think that, given the danger in which they lived, they had to make tremendous efforts to maintain the educational level of their time.



581 FV, 207.

Chapter III

THE FORMATION OF THE CLERGY

The “formation of the clergy” was one of the earliest concerns of the Founder, a concern seen already in the request for approbation made to the vicars general of Poitiers in May 1801.⁵⁸² His anxiety was soon expressed in action and was one of the permanent activities of the Congregation from the first years of its existence.

1. Second Period: 1802-17

During the years of the Consulate, 1799-1804, the Church began to emerge gradually from the open persecution of the previous regime. Napoleon, forcing a reconciliation of the parties of the recent schism, sought to renovate the Church and make it again a social force on the condition of its being at his service with docility. The clergy had suffered a great deal from the schism and there had been very few ordinations during the past decade so that, inevitably, there were fewer priests and their median age was higher.⁵⁸³

In 1809, out of a total of 31,870 priests in France, one third, 10,613, were over sixty. Only 933 were under forty. In January of 1808 there were 1,064 vacant parishes.⁵⁸⁴

Leflon wrote:

In order to survive this crisis and bring about relief, the bishops endeavor to open up seminaries. But there is need of buildings and the government is neither ready nor willing to restore those confiscated in the Revolution. Resources are needed to renovate and furnish the residences as well as provide their budgets and there are no more donations. Certain prelates order collections to be taken up but the peasants do not show any generosity. Church revenues were taxed but the churches are most unwilling to contribute. Cardinal Fesch (Napoleon’s uncle) speaks of taking a beggar’s sack and going about himself begging for the indispensable donations. Besides this, there is a need for qualified teachers. Saint Sulpice lacks personnel and Father Emery, with requests coming in from all areas, replies that he cannot raise the dead. It is often necessary to be content with inexperienced teachers and even, at times, as at Orleans, to entrust to the older students the teaching of the younger ones. In view of the urgent needs one must

582 ANN., 1963, p. 185.

583 Cf. Part I.

584 Leflon, p. 214.

be content also with hasty studies; as a consequence there is a very clear lowering of the intellectual standard among the clergy from which the Church of France will suffer a long time. Finally, there must be vocations and they are still very few. The situation of assistant priests is materially precarious and discourages them. “What sort of parents will wish to allow their children to become priests who will only live lives of misery?” asks the bishop of Carcassone. The new generations have not received a religious education and Bishop de Boisgelin protests that Christian schools are absolutely necessary for preparing the ministers of the Church. Only a fully living faith would induce the embracing of a life of poverty and devotion. Now faith has declined.⁵⁸⁵

In this situation ordinations were scarce, and cost much effort. In 1805 –again, according to Leflon– the Seminary of St. Sulpice of Paris, out of eighty-five students, counted hardly two or three for the diocese. In 1810 there were 16 out of 150. Despite this, the number of ordinations in the whole country increased from 334 in 1807 to 907 in 1812, and to 1,504 in 1816, which was into the period of the Restoration.⁵⁸⁶

Father Coudrin was always very conscious of the most urgent needs of the Church, and in this period, the formation of the clergy was his constant concern.

a. *Minor seminaries*

We have seen that schools for boys, including boarding schools, although not formally “minor seminaries,” had as their primary purpose to foster priestly vocations, whether for the Congregation, or for various dioceses. In this chapter, only the diocesan seminaries directed by the Congregation are treated.⁵⁸⁷

During this second period there was but one instance: the minor seminary of Poitiers, which Father Isidore David accepted in 1812. On this matter we have the testimony of Gabriel de la Barre, who was certainly well-informed:

Brother Isidore had a large number of students, many good subjects. The episcopal council knew of this and rightly assumed Brother Isidore had the ability to teach the young. It perceived besides that without asking anything from anyone, the residence supported itself and was reputable. It thought perhaps that we had resources unknown to anyone. It did not know that all these resources consisted in the thrift and privations which were imposed so that the children should lack for nothing. No matter, this council drew up a plan for inviting Brother Isidore to be the superior of the minor seminary which was still at Poitiers. They had no confidence in our survival as a Congregation. The emperor was at the peak of his power and it did not seem possible that he would be overthrown. We did not want to be approved by him. Everything made it believable that we would

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. chapter II, note 41.

not be able to hold out. So the time, then, was favorable for simply assigning an esteemed priest, whom they needed, to the diocese. But it was clear that to induce him to consent to what was asked of him, it was necessary to present the matter to him as being in the interests of the Congregation. In fact, he was told that all his students would be received at the minor seminary under conditions similar to those in his house; that this was the only means of keeping them (because of the laws of the University), and further, that it was the only way also to maintain the Congregation by keeping it under cover. He believed all that was promised him, and was too good a religious not to ask for and await the Good Father's permission, a permission given regretfully. God had His designs which He kept secret. All the brothers, except a lay brother, left the small residence which they occupied facing that of the sisters, and went to take over the minor seminary on November 2, 1812. The vicars general would have wanted the sisters to continue being financially involved. There was an effort made to insinuate adroitly that the work of a seminary should be preferred to anything else, but this failed. They kept their independence and awaited the times and the circumstances which would bring the brothers back to their first dwelling place.⁵⁸⁸

Through Father Coudrin's and Mother Aymer's letters of this period we know that the proposal arrived around the first days of May of 1812, and that the Founders reacted with a certain reserve. The reason for this reserve was the little confidence they had in the diocesan curia relative to the religious autonomy of the community of the brothers of Poitiers, which seemed too weak to oppose them. The text just quoted makes this clear.⁵⁸⁹

The facts justified the Founders' attitude, as Sister Gabriel de la Barre informs us very summarily:

It did not take long for him (Father Isidore David) to learn how slightly the interests of the Congregation were regarded by the episcopal council. The somewhat austere manner of living of the brothers did not suit the teachers who were helping them teach the classes and run the residence. Their complaints were always received favorably. Finally it was clear that Brother Isidore was only on loan and that his heart, as well as his whole being, remained firmly fixed on the duties of a simple religious, and he was no longer treated with respect. Unfortunately, all the brothers were not as faithful to their vocation. One of them, who had already been more than once a problem, all of a sudden became dissatisfied with his vocation. He gave various pretexts for having his vows considered nul. He asked the Good Father to release him from them, but Father constantly refused, knowing better than anyone how frivolous these pretexts were. There was a heated discussion on this subject between Brother Isidore and one of the vicars general, the former holding that vows, made freely, oblige, and the latter that the first duty of a priest is to obey his bishop. But this priest had taken his vows before his ordination and

588 GB, Ecr.Div., 216-218.

589 BP, 441, 443, 445, 447; BM, 417; GB, Lett. 70.

the bishop had at least verbally approved of the Congregation. Nevertheless, the brother was released from his vows by the ordinary and assigned as a curate in the diocese. The Good Father sent Brother Joachim (Deletang), a priest and one of Father Isidore's first students, to take his place at the minor seminary. Brother Philibert (Vidon), with Father Coudrin's consent, returned to the residence which belonged to the brothers and became the chaplain of the sisters. Brother Philippe (Fezendier), who could no longer stay at the seminary, due to all the unpleasantness he met there, joined him. They took along two or three children, and thus the residence began to revive.⁵⁹⁰

We do not have further details either of this work of Father Isidore, or of what happened to the fifty-one students he had in February of 1812 at his school on "la rue des Hautes-Treilles." To judge from what Sister Gabriel wrote, they stayed at the seminary. The fact is that the experience was not seen as something positive by anyone in the community, and Father Isidore and his students left the seminary probably at the end of the school year 1814-15. Father Isidore, taking advantage of the vacation, as Sister Gabriel reports, went to Paris, where he arrived on September 1, and at any rate was there by the eighth, as we know from a letter of the Good Mother.⁵⁹¹

What seems certain is that this objective of serving a diocese failed due to lack of agreement with the curia and not on account of reasons internal to the work, and that it was the community, still too young, which paid dearly for the attempt.

b. Major seminaries

1. Mende, 1802-5. The first attempt to form "major" seminarians took place in Mende. Hilarion relates it for us in his *Life of Father Coudrin*:

A certain number of youths had already gathered around the Good Father, with the purpose of entering our institute. The bishop of Mende had neither a seminary nor a place for receiving seminarians. Our Founder agreed to take into our residence, provisionally; those who wanted to become priests. So, we began to give them lessons in theology, which was continued up to the month of June 1805.⁵⁹²

In his *Mémoires*, Hilarion gives us some interesting details:

Brother Dominique (Bastide) . . . was put in charge of giving them lessons in theology. He was replaced in the month of August 1803 (the date of his leaving the Congregation), by Brother Hilarion, whom the superior general had sent from the residence of Poitiers.⁵⁹³

590 GB, Ecr.Div., 220. The priest who left the Congregation was Father Roman Guerry, professed in 1810.

591 Cf. GB, Ecr.Div., 231, and BM, 467-468; cf. HL, Mem. 180.

592 HL, VBP, 112.

593 HL, Mem. 108.

Evidently this task was a “service of emergency,” as was almost everything that was done in this period on the level of the major seminaries. It ended up with the resignation of Bishop de Chabot, the termination of Father Coudrin’s jurisdiction as vicar general of Mende, and his transfer to Paris.⁵⁹⁴

At this “seminary” the director was Father Coudrin who, apart from his office of first secretary, and later of vicar general, had many ministries, hearing confessions and preaching daily. Nevertheless, he not only ran the seminary but also taught a class of theology.⁵⁹⁵

2. Sees, 1806-9. After Bishop de Chabot’s resignation, Father Coudrin needed the support of a diocesan bishop, and found it in Bishop de Boischolet of Sees. The prelate did not impose on Father Coudrin the obligation of residence, but asked him to have his community take over the seminary. The Founder could not refuse and, at the cost of great sacrifice, and no little transferring of personnel, took on this responsibility.⁵⁹⁶ Hilarion says in his *Mémoires*:

Bishop de Boischolet, who in 1805 had given our pious Founder letters of vicar general (non-resident), wanted our Congregation to take charge of the seminary of Sees. This was accepted with great enthusiasm since the direction of seminaries and the instructing of young Levites were well within the early objective of our Institute. Our Very Reverend Father left for Sees in the first days of January 1806, with Brother Hilarion who was to teach theology there. Brother Antoine Astier was assigned there the following July as superior of the seminary.

The experiment did not last long for the residences were denounced, and the diocesan clergy put many obstacles in the way. Hilarion says:

The two residences of Sees were denounced in 1808. Bishop de Boischolet of Sees, constantly goaded on by certain persons and fearing to compromise himself with the government, appointed other teachers and another superior for his seminary. Thus, the brothers returned to Paris in August 1809. Brother Antoine remained alone at Sees to manage the sisters’ residence⁵⁹⁷

Gabriel de la Barre gives a slightly different version:

The situation of the seminary (of Sees) could not go on much longer. The priests of the diocese resented having outsiders over them. There were plots, intrigues.. So it came about that the Good Father and his, brothers had no use for this enterprise. They returned to Paris...⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁵ Father Coudrin arrived in Mende as secretary of Bishop de Chabot in May of 1802 and was appointed first vicar general on January 20, 1803 (cf. BP, 224). His teaching in the seminary: GB, Ecr.Div., 112.

⁵⁹⁶ HL, Mem. 142.

⁵⁹⁷ HL, *Mem. 169.

⁵⁹⁸ GB, Ecr.Div., 163.

To be fair, we must note that this motivation given here is at least one-sided. Although they do not refer to the conflict which brought about the abandoning of the seminary, we have letters of Father Antoine which show that Father Hilarion's character presented a serious problem for the presence of the community in the city. It may have contributed to increasing the tension of the situation.⁵⁹⁹

3. Cahors, 1805-18. The work of the community of Cahors consisted rather in boarding the seminarians than in being in charge of the seminary, as may be gleaned from what Hilarion says in his *Mémoires*:

In the course of the same year 1805, the residence of the Brothers of Cahors helped the opening of the seminary of this city. The bishop of Cahors had not as yet found any way to bring together in one and the same place the young aspirants to the priesthood. On Pentecost 1805, he told Father La Deveze, one of his vicars general: "I put you in charge of establishing the seminary." This priest went to Brother Antoine Astier and asked him to receive at this residence the first youths who would offer themselves "to repair the ruined Sanctuary." At first there were but seven or eight. The residence of Cahors continued this good work until there were sixty. Then the bishop obtained a residence from the government and placed the young Levites in it.⁶⁰⁰

We did not find any document which attests that the Congregation did any teaching at the seminary of Cahors, and it seems its work was restricted to running the boardinghouse where the seminarians stayed. Neither do we know how long it took for the sixty students of whom Hilarion speaks to arrive. The intervention of the government in solving the problem of the site suggests the period of the Restoration.

4. Picpus. We do not have any information on the exact date the major seminary of Picpus began to function. Hilarion says that in the time of Cardinal Maury (October 1810 to 1815), under the domination of Napoleon, theology was already being taught in Paris, and that one of the seminarians of the secular clergy was a protege of the cardinal.⁶⁰¹

What is most likely is that, after the withdrawal from Sees, in August 1809, the teachers were free, and at the end of the year began courses in theology or philosophy or both at the same time.⁶⁰²

By 1805-6 a school was functioning in Picpus which gradually acquired better facilities and especially good teachers. The first students of this school had been Athanasius and Augustine Coudrin, the Founder's nephews, who were then ten and

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. Part I, pp. 10-15.

⁶⁰⁰ HL, Mem. 138.

⁶⁰¹ HL, Mem. 338ff.

⁶⁰² Cf. *supra*.

eleven years old respectively, and came from Poitiers. The Founder also brought students who showed signs of a religious vocation from other schools such as Cahors, Mende, and Laval, and thus- formed a more selective study body to which he tried to give a more careful formation.⁶⁰³

To give us an idea of the student body which entered the major seminary in 1809-10, we have an example which we think interesting and illustrative, although it is of 1811. It concerns young Alexis Bachelot who was finishing his humanities that summer. The Founder thought that the brilliant student did not have a vocation, and wrote two letters to his uncle, the superior of Cahors, Father Hippolyte Launay, letters which throw some light on our subject. On May 9, 1811, he wrote:

Alexis (Bachelot) is a rather good student of Rhetoric, a course he is following under Hilarion, but he has scrofula and does not like the residence. I think he wants to return to his countryplace (l'Orne) and be a teacher in a boarding school where he will earn some money.

The Founder wrote on July 19:

I think that if you wrote your nephew Alexis inviting him to join us again, he would be capable of teaching all the classes, Greek, Hebrew and philosophy, and even some mathematics. It will be difficult for us to keep him here after the distribution of prizes....⁶⁰⁴

These paragraphs of the Founder are a fine source of information about the level of instruction at the minor seminary of Picpus in this period, and consequently of the foundation given for entering the new major seminary.

It is surprising that formation in the classical languages Latin and Greek was supplemented by lessons in Hebrew. Hilarion, who, in the first memorandum presented to the Holy See in December 1814, alludes to the chair of Hebrew, says that in 1813 there was added one in Arabic.⁶⁰⁵

Among the students from the schools of the Congregation, again according to Hilarion, there were students for the priesthood from the dioceses of Paris, Sees, St. Flour, Le Mans, Poitiers, and Bayeux. In 1814 a group of Irish were also received, some of whom entered the Congregation later on. There were also some English students.⁶⁰⁶

We have some rather confusing data on the number of seminarians. The number is given as 160, but that includes the novices of the Congregation, and certainly also the minor seminarians. It is said that more than a hundred of them paid no tuition, not even

⁶⁰³ Augustin Coudrin, *Souvenirs*, pp. 17ff.

⁶⁰⁴ BP, 426, 427.

⁶⁰⁵ ANN., 1963, p. 198.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibidem*; BP, 473, 476b.

one franc. Those who did pay something, in only a few cases, paid more than 300-400 francs a year. Judging from the professions of those years, it can be estimated that there were about fifteen students of the Congregation. We know that the Irish were sixteen, plus one or two English, to which must be added seminarians from six different dioceses, a minimum of ten or twelve at least. This would give a total of forty, more or less, for this period.⁶⁰⁷

The teachers of this period were: Father Coudrin, who while in Paris held a chair of theology (moral?); Hilarion Lucas, Dogma, and probably Father Hilary Maigret.⁶⁰⁸

2. Third Period: 1817-26

In March 1817 Father Coudrin received the decree of approbation of the Congregation, and in the following year the bull *Pastor Aeternus*. Although these documents could not be published, for the reasons already mentioned, the bishops were informed about their existence, and the Founder could act with greater security.⁶⁰⁹

On the other hand, with the change of the political regime, and despite the fact that the illusion of civil recognition of the Congregation had soon to be abandoned, the environment was favorable to the Church, and one result was an increase in vocations. Between 1815 and 1820 there were eighty-seven professions, of which forty-three were for the priesthood. To appreciate this growth, it should be recalled that at the end of 1814, the community of brothers counted twenty-five members in all, of which sixteen were priests.⁶¹⁰

Hardly had Father Coudrin the expectation of emerging from the “underground,” than he strove to organize the community better and took very special care to give a more solid form to the novitiate and the major seminary of his residence of Picpus.

a. Major seminary of Picpus, 1817-26

At the end of 1819, the seminary of Picpus had become an important institution in the city and enjoyed the confidence of many bishops of France. Besides the members of the Congregation, all of whom had to attend its classes, there were, in November of this year, more than thirty seminarians of the secular clergy, of whom a good half were Irish. Most of them paid nothing or merely a token tuition, for Father’s norm was to help poor seminarians.

607 BP, 478.

608 *Ibidem*.

609 HL, Mem. 261.

610 LE and Register.

The conflict the Founder had with the curia of Paris, starting from the ordinance of May 30, 1820, took on a grave course for the community, as we have seen, so grave that Father Coudrin very seriously thought of closing the residences of Picpus, not only that of the brothers but also that of the sisters. The seminary was about to disappear, and would have been closed had not Bishop Saussol of Sees intervened as mediator and convinced not only the curia but also the Founder not to aggravate matters and to save the residence and the seminary.⁶¹¹

Even if the work was not terminated, it certainly suffered a shock. The Founder was no longer present to direct it and shortly after this, Hilarion Lucas, one of the pillars of its faculty, left for Troyes. The teaching of theology was entrusted to Fathers Hilary Maigret, twenty-eight years old, who was at the same time prior of the religious residence, and to Father Felix Cummins, an Irishman of twenty-nine, who was at the same time master of novices. The director of the “ecclesiastical residence”, as it was called in order to avoid the term “seminary”, which displeased the curia, was Father Alexis Bachelot, future apostolic prefect of the Sandwich Islands, who was not yet twentyfive.⁶¹²

In spite of everything, the seminary kept on growing, and satisfactorily forming all the religious of the Congregation and many seminarians of France and of Ireland.

The teaching there seems to have been of high quality, equal to that of the major seminaries of the period. We have a note by Mother Aymer of that time which enables us to appraise it:

December 10, the Abbe de Fontanel, dean of the Faculty of Theology of Paris, started a course of theology at Plessis-Sorbonne. Father Pierre Augustin Faudet of Rhodes, a student of the seminary of Picpus, defended brilliantly his thesis as bachelor of theology. This brilliance of the youth is equally an encomium of his talents and of the seminary where he was taught.

It may be recalled that last July, another thesis was defended by a student of the seminary of Picpus, who, due to his responses, merited the suffrage of all who assisted. Moreover, the charity and zeal of Father Coudrin, the superior of this establishment, and of his collaborators was acknowledged. For more than ten years, they did not cease giving proofs of their love for religion and a great number of young aspirants to the priesthood have been and are still freely taught in this seminary, in which the piety which reigns there and the talents which are there developed can be equally admired.⁶¹³

611 HL, Mem. 376.

612 BP, 654.

613 BM, 1443.

Although this note has no date, it can be placed, at least approximately, since it says that the seminary has been going on a little over ten years. This statement and the apologetic tone in which it is written, correspond to the time of the conflict with the curia of Paris, in 1819-20. What is of interest to us, for the moment, is knowing that at this time the teaching there was of high quality.

This is all we could find precisely about the seminary of Picpus in this period, in addition to the fact that it continued growing and forming youths of the Congregation and of the clergy throughout the time we are studying without any other interruption than that of 1831.

b. *The major and minor seminaries of Tours, 1819-26*

Bishop Jean-Baptiste du Chilleau, former bishop of Chalons-sur-Saone, returned to France in 1814 and chose Picpus as his residence, where he was in contact with the Congregation and could observe the progress of the seminary. When he was appointed archbishop of Tours in 1817, although he did not take over the diocese until October of 1819, he induced Father Coudrin to have his community take charge of the seminary, and negotiated for a foundation of the sisters with Mother Aymer.⁶¹⁴

Father Chretien, a priest of the diocese of Tours and a distant relative of Father Coudrin, by his intervention contributed to the positive success of the foundation. Ordained deacon before the Revolution, he had not been ordained to the priesthood until 1817. During this time he visited Picpus, became a close friend of the Congregation, and won the support of the pastor of the cathedral of Tours, who set out to find a residence for the sisters. On the other hand, as early as 1814, the new archbishop had known Father Isidore David, and soon felt such confidence in him that he decided to ask the Founder to have him as rector of his seminary, and at the same time made him his vicar general.⁶¹⁵

This was no little sacrifice asked of Father Coudrin who in 1816 had appointed him master of novices in Picpus. The archbishop also obtained a rector for the minor seminary. So, when on October 24, 1819, Father Isidore arrived in Tours, he was accompanied by Father Ambrose Penel.⁶¹⁶

Shortly afterwards, the Founder could send sufficient personnel to cover all the courses of the major and minor seminaries. Hilarion tells us this without mentioning the names. The fact is that after 1819, both seminaries were in the hands of the Congregation until Archbishop Bonamie (as superior general) transferred them in 1844.⁶¹⁷

614 GB, Ecr.Div., 303-306.

615 HL, Mem. 274.

616 *Ibid.* 332.

617 HL, Mem. 334.

3. Fourth Period: 1826-40

During this period, as we have seen, occurred the collapse of the work of education in all the residences in which the brothers had schools. This happened at the end of 1828. The repercussion this had in the seminaries, and especially in that of Picpus, was that there was a greater number of students for the Congregation. In fact, to meet the needs of personnel in so many schools, it was necessary frequently to use the services of professed students of the Congregation who had not finished their theological studies. Many were in this situation in 1828 and since they no longer had schools, went to the seminary.⁶¹⁸

a. Seminary of Picpus

The seminary of Picpus had developed so much that it was necessary to build a new dormitory at the end of June 1827. Hilarion says in his *Mémoires*, vol. 3:

The establishment of the brothers of the residence of Paris grew considerably. We had at Picpus a school with quite a few students and more than eighty in philosophy and theology, so it was a problem where to board them. The construction of a new building for the seminary was started at the end of June, 1827, and completed in the first days of October.⁶¹⁹

Unfortunately, this prosperity did not last long because of the revolution of July 1830 during which the residence in Picpus suffered three raids in the space of ten days, July 28 and 30, and August 5. As a consequence of these raids, the seminarians became widely dispersed: the Irish returned to their country; the French diocesan students returned to their dioceses and after the dispersion it took a long time to regroup the seminarians of the Congregation. Some of them were unable to return to Paris.⁶²⁰

Some months later –February 16, 1831– came the sacking of Picpus, in which a mob destroyed the furnishings of the house and caused great damage to the building itself, one of the consequences of which was that the boarding facilities were considerably reduced. Furthermore, the general atmosphere in the society of the time was like a powder keg and an aggressive anticlericalism intimidated many.⁶²¹

In October-November 1831 a group of students was regrouped by the indefatigable Father Regis Rouchouze and continued their studies with Father Francis Borgia Chevreuil, who had been sent to Mende by Father Coudrin for this purpose. Others were able to return to Picpus and managed to continue the courses that were indispensable for

618 HL, Mem. III, 32.

619 *Ibidem*.

620 Cf. Part I, pp. 104, 105.

621 *Ibidem*.

their ministry but were unable to restore the seminary to its former splendor. Many years would elapse before that was realized.⁶²²

Hilarion relates in his *Mémoires*:

On November 29, 1834, three young Irishmen turned up to take theology at the seminary of Picpus. They were admitted and entered on December 1. Others followed them some time later. In 1835, the residence of Picpus counted –in addition to a certain number of students of the humanities, all belonging to the Congregation– twenty-two students of theology and many of philosophy. It was decided to begin the school year with a retreat for all those who lived in the house. This retreat was given by Father Francis Borgia Chevreuil.⁶²³

b. Seminary of Tours

Very little information is available on the seminary in Tours apart from the change of personnel. Father Isidore David was called by Father Coudrin to take charge of the seminary in Rouen in 1829. He was replaced by Father Felix Cummins who left for the United States after the revolution of July 1830, on November 4, to be exact. He was succeeded by Father Philibert Vidon who was, in turn, replaced by Father Xavier Belmelle in 1835. Father Bonaventure Majoral took over in 1837, Father Andre Bergougnieux in 1838, and in 1839 Father Ephrem Lafont, who was director of the seminary until 1844.⁶²⁴

c. Seminary of Rouen

For some time the Cardinal Prince de Croy wanted to entrust the direction of his major seminary to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. An occasion presented itself when the founder called Father Isidore David to take his place as first vicar general of the diocese. It was February of 1829 and hasty preparations were underway for the voyage to Rome of the cardinal and his vicar general to participate in the conclave occasioned by the death of Pope Leo XII. Both left for Rome on February 26, and Father Coudrin did not return until September 12.⁶²⁵

The attack of apoplexy that Mother Aymer suffered on the fourth of October of that year kept the Founder in Paris for a few days and it must have been after his return on the sixteenth of the month that Father Isidore took charge of the major seminary.⁶²⁶

622 HL, Mem. III, 89.

623 *Ibid.*

624 *Histoire abrégée des Maisons* by Father Martial Chauchard.

625 HL, VBP, 277-278.

626 HL, VBM, 308.

The professors of those first years were: Father Martin Calmet, moral theology; Father Henry Lacoste, dogmatic theology; Father Hilary Maigret, philosophy; Father Simeon de Monteil, physics and economics. Father Picard de Londinieres, a priest of the diocese, gave courses in church history.⁶²⁷

The Congregation directed the seminary of Rouen until 1900 when the superior general, Father Bousquet, turned it over to the diocese.



627 HL, Mem. III, 81.

Chapter IV

PRIESTLY MINISTRY

This chapter has a summary of the various ministries which do not fit into the framework of the other chapters in this section. These ministries were more diverse and less organized than the others but were no less demanding in the total commitment required of the persons involved.

These many and varied ministries are of interest because they involved various members of the community and the availability to which they testify characterized the Congregation.

1. First Period: 1792-1801

In those early years of his priesthood Father Coudrin put himself at the service of the Church during the Reign of Terror. Each move he made endangered his liberty and his life. It was a ministry that was simply heroic.⁶²⁸

A history of the events of his ministry will not be given, but some characteristics of that ministry which reveal the spirit which animated the young priest will be highlighted. During all those years there were no members of the community to accompany him, for the Congregation was still a dream. However, his activity is of interest because it may be said that, in those years, he formed an apostolic and missionary attitude which later was to pass on to the community and become part of its spirit.⁶²⁹

Perhaps the first trait imprinted on this ministry was the 'availability' which characterized it; the young Coudrin was ready and available to serve at any hour of the day or night. The clandestine authority of the diocese of Poitiers had merely to make a request and he was ready to act without hesitation or self-concern; a person in need had simply to request his aid and he was prepared to abandon his refuge and endanger his life in the streets in order to hasten to wherever his services were needed.⁶³⁰

He himself seems to be in admiration of what he did in those heroic years. He says in a testimony preserved by Hilarion in his *Remarques*:

628 Cf. Part I, pp. 38-41.

629 Cf. Part I, First Period, pp. 34-54.

630 *Ibidem*.

I hardly slept any more even though I needed a great deal of sleep or at least to stay in bed for a long while to give my body some rest. I went constantly around the whole town and often I followed the guard who checked the dwellings. I continually went out. I had much more courage then than I have now (now = 1800-1801).⁶³¹

This readiness to serve everyone enabled him to help many.

Put in charge of hearing the confessions of more than forty priests who had remained loyal, and inducing forty other priests who had had the misfortune to take the schismatic oath to retract, and directing more than 900 persons, our Reverend Father had no time to study...⁶³²

As circumstances demanded, he performed many ministries. As soon as he brought small groups together before the Eucharist, he preached to them and strengthened their faith. The areas where he exercised his ministry most of all were the parish of Saint Radegund and especially the district of Montbernage in Poitiers. He also went about the countryside. In the city itself he did not confine himself to his district; he visited the sick, prepared the dying for a good death, heard confessions everywhere they called him to come.⁶³³

His preaching was particularly remarkable. Hilarion says:

For more than five years, whether at Poitiers or in the countryside, he spent the day hearing confessions and preaching in private homes, and spent a large part of or often an entire night, visiting the sick. He was filled with ardor on announcing the Divine Word, and I have it from M. Roulleau and from many others who were witnesses that more than once he was so exhausted in the middle of a sermon that he had to stop all of a sudden. On one occasion he fell down as if dead. In this way he produced much fruit. When he finished preaching, his listeners remained immobile and in deep reflection. The result was almost always numerous conversions. He did not have time to prepare himself before preaching. He only said a prayer and the Lord inspired him with what he had to say. In his sermons there were neither brilliant ideas nor affected expressions. He drew from his heart all the words of charity he addressed to the faithful. He had one particular gift, that of dwelling on the divine mercy. This was the origin of a remark by a very intellectual person who, comparing our Reverend Father with another hidden priest, said: "Father N. teaches us to fear God; but Father Coudrin teaches us to love Him."⁶³⁴

Further on, the source of the message of this preaching, which was the love and mercy of God, will be seen when we study the faith by which the Founder and his community

631 HL, Qq.R.II, p. 13.

632 *Ibid.*

633 *Ibid.*

634 HL, Qq.R.II, p. 8*2.

lived. For the moment we shall conclude by observing another of the characteristics of Father Coudrin's ministry during the Revolution, even though we have already implied it: he was deeply rooted in prayer.

Perhaps to a person of our times it may seem extraordinary that, under a regime of such feverish activity, the young Coudrin found time not only to carry out his devotional prayers but also to become a "man of prayer." Hilarion says:

On working for the salvation of others, Father Marie- Joseph did not neglect his own sanctification. He devoted a considerable amount of time to prayer and especially to mental prayer. He drew from his conversations with God fresh strength to bear up patiently under all the pains he endured. Although his character was naturally ardent, he well knew how to control it so that occupations counter to it were always much more favored. His conversations were filled with unction. It was enough to see him to feel led to love the good God. "He brings the good God with him," said our good Sister Therese de la Garelie...⁶³⁵

Noting the fruits of this apostolate, Hilarion says in his earliest *Remarques*:

The persons who knew Father Marie-Joseph all with one voice say that it was astounding how much work he did. Burning with the fire of charity he communicated it to others. It was not possible to see him or hear him, without being touched, without being enflamed. The danger of death and its menace shook consciences and disposed them in advance...⁶³⁶

2. Second Period: 1802-17

This is the period in which a community of priests was formed around the Founder, which in its modest dimensions –not quite twenty– was, as it were, an extension of his spirit. Particularly in their readiness to serve the faithful (the revolutionary persecution now over), its members, imitated by the local clergy, lived Father Coudrin's spirit, which we have just outlined.⁶³⁷

Teaching in the men's schools and spiritual direction of the nuns, while absorbing tasks, did not prevent the first religious from being ever ready to go to the help of the clergy, give retreats, hear confessions, and give spiritual direction to persons of all categories.

In Poitiers, for instance, Father Isidore David never let up, as Sister Gabriel de la Barre testifies:

The obscurity in which he still wanted to live seemed foolish even to those who did have some liking for us. Father Isidore, however, was of great service to the

⁶³⁵ HL, Qq.R., p. **3.

⁶³⁶ HL, Qq.R.I., 66.

⁶³⁷ Number of members: LE; HL, Tableau General.

diocese. He was always ready to exercise the holy ministry whenever the vicars general or the pastors requested it. During the Jubilee year he heard confessions in one of the parishes of the city, the one having most of the poor and ignorant. The objects of his zeal were also the prisons, detention houses for beggars, jails confining condemned criminals, and the unfortunate of all kinds. And yet this was not enough for him.⁶³⁸

This should not lead us to think that Father Isidore was a priest without an assignment, hoping that he would be given authority. The truth was quite different. He had in his house a group of more than forty students of all ages, and Sister Gabriel, a good witness, says that he arranged things so that daily and for a long time, classes in theology, philosophy and rhetoric could be given. That he might be more available to them, he encouraged the older ones to watch over the younger, and even left them in charge, accompanied by an elderly man and a brother.⁶³⁹

The case of Father Hippolyte Launay, in Cahors, after 1806, is quite similar. Among many testimonies, that of the director of the Academy of Cahors in 1816, which we quoted above, is of interest.⁶⁴⁰

At the same residence of Cahors, from 1807 to 1815, Father Abraham Armand, who would be one of the first missionaries of Oceania some years later, is shown to us by Hilarion in full “ministry”:

The bishop of Cahors put our brothers in charge of taking care of prisoners. This good work was entrusted to Brother Abraham, who carried it out until 1815. These unfortunates were wholly ignorant of all the duties of religion. Without spiritual and temporal resources they lacked all. Brother Abraham, sustained by his zeal, instructed them, heard their confessions, took up collections for them, obtained generous alms for them and succeeded in making good Christians out of these men, who for so long were delivered over to all sorts of disorders. The whole town of Cahors was edified by the eagerness he had to console these unfortunates. Even the civil authorities, although but little favorable to religion, could not help but applaud his efforts. One day the prefect said to many persons: “I do not know how this little priest does this. Every time he comes to me it is to ask for money for his prisoners. I am always tempted to say no, but always I have to give it to him.”⁶⁴¹

The same may be said of any other of the communities, beginning with that of Paris. The Founder, having become known in the parish of San Roque, added to the works of the foundation of the residence of Picpus, with its school and seminary, ministries of spiritual direction and preaching.⁶⁴²

638 GB, Ecr.Div., 171.

639 *Ibid.*, 209.

640 Cf. *supra*.

641 HL, Mem. 150.

642 HL, VBP, 130.

Mother Aymer says, for instance, in a letter of February 1807, to Ludovine de la Marsonnière:

The Incomparable (a pseudonym for Father Coudrin) is in good health. He preaches in Lent in four different churches, and twice a week in two of them. You see how much he needs strength and good health.⁶⁴³

The incisive wording of this quotation by Sister Gabriel de la Barre completes for us the portrayal of Father Coudrin's ministry at the end of Napoleon's domination:

The Good Father's position was very embarrassing on the death of Bishop de Juigne (a slip of the pen by Sister Gabriel, who puts here the name of the archbishop of Paris under the Old Regime. Actually, she should say Cardinal de Belloy, appointed after the Concordat in 1802, who died June 10, 1808.) Cardinal Maury, appointed by the emperor to succeed him, was not canonically instituted. The Good Father, faithful to true principles, ignored him. When he had need of permission to exercise his ministry he had recourse to Father d'Astros. Besides, confining himself almost entirely to the governing of his residence, he no longer preached in Paris. He had brought together many youths who wished to prepare for the priesthood and did not have the means to pay their tuition.

In this way he formed a small seminary. He also received some little children and had a school. The number of brothers was hardly sufficient, but their courage more than made up for it. One single brother taught several classes. The Good Father for a long time took charge of theology and philosophy. He also met in Paris some of his old classmates whom the disaster of the Revolution had caused to abandon the ecclesiastical career and take up another. He brought them back to their first vocation, and the diocese of Poitiers owes to his zeal more than one virtuous priest who is of service to it, due to his talents and his unselfishness.⁶⁴⁴

3. Third Period: 1817-26

The attention of chroniclers and most of all of Hilarion is taken up almost completely by the missions of Troyes during this period. At the same time, a similar way of life and availability are noted in the lives of other priests of the Congregation.⁶⁴⁵

Françoise de Viart, in a letter to Mother Aymer of July 14, 1824, gives information about the fathers' apostolate in Cahors:

We are all going tomorrow to St. Henry to celebrate the feast of our Good Mother in a manner worthy of her. They (the priests of Cahors) are tired of serving this parish, because it is harmful to their residence.

⁶⁴³ BM, 281,*5.

⁶⁴⁴ GB, Ecr.Div., 194.

⁶⁴⁵ In order to be convinced, it suffices to read the *Mémoires* of Hilarion.

I miss this church of St. Henry. It seems to me it is ours, and has a right that we be interested in it. Father Regis has done a great deal of good and has brought in many people.⁶⁴⁶

From the Napoleonic era, the fathers for a time took care of parishes in various cities. This parish of St. Henry of Cahors, five or six kilometers from the city, was one of those where they did so for the longest time. At Mortagne, we learn from a letter of Mother Aymer that Father Xavier Belmelle was a local pastor. The residence was founded in August 1821, and Father Belmelle arrived at the end of October or the first days of November.⁶⁴⁷

4. Fourth Period: 1826-40

With the closure of the schools at the end of 1828, many priests were available, either for the missions or for other ministries and various bishops offered parishes to the fathers. This growth of the ministry increased even more after the revolution of July 1830, and especially after the destruction of the seminary of Picpus in February 1831.

In 1830 the diocesan missions were abruptly stopped, and its personnel sought the (parish) ministry.

Bishop (Paul-Louis-Joseph d'Autpoul, 1828-47), who always showed great benevolence toward the Congregation, offered Father Cesar (Carre) subsidiary churches for the priests of our Institute who lived with him.

A letter of Father Cesar of October 12 (1831), lets us know the results of the benevolent offer of the good bishop: "Our brothers Ambrose (Penel), Bonaventure (Mayorel), and Anacletus (Lestrade), each serves a parish in the neighborhood of Cahors. Father Ambrose is the only one bound to stay at the residence. The bishop, who is so remarkably kind to us, told me that he entrusted these parishes to us to help us and that he was delighted to find this opportunity to prove to us how much he loved us."⁶⁴⁸

In 1832 there were at least two other fathers who, in places rather distant and separated from the residences, temporarily were given responsibility to take care of a parish. They were Father Jules (Carrie) in Neuviale, and Father Simeon Dumontheil, who was pastor in Pont-de-Veyle (Ain), and always in contact by letter with the superior general.⁶⁴⁹

At any rate, taking over parishes was always an emergency solution and, as such,

⁶⁴⁶ FV, 138*70.

⁶⁴⁷ BM, 1054,*2.

⁶⁴⁸ HL, Mem. III, 71.

⁶⁴⁹ BP, 1742, 1745; HL, Mem. III, 122.

transitory. What always remained the same was the availability of the priests to serve the faithful, especially by preaching and spiritual guidance.⁶⁵⁰

When the first case of the cholera outbreak occurred on March 27, 1832, the archbishop of Paris asked the fathers of Picpus for help in attending the victims. Hilarion was one of those who offered themselves for this work of mercy.⁶⁵¹

The request of the archbishop of Paris too closely conformed to the sentiments which animated the children of the Sacred Hearts for them not to assist very enthusiastically. On April 12 they began to carry out, day and night, their painful offices in the orphanage in the district of St. Antoine, which had been changed into a hospital for the victims of cholera. They continued devoting themselves to this important task until the devastating effects of this disease ended. Our pious Founder applauded their zeal, but he thought he ought at the same time prescribe some measures of prudence. On April 13 he wrote: "I can only praise, my dear friends, the spirit of sacrifice which animates you, in the disastrous circumstances afflicting Paris. Only, in order not to frighten those of the residence, I think I should tell your friends who have begun this good work that they should live in Number 7 (a separate building); have their meals there; say Mass there or at the hospitals and voluntarily, at least for some time, avoid contact with the others of the residence. Everybody knows that fear causes many casualties, and on the other hand, the same grace to be a martyr of charity is not given to everybody.

I approve then, wholeheartedly and with real edification, the self-denial of our dear friends Philip (Fezendier), Hilarion (Lucas), Francis of Assisi (Caret), and all those who make a sacrifice of their lives to save the souls of their brothers. Every day and many times during the day I hope to pray for them in order that the Good God, through their holy angels, may preserve them from all contagion. Let this letter be communicated to everyone."⁶⁵²

Hilarion, out of modesty, shortened the text by omitting the names; the entire letter is given here.



650 HL, Mem. III, 114.

651 BP, 1692, 1695.

652 HL, Mem. III, 114.

Chapter V

THE DIOCESAN MISSIONS

Not only the Founder himself, but also many other members of the Congregation gave missions in the parishes of various dioceses before 1820. What had not happened prior to this date was that the work of the missions was not taken on as a communitarian task.⁶⁵³

At the end of 1820, due to reasons and under circumstances we have explained elsewhere, Father Coudrin accepted the appointment of vicar general of the diocese of Troyes, and the special charge of engaging in the parish missions within his territory with the help of his religious. It was the beginning of “missionary” life properly so-called in the community.

Before considering what is recorded about this achievement, it seems useful to try to penetrate the spirit with which the community took on these missions and the social and ecclesial circumstances in which they were accomplished.⁶⁵⁴

1. The Missionary Vocation of the Congregation

The missionary vocation of the Congregation did not begin in 1820. Way back in September of 1792, in the “vision” of “La Motte d’Usseau”, the first image of the future religious community present in the Founder’s mind was missionary.

The revised text which merits the greatest confidence, since it was composed by the young Hilarion, and taken from the very lips of Father Coudrin before he left for Mende in 1802, and put in writing “that very day” according to his testimony, says: “It seems to me that we were several persons gathered together, that we formed a group of missionaries who were to spread the Gospel everywhere...”⁶⁵⁵

It is curious that in this first description of the “vision” the material proportions of the “things seen” were relatively modest: “we were several persons.” There are not those

653 HL, VBP, 77.

654 Cf. Part I, pp. 54-69.

655 HL, Qq.R.I, 62. Cf. Part I, p. 37. It is of interest to compare what HL himself says in Qq.R.II, p. 4*2, and in VBP, 20; GB, Mem. 2, ANN., 1962, p. 172; PAC, 1043-1052.

long processions that you almost lose sight of that Anthony Bigot says he got testimony of almost fifty years later. To sum up, they form a “group of missionaries” and not a vast army marching over a grandiose landscape. What is truly grand in this early description is the formally apostolic horizon: “missionaries who were to spread the Gospel everywhere.” It is a vocation explicitly “missionary” from the very beginning, whose field is the whole world with no restriction of frontiers.

Starting from the date of this “vision,” every document which treats of the specific vocation of the Congregation brings this out.

A “petition” to the pope, at the end of 1800, reads: “The priests of the Society of Adorers, devoting themselves to the missions and to the hard labors of its ministry, lead lives of oblates.”⁶⁵⁶

In the “petition” to the capitular vicars of Poitiers in May 1801, citing the first approbation for the men’s sector, Father Coudrin says:

Each individual in this society still has particular duties to perform which are regulated by obedience and form part of the objective intended. Some are assigned to go into the countryside to conduct missions, instruct the people and propagate devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary. Others are assigned to teach children.⁶⁵⁷

In a “note” by the Founder on the Congregation and its purpose, the date of which is usually given as between 1804 and 1805, we read:

Our resolutions have as their principle and end the four ‘ages’ of Jesus Christ:... His apostolic age, instituting a society of missionaries at the disposal of the bishops for announcing the Gospel to the poor.⁶⁵⁸

After this period come the documents on the negotiations for the approbation by Rome, between 1814 and 1817. In the Founders’ petition to the Pope, of October 25, 1814, we find the following:

The principal end of the Congregation is to recall the four ages of our divine Savior ... the Apostolic Life by preaching the gospel and missions.... The priests of the Congregation... teach youth ecclesiastical science, and with the consent of the bishops, preach the gospel, hear confessions and preach missions.⁶⁵⁹

In order to conclude what is said in these official documents prior to 1820, let us record what the constitutions of the Congregation, approved on January 10, 1817, and

656 ANN., 1963, p. 183. The expression “the lives of oblates” is for us and perhaps also for the official of the Roman Curia, who had to acknowledge the petition, somewhat enigmatic. This obscurity disappears on reading the *Rule of la Trappe*, where the mitigation of the rigors of the Rule to which the “donnés” have a right is given.

657 ANN., 1963, p. 184.

658 BP, 216; ANN., 1963, p. 189.

659 ANN., 1963, p. 190.

included in the bull *Pastor Aeternus* of November 17, of the same year, say on this subject.

In the preface we read:

The objective of our Institute is to follow the steps of the four ages of Our Lord: His childhood, His hidden life, His evangelical life; His crucified life, and to propagate devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary.... The brothers follow the Savior's steps in His evangelical life by preaching the Gospel and by the missions.⁶⁶⁰

From all these texts it seems sufficiently clear that the missions were an important objective of the community, though not an exclusive one. It seems clear, too, that the desire for the missions was present from the very beginning. It would be fitting, then, to ask why there was such a long delay in putting it into practice. The answer is relatively simple: during the domination of Napoleon the Congregation was “underground,” so it had to take great care not to betray its unity. It is amazing it was able to carry on its under-ground activity without being discovered. Another reason was its smallness—sixteen priests in 1817— and one wonders how they managed to found and run eight residences with schools and ministries. Finally, it was a “diocesan” congregation, whose priests were incorporated first with the clergy of the diocese of Mende, and afterwards with those of Sees, until the approbation of the Holy See was obtained, at the time we have just noted.⁶⁶¹

If we leave these documents and pass on to observe the concrete conduct of the community and its members in these early twenty years of its existence, it is clear that we do not find the organized missions, but we do find the missionary spirit, which endeavored to pass on the Gospel message to a people who had suffered the disasters of a religious schism and the disorientation of an overweening secularization. Therefore, the letter Father Coudrin sent around announcing the opening of the missions in the dioceses of Troyes, on November 27, 1820, is not mere rhetoric:

The day we so ardently desired has arrived.... We are going to begin in the diocese of Troyes the important work of the missions, which was especially recommended to us by the Sovereign Pontiff....⁶⁶²

This recommendation of Pius VII to which the Founder alludes is the one he expressed to Hilarion in the audience he granted him on his departure from Rome, on June 10, 1816.⁶⁶³

660 ANN., 1961, p. 179.

661 ANN., 1963, p. 200.

662 ANN., 1960, p. 193.

663 HL, Mem. 238, 417.

2. The Missions of the Period of the Restoration

The missions of the Restoration are not highly regarded by present-day scholars. Speaking of the missions of France and what was done in this period, Dansette writes:

Groups of their priests arrive and forbid dances, the theater and carnivals. They give retreats, repeated for many weeks, in the churches. During these retreats they perform spectacular ceremonies such as sermons at tombs in the cemetery, general confessions, and mass receptions of Holy Communion. They hold processions escorted by military bands, terminating in the erection of a gigantic crucifix, in reparation for the sacrileges committed during the Reign of Terror, or in memory of Louis XVI, Louis XVII, of “the august Marie-Antoinette,” and of “the inimitable Elizabeth.”

They preach a strange Catholicism, brutal and threatening, a sort of eternal combat between a vengeful God and a protean Satan, from whom man only escapes through the salutary fear of the punishments of hell and the mechanical performance of religious duties. Their sermons are furious tirades or pathetic exhortations. . . . In spite of, or because of these excesses, the success of the missions is at times prodigious. Balancing these good effects, no matter how fleeting they are, let us bring out the unfortunate consequences. If they enkindle the tepid and move the indifferent, the missions alienate others: merchants annoyed by interference with their business, non-churchgoers victims of a boycott, liberals or skeptics whom an offensive scene makes indignant. Proudhon will relate that his first doubts arose, when he was about sixteen years old, from the mission preached at Besancon in 1825. The prefects, although royalists and Catholic, are far from approving the missionaries. They accuse them of stirring up the still smoldering embers of the quarrels of the Revolution...⁶⁶⁴

Severin, the historian of the missions of the Restoration, admits that it is difficult to make an overall judgment, and explains the deficiencies, in great part, by the lack of preparation of the clergy of the period, and the improvising of the mission campaign itself.⁶⁶⁵

Actually, the task of filling up the void of evangelization of thirty years was something gigantic, and unleashed an all-absorbing action which had no room for greater preparation. There was no revision of the methods of the “mission” prior to the Revolution. Missioners simply followed in the footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul, or of Father Lejeune without searching for an adaptation to the situation which had so greatly changed.⁶⁶⁶

Nonetheless, the missionaries decidedly intended to work for the kingdom of God: “Rendre la France à Dieu—Rendre Dieu à la France.” The work ran into major difficulties,

⁶⁶⁴ Dansette, pp. 210-211.

⁶⁶⁵ Severin, pp. 83ff.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

such as the problem of conscience of many people who had acquired “nationalized goods” which were nothing other than the goods of the clergy under the Old Regime. No less a problem was the administration of the sacraments by the constitutional and consequently schismatic clergy.⁶⁶⁷

As a rule, the missionaries showed themselves irreproachable in their customs, and free from all monetary interest. It is not possible to fault them for being men of a romantic mentality, which was the mentality of their time. They were as fond of ceremonies as were the people of their time. The act of contrition, the renewal of the baptismal vows, the consecration to the Virgin, the procession to the cemetery, the procession of the Most Blessed Sacrament, were carried on at times with rather theatrical and somewhat exaggerated pomp and splendor. It is hard to assert that there existed an over-stereotyped style in this manner. In each case, all depended on the imagination of the missionaries and their instinctive pedagogy.⁶⁶⁸

Perhaps the stigma which is less pardonable for these missions was their compromise with the dynasty of the Bourbons and the preaching of an alliance between “throne and altar.” A hymn was sung which is found in the “collections” distributed in this period:

“Come, people of France; God has given us power
to triumph and the Throne and Faith.
Would that today in France one could sing
Glory to the Highest! Long live the King!
Long live France!
Long live the King!
Forever in France
The Bourbons and the Faith.”⁶⁶⁹

It was the position of all the clergy and of the Church of this time, due to the difficulty of avoiding a reaction to the atrocities of the Revolution, and the odious manipulations of Napoleon. The acceptance of what was genuine social progress presupposed the ability to overcome historical traumatic experiences which, at this date, was premature.

3. The Missions of Troyes: 1820

We have seen how a crisis arose in the relations of Father Coudrin and the residence of Picpus with the curia of Paris, in regard to the claims of the pastor of St. Marguerite, Father Lemercier. The situation had reached a point which left Father Coudrin no other

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁶⁶⁹ *Recueil de Cantiques à l'usage des Missions de Troyes*, 3rd ed., p. 90, no. 79ff.

way out than to leave Paris and establish himself in another diocese where a kind bishop might accept him. He did not yet know what to do, when he received a kindly offer, from no one other than Bishop de Boulogne of Troyes. His first reaction was to make a trip to Troyes where everything seems to have been prepared. On Sunday, October 22, the Founder left Paris and the residence of Picpus and took the stagecoach to Troyes, arriving the next day.⁶⁷⁰

Father Coudrin stayed at the hotel “Petit Louvre”, a few steps from the cathedral, and after having made the visits required, went to look at the residence of Saint-Martin-des-Champs, which was outside the city, on the road to Paris, and which was assigned as a residence to the missionaries. It was a large enough house, but was unready and unfurnished. The residence was made ready and on Saturday, November 11, the first group of missionaries, who had left Paris the day before, arrived.⁶⁷¹

The group was made up of Hilarion Lucas, Albert Breysse, Cyril Pigassou, and Xavier Balmelle, priests; Henri Lacoste, a deacon, and Leufroi Denain, a lay brother novice. The second group left Paris on Sunday the twelfth and was in Troyes on Monday the thirteenth. It was made up of Abraham Armand, a priest; Anselm Salacrous, a tonsured cleric; and Paul Royale, a lay brother.⁶⁷²

The Founder was not alone at Saint Martin-des-Champs when the missionaries arrived. On November 8, Mother Aymer had made a visit for only a few hours, bringing along Brother Gerard Pillier who was to be the cook. So there was a community of ten religious, not counting the Founder.⁶⁷³

Concerning the preparation of the personnel for the missions, it may be said that they were in basic training. Hilarion remarks in his *Mémoires*:

It must be noted that the first five priests employed in this important work of the missions, could expect nothing except that the divine mercy would bless their work. None of them had ever given a mission, and so in this regard were inexperienced. The only thing they knew about retreats was what they read in books.⁶⁷⁴

This work imposed great sacrifices on Father Coudrin. Nevertheless, he took for the missions one of his better prepared teachers from the seminary at Picpus and one of the first religious of the Congregation, Hilarion Lucas, then thirty-eight years old. Next, came two companions, professed in 1803: Fathers Abraham Armand, forty-four years old, and

670 Cf. *supra*, Part I, p. 85.

671 BP, 656.

672 *Registre des Professions de Picpus*, p. 54.

673 *Ibid.*

674 HL, Mem. 417.

Albert Breysse, forty-seven. The last was hard to deal with, despite his excellent goodwill, because he had a somewhat exaggerated idea in regard to asceticism and penitence, and because, when he did not write his sermons, he became confused and even somewhat imprudent. The other two missionaries were Father Cyril Pigassou, thirty-one, professed in 1817, and a priest of Mende who had recently entered the Congregation at the age of fifty-two, Father Xavier Balmelle, professed on October 11 of this year 1820.

The other two missionaries were two young students, of promising talents. The lay brothers were also very young, between twenty-two and twenty-three.⁶⁷⁵

The prospects facing the missionaries, in view of the area in which they were to exercise their apostolate, were not favorable. Hilarion says of this first experience:

They were called on to evangelize a district which for almost a century had been perverted to Jansenism, and whose spirit and heart the Revolution had succeeded in corrupting. It was necessary to try to move men of a naturally cold and apathetic character, as the people of Champagne rather frequently are. Humanly speaking, there could be little hope of success. But we knew that the Lord asks only good will on the part of His ministers. We put our trust in Him alone.⁶⁷⁶

On November 26, the Founder sent to the whole Congregation a letter announcing the opening of the mission campaign on the First Sunday of Advent, December 3. In general, it was a great piece of news for all the houses of the province, and the whole community felt involved in this new apostolic adventure.⁶⁷⁷

4. The Mission Campaign of the Winter of 1820-21

This campaign is the most documented of the missions in Hilarion's *Mémoires*. So we think, by summing it up, we will be able to give an idea of what were the subsequent happenings, providing information on the methods and programs used and, above all, on the reactions of the faithful.⁶⁷⁸

a. Bouilly

It was decided to begin with Bouilly, a parish which had just lost its pastor, who had died some days previously. Fourteen kilometers from Troyes, today it is a community of 806 inhabitants. As soon as the rumor of the coming of a mission spread, resistance began. The word spread that the "auxiliary priests" –the name given to the missionaries

⁶⁷⁵ Data on age, taken from L.E.

⁶⁷⁶ HL, Mem. 417.

⁶⁷⁷ ANN., 1960, p. 197.

⁶⁷⁸ HL, Mem. 417. As may readily be understood, the testimony of HL on this matter is of particular worth, because he was one of the missionaries. We follow his account.

of the Congregation in the diocese— were Spaniards who had been expelled from their country, and were coming to sow confusion and disorder in the parish. Many believed this and swore not to go to confession to such dangerous people. The prefect felt obliged to intervene, denying this fabrication in a letter to the mayor of Bouilly and of the neighboring communities.⁶⁷⁹

Under these circumstances, the missionaries arrived on Saturday afternoon, December 2. The mayor sent coaches to pick them up, and truly they needed them, because they had a great deal of luggage, for the religious were resolved to observe strictly their norm of not asking anything from anybody. They “wanted to live at their own expense,” according to the expression used by Hilarion.

The mission started the next day. Father Coudrin came to preach the opening sermon. A procession to the cross erected at the mission of 1778 was organized, where a sermon was given. There was a crowd which listened very attentively. In the afternoon, another instruction was given after Vespers, when those attending were asked to be faithful to the exercises of the mission. Hopes were high but on Monday almost nobody came to the exercises of the day. In the afternoon, the missionaries went about the town inviting people to the mission and to the evening prayer. The result was good: some hundred persons came, and there were hymns and a sermon. On Tuesday a yet greater number of the faithful came but no one went to confession and this made the missionaries feel frustrated.

For two years no first Communions had been made in the town, and the missionaries announced preparations for the reception of the sacrament by children who were old enough and disposed to do so. Two daily catechism classes were started and confessions of the children were heard. The elders, seeing how their sons and daughters were treated, began to come to the tribunal of penance.

Around Christmas, fervor lessened. Afterward the cause of this became known: some missionaries, exhorting the faithful to return to God, had suggested making a “promise” of better observance of the commandments. Those who heard this thought that they were being asked to make a vow, which they feared they would not be able to keep later on, and so many avoided the mission. Hilarion wrote Mother Aymer, who answered him in words which are interesting for us, not only by what they reveal of the Foundress’ criterion, but by what they show of her participation in the work of the preachers of Troyes. She replied in January 1821:

679 HL, Mem. 419.

I think, my good Brother that you have to occupy yourselves more in increasing, if possible, the present good dispositions rather than having them make promises for the future. This might become dangerous if they become convinced that, having failed in some points, they would lose the fruit of the mission. Then it would be very logical to fear that they will become as indifferent to religion as they have been in the past, and certainly more culpable. My good Brother, restrict yourselves to making them know well what is of strict obligation. Leave the rest to the grace of the Lord who will not be wanting to them if they are faithful to your good instructions. This is what I think I can tell you with certainty, so be indulgent, the good God will do the rest.⁶⁸⁰

It was a norm of behavior which the missionaries took very seriously, and this criterion brought about a liberation of consciences.

During the first days of January 1821, Father Coudrin went again to Bouilly, and preached on contrition. His words deeply moved his hearers; tears flowed, faith reawakened, and from this moment on throngs came to the confessionals. The weather was rainy and very cold, but this did not stop them from coming to the church at four o'clock in the morning to be the first to make their confessions. During the last week there was a veritable siege from morning to night.

On Saturday the thirteenth, the "renewal of the baptismal vows" was presided over by Father Coudrin. On the next day, Sunday the fourteenth, there was "General Communion," and more than five hundred persons received. Of this entire crowd, almost no one had been confirmed; Bishop de Boulogne came to administer the sacrament and addressed some words to them which moved everyone.

On Monday the fifteenth, the Founder sang Mass, and afterward there was a procession to the site where the cross of the mission was to be erected. The whole town, with the children who had made their First Communion leading, formed a procession. When they arrived at the site, the cross was solemnly blessed. Each one of the faithful carried a small cross which was brought home as a memento. Hilarion notes:

The cross was solemnly blessed. Attached to it was a crown of thorns, the lance and the nails, while, within the circle of the crown of thorns were fixed three hearts, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the very gentle Heart of Mary, and the humble Heart of St. Joseph.

Such were the insignia of all the missions of the children of the Sacred Hearts.... In the evening, our Very Reverend Father restored the old Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, and instituted that of the Blessed Virgin under the title of the Holy Rosary.

680 BM, 774.

A white banner on which the image of Mary was embroidered was blessed and borne in the procession while the *Te Deum* was chanted.⁶⁸¹

The mission was now over, although the missionaries remained until the following Sunday, when they had the consolation of seeing more than two hundred persons receive Communion. Many marriages were performed; unions which up to then were only civilly authorized were blessed, and many separated families reconciled.

Concerning the effects of this mission, the letter of January 25, 1821 sent by the municipal judge of Bouilly to the procurator of the king is interesting:

The enthusiasm of these (inhabitants of Bouilly), equalled the zeal and fervor of the priests of the Lord. . . The harvest of these worthy shepherds was more than abundant. Could it be otherwise? The preciseness of their reasoning was capably adjusted to the abilities of their hearers; their exactitude in staying within the limits fixed by civil and ecclesiastical authority, their good example, their charity and their selflessness won over to them every heart. The parishioners were not enchanted or subjugated, they were gently persuaded, and the deep emotions they felt, revealed the happy impressions to which they seemed so pleased to give way. . . . I am perhaps taking up too much of your time, M. Procurator of the King, but I could not resist the pleasure of letting you know about an event so fortunate for the canton over which you have put me in charge. What will not be your satisfaction when I inform you that those under our jurisdiction are already more reserved in regard to the oath they announce with greater sincerity in their contracts and that up to this day my repertoire is still blank! May it not be stained by a single note! Gratefully will I share in this glory!⁶⁸²

Hilarion tells us about the departure of the missionaries including himself.

The departure of the missionaries was scheduled for Monday, January 22. At the request of the people, they sang a Mass in honor of St. Vincent the Martyr. After Mass, the crowd of people filled the courtyard of the rectory and the neighboring square. They stayed there more than two hours, despite the bad weather and the urging by the missionaries that they leave. They said they wanted to see for some moments more the good priests who have opened up to them the gates of Heaven. Men, women, children, old men and women, all burst into tears. The missionaries went together to pray at the foot of the cross of the mission. The crowd followed them there. All prostrated themselves. When the missionaries got into the stagecoaches the sobbing redoubled. The people cried out: "Do not forget us any more than we will forget you." Deeply touched the missionaries replied that they would not forget. When the coaches left, these poor people ran along the road to see and wave at the ministers of the Gospel. Such was the success of the first mission of the children of the Sacred Hearts.⁶⁸³

681 HL, Mem. 422.

682 HL, Mem. 423, note.

683 HL, Mem. 429.

Meanwhile Father Coudrin, although unable to stay with his missionaries, did not stop preaching in the city of Troyes. There is a letter of Mother Aymer to Sister Françoise de Viart of January 1821 in which there is this paragraph:

The missionaries work wonders. There are numberless conversions and of many eminent persons. Father Coudrin preached three times a week at the cathedral. There were six or seven thousand souls at each sermon. Note that in this region, before he arrived, hardly anybody went to church...⁶⁸⁴

Despite a certain “golden legend” tone, these lines indicate the intensive ministry of the vicar general.

b. *Essoyes/Landreville*

After the success of Bouilly, many priests wanted missions for their parishes. Among them the pastor of Essoyes, a rather large town seventeen kilometers from Bar-sur-Seine, and some fifty kilometers from Troyes. He had been assigned some months before, and felt a silent resistance among his parishioners, which prevented him from developing any apostolate.⁶⁸⁵

This was a consequence of the revolutionary trauma. The parish priest at that time had not only fallen into schism, but had lost the faith, and preaching against confession, thereby succeeding in many away from the sacraments. Besides there were in the parish many distinguished revolutionaries, enemies of the Bourbons, who being rich, were also very influential in all that involved the life of the town.

The neighboring area was no better. The parishes of Verpillieres-sur-Ource and of Fontette, three-and-a-half and six kilometers from Essoyes, were for quite some time without a pastor. The parish of Loches-sur-Ource, also three-and-a-half kilometers away, had a pastor, but there were in the town two married priests who undid everything the pastor succeeded in building up.

The knowledge of this overall situation caused many doubts in the minds of the missionaries who were undecided about taking on this mission. It was Mother Aymer on one of her visits to Troyes who convinced them that they ought to begin the mission right away. Hilarion says:

It was around February 7 or 8, 1821. She was consulted. She urged us to begin the mission of Essoyes right away and assured us that our labors would produce very fruitful results there. We had more than enough motives for being convinced that the Lord granted her supernatural lights and so we could only follow her advice.

⁶⁸⁴ BM, 780.

⁶⁸⁵ HL, Mem. 438.

The mission of Essoyes was then decided on and consecrated to St. John Francis Regis, in honor of whom we began a novena. The Venerable Mother prescribed that in all the sisters' residences also prayers be said for the same intention.⁶⁸⁶

With this confidence, the missionaries left for Essoyes on Thursday, February 8, 1821, and started the mission on Sunday the eleventh. Judging from Hilarion's data, they took great pains to organize the tasks of the mission.

Sundays and feast days, three instructions were scheduled: one at the main Mass, another at Vespers, and the third at night. At 2 p.m. there was catechism. Moreover, Mass and three instructions, or at least two, were to be held at the parishes of Loches, Verpillieres and Fontette.

On working days, there were two instructions, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Besides there were four classes of catechism each day for the children who were preparing for First Communion: two for boys and two for girls. At night there was a catechism class for adults.

The mission went on listlessly. There was regular attendance, the audience paid attention, but nobody went to confession. This was the situation when Father Coudrin came. But let us leave the account to Hilarion:

On Tuesday, February 13, our pious Founder came to the mission, preached three times a day, and made so salutary an impression on the multitude of his listeners that the confessionals were soon jammed. They flocked in from all the parishes to participate in the benefits of the mission. Every evening there could be seen in the distance the flare of torches as, after the holy exercise of the missions, the people of Essoyes and of the neighboring villages made their way home. Every missionary and the pastors of Essoyes and of Loches were busy for as many as ten to twelve hours a day hearing confessions. The people of Essoyes and of the neighboring villages spent the days before Lent in exercises of piety. There was no place for profane diversion. There were neither masquerades nor dances.⁶⁸⁷

Anticlericals attacked them, intimating, in addition to the charge that the missionaries were fugitive Spaniards, that they would make them pay the bill. Because these were lies which could easily be exposed, they went on to give distorted interpretations of the instructions given, but they were denounced in time and the authors confounded.

During Lent, there was a horrible incident. A youth of twenty-two, who was employed in the home of one of the anticlerical potentates of Loches, was preparing for his First Communion. After he had confessed several times, he began to show signs of madness. The report was circulated that the missionaries had deranged him and that the

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 439.

same thing might well happen to many others. For some days there was a tremendous outcry against the missionaries. But finally the youth's parents gave the explanation. The patrons of the youth had intoxicated him, and then had made him drink an injurious beverage which had reduced him to this condition. The indignation of the faithful against the perpetrators of this infamous act was intense.⁶⁸⁸

On Thursday, April 5, the mission moved to Landreville, a parish six kilometers from Essoyes. The results of the preaching in the latter parish were greater than expected: 1,600 Communions, 100 First Communions, and 20 civil marriages blessed. Bishop de Boulogne came to confirm, and it took two days, April 3 and 4, during which he administered 4,000 confirmations.⁶⁸⁹

In Essoyes, as in the other parishes, there were ceremonies at the close of the mission, but a description of them would be repetitious.

In Landreville, the mission lasted a month, and the people of Essoyes, at great sacrifice, continued attending the instructions.

There, too, there were attacks by anticlericals who spread the rumor that the missionaries, in order to make money, had asked for eight francs a person in Essoyes. The pastor of Essoyes learned that this was being said to the faithful, and decided to write a letter to the missionaries which was read in the church and was signed by the pastor and the mayor. The letter said:

You have been accused of having asked our parishioners for a contribution to pay the expenses of the mission... The inhabitants of Essoyes... attest collectively and individually that in the course of your mission at Essoyes, you never charged anyone and never demanded or requested anything for your needs in any manner at all. Far from so doing, despite the poverty which you profess, you have even helped the poor and the church of Essoyes, a testimony which all my parishioners are ready to sign in case of necessity...⁶⁹⁰

Despite all this, the mission was a success, and the small parish of Viviers, four kilometers away, was also able to enjoy the mission. After having helped the faithful with the Easter ceremonies, the missionaries returned to Troyes. Hilarion says:

The missionaries left Landreville May 7, 1821 and returned to Troyes the same day. They had stayed three months on the mission without any period of repose. After the month of May the work done on the farms did not permit any more missions. However, the priests of the residence of Troyes were not idle. Every Sunday and holiday, they went out among the parishes of the countryside, where they preached two or three times a day. They also gave many retreats. The time

688 *Ibid.*, 440.

689 *Ibid.*, 448.

690 *Ibid.*, 449, note (*Pièces Justificatives*, 125).

left free was devoted to study. They made it a rule never to make social visits, or to eat with anyone unless they were travelling. This behavior, while maintaining them in the observance of their religious duties, contributed a great deal to their winning the esteem and confidence of almost everyone. I will add that in all the parishes to which they went, they reestablished the custom of having a lighted lamp before the Blessed Sacrament.⁶⁹¹

At the beginning of May 1821, the missionaries terminated their first campaign, and withdrew to St. Martin-des-Champs. We have a picture of their activities during the campaign, and we can form an idea of their method of work, in its broad lines. It would be of interest to give documented info/oration about the message transmitted in these missions, that is, on the content of this preaching. Unfortunately, we do not have many sermons given during this period.

At the end of the first week of the mission of Essoyes, there arrived from Paris with the Founder a young, twenty-three year-old priest, a distinguished student of the seminary of Picpus. We have a conference of his on the nature of the mission which we think illustrates the type of preaching adopted on these missions, since it was most likely composed for this occasion. We shall try to summarize it:⁶⁹² *Sicut misit me Pater et ego mitto vos.* “As the Father has sent Me, so I send you.” (Jn 20:21).

After an introduction in which he speaks of the enemies of the mission, and particularly of the Christians who resist it, he goes on to explain what a mission is.

What is a mission?... A mission is a time of grace especially devoted to the explanation of the truths and precepts of the Gospel, as well as to prayer, to the singing of hymns and to the frequenting of the sacraments.

I say first that it is a time of grace.... Jesus Christ, the first missionary, did He not in the course of His mission constantly spread graces and blessings?

Who knows how many sinners He reconciled to God His Father, how many souls He sanctified, how many hearts He purified? This first mission given by the Son of God, did it not teach the inhabitants of the earth to obtain pardon for their sins, to overcome their passions, to conquer the devil, to resist the scandals of the world, and to merit an eternal happiness?

What else is needed to prove that a mission is a period of grace and of conversion?

Then he describes the history of the mission of the Apostles and of the missionaries who brought the Gospel to the heathens, showing how the light for peoples and souls sprang from these missions. He then continues:

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 452.

⁶⁹² On Father Bonamie's departure: *Registre*, p. 60 (15, II, 1821).

I said that this time of mission was especially devoted to the explanation of the truths and precepts of the Gospel. This means that in a mission an endeavor is made to make known all that is necessary to know and to do for carrying out properly one's obligations and working for the salvation of one's soul. So every day after the morning prayer a short instruction is given. Another one is given every evening at the end of the day. The morning instruction, simpler and shorter than the others, provides all who hear it the means of self-instruction, and further the ability to make holy and joyous reflections during the day. That of the evening, by recalling more touching truths, may make on the hearts of the hearers more vivid impressions and bring them to resolve to come back in all sincerity to the Lord. It is for obtaining this great grace that, most especially during the mission, there is recourse to prayer: for the morning and evening prayer is not enough. Every day a great number of Masses are celebrated for the conversion of sinners and for the perseverance of the just. Every day, by recitation of the rosary, we ask God for this same grace, directing ourselves to Mary who, as you know, is the refuge of sinners, the consoler of the afflicted, the strength of Christians. Every day also, after the evening exercises, there is Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. I will say also, for your consolation, my brothers, that throughout France, pious ladies, in great number, are praying that the good God grant you the grace to derive fruit from this mission (he was referring to the adoration of the sisters). But do not forget that the most essential thing in a mission is the frequenting of the sacraments, for it is only the sacraments which can truly purify you from your faults and make you friends of God. So let each one from now on approach as often as possible the sacred tribunal of penance...

Going more deeply into the "utility" of the mission, he says:

Yes, my brothers, if you know how to benefit from it, this mission will produce among you the most useful and the most admirable effects. You will learn, by attending the instructions, to know God's nature and His infinite perfections, to admire His might, to fear His justice, and to hope in His mercy. You will be shown the means you must take to come to Him and to obtain all that may be necessary for your sanctification... Your children will learn to respect you, to help you in your needs, to console you in your afflictions. You will also learn, fathers and mothers that the first duty you have in regard to your children is to cherish them, to watch over their behavior, to correct them and above all to give them good example.

Further on, replying to those who think that the pastor is enough and the missions are superfluous, he says:

... I am not afraid to state that such a person who inveighs against the mission saying that his pastor is enough for him, would be fully satisfied if there were neither missionaries nor pastor. For, after all, what do the missionaries do? They only do what the pastor does and what he must do. They only announce the same Gospel, they only proclaim the same truths, they only exercise the same ministry.

Whoever has contempt for their ministry, has contempt also for the ministry of his pastor, and thereby declares himself to be an enemy of God, an enemy of the religion of Jesus Christ. Judge according to this, what you should think of those who say they do not want any mission...

Answering the question as to what should be done to profit most from the mission; he sums it all up in four points:

1) Listen carefully to the instructions, above all, with the intention of using them in life, without concern for the rhetorical aspect; 2) pray, not only ritually in common prayer, but putting yourself in personal contact with God; 3) make a good confession, and for so doing start preparing right away; 4) avoid occasions of sin which can separate you from God or hinder you from approaching Him. He concludes with a prayer:

Deign, o my God, to grant all these graces to the people of this parish and of all neighboring parishes. May there not be a single one, o my God, who does not benefit from these days of salvation for learning Your law; may they bewail their faults, obtain Your pardon here below, and possess You in eternal happiness. This is the grace I beg of You, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.⁶⁹³

5. The Missions of Troyes: Autumn 1821

Starting from the spring of 1821, a mission group was formed which had enjoyed a stimulating experience. The three missions of which we have spoken were so successful that the bishop, the clergy, and the faithful were satisfied and as a result the missionaries themselves were able to weigh their capabilities and to test their methods. From now on the way was open, and the preachers had the feeling of having hit the nail on the head, and the pleasure of being esteemed by everyone. So, the only thing to do was to follow the same path.

Mother Aymer's advice also had weight; she wrote to Hilarion in March 1821:

My dear brother, do not worry too much. I am confident that you and your fellow-missioners will do a great deal of good, if, above all, you use a great deal of gentleness, of pleasantness of expression on presenting things, even difficult ones, so as to take away all bitterness. Do not be too formal for it tends to turn people away. The awareness of God will cause more to be done later on than you might ask for at the moment. In all, my good brother, provided you see frankness in the manner of acting, sincerity in accusation, do not be afraid and above all never appear to be.⁶⁹⁴

693 PAC, 3254.

694 BM, 789.

a. Campaign 1821-22

On Sunday, October 7, the new mission season began, and the parish of Auxon, twenty-eight kilometers to the south of Troyes, was chosen as the place to begin it. It was a very large parish with a big population, but in fact with hardly any parishioners. The people married only civilly, and knew nothing about religion. Hilarion observes: "It was like preaching the faith to savages who lived in absolute ignorance of all religious obligations."⁶⁹⁵

As usual, the Founder's preaching was impressive, but this time what he said made many feel frightened. When he spoke of putting off going to confession, he said: "It may happen that before my departure (one or two days later) some will die without the sacraments." He particularly disquieted a man who was in front of the pulpit, and he asked the pastor his name. He was an inveterate drinker who had not gone to confession for years, and who died that night. This frightened everybody, and caused them to open themselves up to the preaching of the missionaries. On November 18, at the general Communion, there were around 800 Communions. Among those receiving were more than 100 men between twenty and sixty years old who had not made their First Communion.⁶⁹⁶

On Sunday, November 25, the opening of the second mission in Ervy, nine kilometers to the south of Auxon, took place. This was an area which had suffered much because of religion during the Revolution, and where the partisans of Rousseau and of Voltaire were very active. So much so that, when they learned of the mission, they organized meetings to put the young on guard against the missionaries. More than anything else they endeavored to make the missionaries look ridiculous, launched an offensive ideological attack on them, and did not hesitate to threaten the simple people with reprisals.

The missionaries felt that their efforts came up against a kind of inertia which not even Father Coudrin's words were able to overcome. Then they wrote Mother Aymer, who promised that her sisters would offer up prayers for them and exhorted them not to give way to discouragement. To this Hilarion attributes the success of the mission. Actually, more than 3,000 persons went to confession. The mission ended on January 13, 1822.

Fifteen days later, a mission was begun in a town twenty-eight kilometers to the north of Troyes, on the road to Chalons, Arcis-sur-Aube. At the time it had 2,500

695 HL, Mem. 466.

696 HL, VBP, 212; Mem. 466.

inhabitants (today 3,259), and was an industrial area before the Revolution, the native land of Danton and of Courteois, where Volterian propaganda had become dominant.

The mission opened up on January 27. There were some novelties introduced into the “exercises”; five daily catechism classes for adults were added. It was possible to carry this out due to a rather novel cooperation of the Ursuline nuns of the city who took charge of teaching all the classes to the women and little girls.

The results were good, among them, the First Communion of a group of 500 adults of both sexes. One hundred and thirty men, one wearing a crown of thorns, bore the cross which was erected on the road leading to Troyes. The missionaries left Arcis on March 19, 1822. Almost two thousand persons accompanied them as far as Voue, nine kilometers away.

b. Campaign 1822-23

As time passed and as the parishes which had been given missions increased, the missionaries began to realize that after the mission pastoral care had become more arduous for the pastors. From various places the pastors called for the missionaries to give them a hand, especially during the great feasts, such as Easter.⁶⁹⁷

So it was that, in order to answer the requests of Arcis and of Ervy, which had an octogenarian pastor, it was necessary for the moment to refuse the mission of Nogent-sur-Seine, which was scheduled after that of Arcis. However, a briefer mission was given which lasted four weeks.

At the beginning of March of this year, there was anticlerical agitation in Paris in connection with the missions, and there was no hesitation in insulting the archbishop. In the department of Aube (the department whose capital is Troyes), the prefect was afraid something similar might happen, and on the sixth of this month sent a letter to the mayors to prevent disorders. In it, among other things, he says:

The inhabitants of Aube receive with as much eagerness as respect the pious missionaries whom the bishop sends to their cantons. These respectable churchmen go among them with success. Since their arrival, their words, filled with kindness and charity, dispel the prejudices which have been raised against them.⁶⁹⁸

The prefect, knowing that a mission was beginning in Nogent-sur-Seine, sent police reinforcements. The missionaries begged the gendarmes to withdraw and everything followed in an orderly way.

⁶⁹⁷ HL, VBP.

⁶⁹⁸ Pièces Justificatives, 146; HL, Mem. 469.

The mission season of the year began as customary in October. On the sixth of this month, the mission in Gye-sur-Seine, forty-five kilometers away, to the southeast of Troyes, was opened. To facilitate the faithful attending the mission, after the first days, the missionaries divided up: five stayed in Gye and three went to the neighboring parish of Meuville-sur-Seine, two kilometers from Troyes.

Despite the fact that there were some instances of resistance, the mission was a success in both places. Father Coudrin came, as usual, and preached five times in two days. Hilarion describes for us here a ceremony of “reparation” which was somewhat of a novelty:

Some days after the opening of the mission, an act of reparation was made to the Blessed Sacrament. An altar had been erected in the middle of the nave; the Blessed Sacrament was borne in procession and set down on this altar. The church was lit up by more than eighty candles. The *Miserere* and the *Domine non secundum* were sung. This ceremony made a very vivid impression on the people.⁶⁹⁹

On November 26 the missionaries left for Riceys. The mission opened up in Riceybas on December 1, and in Riceyhaut on the eighth of the same month, the missionaries divided up as in the previous mission. It seems that this week of delay was due primarily to the fact that the pastor was not a supporter of the mission and did not have a favorable idea of the missionaries. But seeing them working for a few days was enough to dissipate his prejudices and the mission went on normally.

On January 20 and 27 the mission of Riceys ended. On February 2 the missionaries were already starting a mission in Lusigny and in Couteranges where four stayed while four others were stationed at Mezieres. In this last place, more than fifty men between twenty and forty years old made their First Communion.

These were the last missions of the season, but the missionaries each time received requests from the parishes through which they passed to return and help the pastors, especially on holy days.

c. Campaign 1823-24

The pressure of the pastoral needs of the diocese forced the missionaries to divide up and cover a greater number of parishes. Thus, during this season, which began on October 18 and ended on May 3, 1824, eight missions could be given.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁹ HL, Mem. 511.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 533-536.

They began at Estissac twenty-one kilometers from Troyes, toward the west, and ended seven weeks later, December 7.

On December 8 the mission of Marcilly began, in the same area of the west, some twenty kilometers from Estissac, and lasted until January 18, 1824.

Meanwhile another mission had begun in Aix-en-Othe, some ten kilometers to the south of Estissac, and lasted until January 25. In Marigny-le-Chatel, the mission began on January 20 and ended on February 15. In Rigny-le-Feron the mission began in February and ended on March 7. In Pont-le-Roy, it started on February 22 and ended on March 21. In Dienville, it started on March 14 and ended on April 25. Finally, the mission of Romilly began on March 28 and ended on May 2. It was a long and full season.

In Pont-le-Roy a difficult situation arose during the mission because of a young girl who gave scandal and who had refused to repent. The missionaries refused her burial or rather had the pastor do so. This decision was made with the explicit intention of giving a lesson to the youth who were notorious for their frivolous customs.

The rest of the campaign followed its usual course, but it must have left the missionaries more tired than in the past, because it was longer and there were fewer rest periods.

d. Campaign 1824-25

Hilarion in his *Mémoires*, which are the main source of our information, treats this season of the missions very summarily and incompletely. In October missions started simultaneously in Chaussigny and in Rilly-Ste-Cyre, sixteen and eighteen kilometers, respectively, from Troyes down the river, on the banks of the Seine.⁷⁰¹

The missionaries left Ste. Cyre for Chaource, some twenty- nine kilometers from Troyes to the south. They took care at the same time of the neighboring parishes: Lantages, Pargues, Maisons-les-Chaource, and Cussagny. The mission ended on January 30, 1825.

Immediately afterwards, the mission of Bar-sur-Seine began, which lasted until March 27, 1825. Simultaneously, the parishes of Vitry-le-Croise, Mille-sur-Arce, and Bourguignons were taken care of.

e. Campaign 1825-26

1825 was an important year for the Congregation and also for the diocese of Troyes. On May 13 Bishop de Boulogne died unexpectedly in Paris while Father Coudrin,

⁷⁰¹ HL, Mem. 561-562. After the Chapter of 1824 the chronicler is less concerned about the missions.

accompanied by Hilarion, was getting ready to go to Rome, where he went on May 19 and did not return to Troyes until August 8. Let us recall that on this visit to Rome the Founder presented the constitutions, completed by the General Chapters of 1819 and 1824, and requested the pope for a mission territory.⁷⁰²

The diocese had to wait about ten months before the new bishop Seguin des Hons arrived. In those months many divisions arose in the curia, and the Founder on his return found everything changed. While the support he received from the Church of France lessened, his responsibilities on the level of the universal Church increased. On September 29 the nuncio in Paris transmitted to him the request of the Holy See that he take charge of the missions of the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii). On October 6, he sent the reply to Rome accepting this. On December 26 of the same year he received the approbation of the constitutions, although the documents did not yet arrive.

In October the missionaries of Troyes took up their preaching again and began this time with Grandes-Chapelles and Petites-Chapelles, twenty-five kilometers from Troyes. From there they went on to the parish of Mery-sur-Seine, where they finished on January 27, 1826. On February 2 the mission of Bar-sur-Aube was started and ended solemnly on the first of April, with the visit of the new bishop Seguin des Hons.

During the last years, and especially in 1826, various bishops had asked for missions for their dioceses, but Father Coudrin could not comply with their requests. The extent of the field to be covered was already too much for the personnel at his disposal, especially now that the horizon had opened up for the foreign missions.

f. Campaign 1826-27

1826 was the year Father Coudrin left the diocese of Troyes. On July 26 he left the city and went to Paris. Five days before he had written to Cardinal de Croy accepting the office of vicar general of Rouen. From Paris, he wrote to the bishop of Troyes on the twenty-ninth, resigning his office in that diocese.⁷⁰³

The following September, on Friday the eighth, the Founder appointed as the new religious superior of the missions of Oceania, Father Alexis Bachelot, the prefect apostolic. On the thirteenth the white habit was adopted and was worn for the first time by the members of the Congregation. The next day, Thursday, September 14, Father Coudrin, accompanying the cardinal, left for his new residence in Rouen.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 586, 593; cf. Part I, pp. 95ff.

⁷⁰³ HL, Mem. 602.

In Troyes, Father Raphael Bonamie was still head of the missionaries. He was only twenty-eight, but showed he had administrative ability of a high order and was a very good missionary.

According to Hilarion, who was not any longer among the missionaries, having been transferred to Picpus, the new bishop intended to confine the missions to the countryside. It seems Bishop Seguin des Hons was “timide”, as Hilarion says, afraid that, as had happened in Paris, the missions would stir up trouble. But many influential persons insisted that the missions be given in the city parishes, and the prelate finally gave in. He imposed one condition: no hymns were to be sung. The Founder regretted this. The mission was given in the city in two periods: Advent of 1826 and Lent of 1827. In the interval, a mission was given in Vendevre, twenty-eight kilometers east of Troyes.

The mission of Vendevre began on January 21, 1827, and ended on March 12.

On returning to Troyes, they held the exercises of the Jubilee which began March 18 and ended in May. Hilarion, who was now far away, says: “I have found no information on this subject in anything I have come across.”

We know little about the closing of the missions in Troyes. We do know that they did close when the Restoration came. What seems certain is that in these last years, and after the Founder’s departure to Rouen and the opening of missions in that diocese, the personnel were not as numerous, although at the end of 1828, with the closing down of the schools, there was still some personnel available.

6. The Missions of Rouen

Father Coudrin arrived in Rouen on September 15, 1826. The diocese suffered from a shortage of clergy, and the missions seemed urgent. Nevertheless, the Founder could not at this time make available as large a group of religious and priests as when he arrived in Troyes in 1820.⁷⁰⁴

He had available only two priests of the Congregation: Father Simeon Dumonteil, thirty-three years old, and Father Martin Calmet, thirty-two.

Although the testimony is late –written in 1867, when he was seventy-three– what Father Calmet says is certainly interesting:

(Father Coudrin) had only been a few months in Rouen when Father Caumont, today first vicar general, and then pastor of Forges-les-Eaux, having built a church in the town, requested Father Coudrin to come and bless it and to assign him one of the priests of his Congregation to give a mission in his parish on this occasion.

⁷⁰⁴ HL, Mem. 603; Father Martin Calmet, *Vie du BP*.

The Good Father took this occasion to undertake the work of the missions in this extensive and populous diocese. But, as the times were adverse, and there was a general unleashing of all the enemies of religion against the missions, he thought he should act prudently and carry out this work with reserve.

So, having gone to Paris around the end of November 1826, on his return to Rouen, he brought with him Father Dumonteil and Father Calmet. He left Father Dumonteil in Rouen to preach during Advent in the metropolis and went to Forges to bless its church on the first Sunday of Advent (December 3), bringing with him Father Calmet. The Good Father, after having blessed the church, preached vigorously with characteristic unction. He departed the next day, leaving Father Calmet at Forges to continue the mission which went on until after the Christmas holydays. It did some good, but would have produced more if the preacher had been more eloquent and especially more animated by the love of God. I say this, for this is how it actually was and not out of modesty. During the whole mission Father Caumont treated me most kindly and courteously...

In the month of January the Good Father sent us, Father Dumonteil and me, to give a mission in a parish five leagues from Rouen, called Villers-Ecalles.

For a long time it did not have a priest because then the diocese had few subjects. It was served by a neighboring pastor. The Good Father could not come with us. Father Libert, second vicar general and a very devoted friend of the Good Father brought us there, letting the pastor know beforehand and arranged everything with the mayor for our staying at the rectory. The mayor had even had one of his daughters do our rooms and prepare and serve our meals –which were quite simple– every day. He also let us have the cider we needed, fine cider which was the beverage of the area. At the end of two weeks, the Good Father sent us Brother Gerard (Pillier) and we no longer needed the mayor's daughter's services. The Good Father himself came toward the middle of the mission and preached there once or twice. One of the fruits of this mission was the conversion of four persons of the "Petite Eglise," which here is called "Clementine," the father of a family and two young men of another family along with their sister.

While we were giving the mission of Villers-Ecalles, the pastors of Pavilly and of Bouville came to ask us to come to their parishes and give missions during Lent which would soon begin, after we had finished the mission at Villers-Ecalles, which would be before Lent. The Good Father for the moment preferred Pavilly to Bouville. The Bouville parish is a big town four leagues from Rouen. Its population is 2,780....

The mission of Pavilly began at the beginning of Lent. The people seemed to welcome it. At first the confessions were not very numerous, but the instructions which took place every evening were well attended. Soon the confessionals were crowded and we could very seldom leave before late at night. This was because the factory workers could come only in the evening. The pastor, Father Lefeuvre, was greatly consoled. The Good Father came to preach there one evening. The church was filled and he preached with so much feeling that almost everyone

wept. He returned at Easter with His Eminence to conclude the mission. On that day the Communions were very numerous, but I could not say how many.

Some time later, the Good Father had Father Eugene Lauzoult come again to Rouen and he assigned us during those three years 1827, 1828, 1829, to give missions in various parishes. He sent us, now alone, now with a companion, according to the circumstances. Here are the names of the principal parishes where missions were given during these three years: St. Saens, Londinieres, Blangy, Argueil, Lafeullie, Boissai, St. Jacques-sur-Darnetal, Bois-Hérault, Bosc-Roger, Sommary, Bouville, St. Mellon, Graimille, Etouteville, Houtot-St. Sulpice, Enverneu, St. Nicolas-d'Aliermont, Auquemenil, Campneusville, Bois-Vilbert, Vouville-les-Baones, Assigny, etc.⁷⁰⁵

We have no major details on the method followed, and it is to be assumed that it was not very different from that employed in the missions of the diocese of Troyes. The list of so many places and with so few persons, suggests that on many occasions the missions were very brief. The suitable time was everywhere the same; during summer and autumn, the countryfolk were always busy, and the missions were left for another season.

General Conclusion on the Diocesan Missions

The missions we have recalled are all recorded in the period of the Restoration. Consequently, it is obvious that they could not avoid the conditioning of their time.⁷⁰⁶

Yet we did not encounter in their development the very accentuated presence of any of the negative aspects critically brought out in the missions of the Restoration.

They do not seem to have exaggerated the political tone. Hilarion, who was undoubtedly an enthusiastic legitimist, does not preserve even one incident which might lead us to think that political propaganda was an objective, even a secondary one, of the missions.

Neither does the imagery depicted seem excessive, keeping in mind that it was presented in the midst of the Romantic period.

It is certain that the results of the missions were measured by the number of communions and confessions; in other words, great importance was given to "sacramentalization." Nevertheless, it would deform true history not to mention the determination the missionaries had to achieve "evangelization" in the true sense of the word by the means and methods at their disposal. The great calamity of the Church of France after the revolutionary experience, the campaign of de-Christianization, and especially

⁷⁰⁵ M. Calmet, *Le BP à Rouen*.

⁷⁰⁶ Leflon, pp. 309sff.; Dansette, 202-212.

the twenty-five years of deficient education was the ignorance of religion that prevailed. It may be said that the main effort of the missions, especially those of Troyes, which we know best, was the evangelization of the faithful, who were extremely uninstructed, and the reactivation of the parochial community.

We have no means of checking how long the effects of the missions lasted, but at any rate, all the deficiencies cannot be imputed to the missions, which seem to have achieved all that could be done at that moment.



Chapter VI

THE FOREIGN MISSIONS

If one should take a globe of the world and, while revolving it slowly, mark the places where there were religious of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts at the time of the Founder's death, it would be clear that there was a veritable explosion which had showered them all over the world.

First of all, there were the islands of the Pacific, from the archipelago of Hawaii to that of Gambier, with a mission post in California and a house in Valparaíso, which was intended to serve as a bridge between Europe and all of Eastern Oceania. Then there was the diocese of Smyrna, in Asia Minor and, finally, a mission among the Indians of the Atlantic coast of the United States, in the extreme northern section of the diocese of Boston on the border with Canada.

To appreciate this expansion better, it should be taken into account that the community was not very numerous at this time, although it had grown relatively fast. In the men's branch of the Congregation, there was a total of 242 religious, of whom 122 were priests and 105 were lay brothers. The sisters had not left France at this time and numbered 888.

In order to appreciate the facts, it is also necessary to understand that only Oceania was a mission territory entrusted to the Congregation by the Holy See. In Asia Minor, the Founder took no responsibility in the name of the Congregation, but agreed that one of his religious be named bishop in that region. In the case of the diocese of Boston, Father Coudrin sent two missionaries, who helped in the evangelization of the Indians, under the jurisdiction of the bishop. But, in this case also, he did not assume missionary responsibilities in the name of the Congregation.

1. The Missions of Eastern Oceania

a. First Project and Decision

The acts of the second General Chapter of 1824 do not treat of the discussions which

the assembly held and give only the decisions which were arrived at, so we do not know what was said at the Chapter about the foreign missions. However, we do know that they were discussed, because legislation was passed on the foreign missions, although, as yet, they were merely a possibility.

At the seventh session, on September 9 of that year, it was established that future missionaries, that is, those resident in religious houses founded in pagan countries, would be subject to the same Rule as all the others. In a second article it was said:

The brothers of the Congregation who will be sent to the missions of the Levant and the missions outside of Europe, will keep ever in mind they are religious.

For each mission there will be a superior to whom the others will be subject, and to whom they will render as often as possible an account of the state of the mission entrusted to them. They will obey exactly the orders given them and will ever be at his disposition for going to all the places he thinks he should send them. They will conform in everything to the rules drawn up by the Holy See for each one of the missions where they may be employed.⁷⁰⁷

In a following article, it is required that each missionary write to the superior general at least once a year.

Up until now, the documents do not enable us to determine what was projected for the future regarding the opening up of foreign missions. Concerning the first steps taken to carry out the project, we must wait for Father Coudrin's journey to Rome to learn what they were. This is what Hilarion tells us in his *Mémoires*, writing on the Founder's journey to the Eternal City in 1825.⁷⁰⁸

When giving an account of the negotiations conducted in Rome, he writes:

There was still another important objective. Not only did we have as our aim to devote ourselves to the missions of France but also to the foreign missions, insofar as circumstances might allow. Our pious Founder spoke of this to Bishop, later Cardinal, Caprano, at that time secretary of the Propagation of the Faith. He sent him a memorandum on July 15, 1825, in which, after having cited the regulations adopted on this subject by the General Chapter of 1824, he requested that the brothers who dedicated themselves to these missions depend only on the Propagation of Faith and be not subject to foreign superiors. Bishop Caprano received this memorandum benevolently. We shall see later on that he was the one who opened the way to the mission of the Sandwich Archipelago (Hawaii).⁷⁰⁹

It does not seem that on this occasion mention was made of any mission region in particular. At least, no indication of this appears in the documents. What is most likely

707 ANN., 1964, p. 152.

708 HL, Mem. 573.

709 *Ibid.*, 581; ANN., 1963, p. 279.

is that Bishop Caprano promised to deal with the matter without going into greater details.

According to the information Hilarion gives us, it was the superior of the Foreign Missions of Paris who sent to Bishop Caprano the petition which a Frenchman –perhaps a certain Monsieur Rives– made to send missionaries to the Sandwich Islands, where he had many interests and a great deal of influence. He had accompanied the king of the islands, Kamehameha II, on his journey to London. The sovereign had died in London in 1825, and M. Rives had gone on to France where he had asked Father Langlois, the superior of the French Foreign Missionary Society, for priests for the islands. Not having any available, Father Langlois sent the petition on to Rome. It reached Bishop Caprano who then recalled Father Coudrin’s petition and proposed to Cardinal della Somaglia, pro-prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, the idea of offering the new mission to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. In fact, the mission was truly “new,” for no Catholic missionaries had ever been sent to Eastern Oceania.⁷¹⁰

On September 10, 1825, Cardinal della Somaglia wrote to Father Coudrin asking him for missionaries for the Sandwich Islands, as Hawaii was then called. The Founder was at the time in Troyes, as vicar general, and on October 6, he answered the cardinal, accepting the mission in the name of the Congregation. Without naming them, he offered three religious for the islands.⁷¹¹

A few days later, on October 17, he wrote to the young director of the minor seminary of Tours, Father Alexis Bachelot, asking him to accept the mission, without telling him yet about the office he intended to give him. He told him:

Not long ago, my dear Alexis, I received from the Cardinal Prefect of the Propagation a request for some missionaries of our Congregation to be sent to the Sandwich Islands which are in the Pacific Ocean.

I learned, too, that a ship is ready to leave for these islands around next November, or the first days of December. I promised the Propagation three missionaries and I have you in mind as one of the three.

I do not intend, however, to oblige you to go in virtue of holy obedience.

Reflect before God on this proposition and answer me right away. These islands have never seen a Catholic priest. They have a population of around 500,000 souls.

The Propagation offers us this mission as something belonging to our Congregation.

710 HL, Mem. 607.

711 BP, 1065.

I have every reason to believe that divine Providence has procured for us this means of carrying out our duties, in particular for bearing everywhere the torch of the faith.⁷¹²

In Paris, the Founder had told the prior, Father Felix Cummins, to get in contact with the authorities and shipowners, in order to prepare the voyage of the missionaries. Father Felix had an interview with Baron de Damas, Minister of Relations, on October 7. The minister received him cordially. The prior, encouraged by this reception, presented a request the next day for three missionaries to travel on a state ship, and also a recommendation of the minister that the missionaries be well received in the country where they should spread the Gospel. The minister put Count d'Hauterive in charge of presenting him a report on the matter, and the preparation for the journey was under way.⁷¹³

b. *Preparation for the First Voyage, 1825-26*

De Hauterive's first step was to call the prior of Picpus to his office and an interview took place on Wednesday, October 19. It was a pleasant and lengthy conversation. The count reminded Father Cummins of the dangers which the envy and rivalry among various congregations brought to the missions, and the scandal given by the selfishness of some missionaries. The prior answered that these dangers did not frighten the members of the community, who would be alone in the archipelago and would observe the discipline of obedience. He promised him that the three priests would go with a brother who would help them.⁷¹⁴

In this interview the expenses of the voyage were also discussed. An exemption seemed possible. De Hauterives proposed that a school where the young would be taught to read and write be opened up in the islands.

Very politely the count suggested his desire that the archbishop of Paris approve the enterprise. Father Cummins replied that the foreign mission depended directly on Rome and, furthermore, that the residence of Picpus was in good standing with the archbishop, who ordained the seminarians and approved its priests. De Hauterive added that in the future it would be necessary to send more missionaries, because it was thought that starting out from the Sandwich mission there would be missions in California and perhaps in China itself.

712 BP, 1069.

713 HL, Mem. 608.

714 HL, *ibid.*

The same afternoon, Father Felix wrote a long letter to the Founder to inform him in detail about the negotiations and at the end he added this observation:

Count d'Hauterive dined yesterday with Monsignor Frayssinous. Doubtless they spoke about the new mission and about other members of our Congregation. Might it not be suspected that the Grand Master (of the University) said a word or two about our affairs with the archbishopric and this would explain the desire expressed by the count to have the mission approved by the archbishop? At least, that this wish was not suggested to him by Father Desjardins, of whom the count spoke about to me as his old and great friend.⁷¹⁵

Matters had reached this point when, on November 11, 1825, Father Coudrin received a communication from Cardinal della Somaglia, in which he thanked him for the solicitude of the Congregation in responding to the wishes of the Holy See, and he advised extreme caution in carrying out the task. He also asked him to let him know the measures needed in order that the expedition be achieved with all the success and promptness desired. He enclosed a report on the religious situation of the Sandwich Islands.⁷¹⁶

The Founder answered the following day, giving the names of the missionaries: Father Alexis Bachelot, superior of the mission, whom he requested to be appointed prefect apostolic, twenty-nine years old; Father Abraham Armand, forty-nine; and Father Patrick Short, thirty-three.⁷¹⁷

In mid-November, Father Cummins learned that the Minister of Relations was very disturbed over rumors that came to him about the intentions of the Congregation to take advantage of the missions for consolidating its attitude of independence.

On the one hand, he wanted to help the mission and, on the other, he did not dare to do so openly because he had been told confidentially that the Congregation was not in good standing with the archbishop.⁷¹⁸

To settle things as soon as possible, Father Felix decided to request an interview with the archbishop, which was granted on November 27. Archbishop de Quelen was in agreement with the exclusive dependence of the mission on the Holy See, which he very amiably accepted, and congratulated the Congregation on its enterprise. He added that he could not recognize an institution which had no legal existence, so as not to estrange the government, but that officially he would deny nothing to the Congregation. He concluded by telling him he would like to see Father Coudrin return to Paris, that he had nothing

715 PAC, 3511.

716 BP, 1073.

717 BP, 1075.

718 HL, Mem. 610.

but praise for the Congregation, and that he would arrange matters with the pastor of St. Marguerite if the Founder offered to return.⁷¹⁹

Three days later, the prior was again in audience with the Minister of Relations, Baron de Damas, who had granted it for Friday the twenty-fifth. The minister assured him of his interest in the missions of the Sandwich Islands; he told him that the government could not openly intervene, but that he could count on free passage, and also that it was ready to offer some necessary things. On this occasion, Father Felix had confirmation that the minister's doubt came from Frayssinous, who was annoyed by the attitude of the community in the conflict with the University, and by Father Coudrin's intransigence concerning the seminary of Troyes, about which Father Hubert had the courtesy to inform him.⁷²⁰

The Founder was in Troyes when he received a letter from the nuncio in Paris, Bishop Macci, dated December 18, 1825, in which he asked him to come to Paris, in order to give him the documents he had received from the Holy See for him. Father Coudrin left for the capital very soon after the Christmas festivities.⁷²¹

The nuncio told him that authority over the missionaries was his, but that he could not hand over the faculties without another consultation with Rome, because he was not sure of the protection of the missions by the government, which showed few signs of being interested.⁷²²

The Founder gave him the reply which Hilarion has preserved for us. The community had accepted the offer by the Holy See and had the courage to undergo misfortunes and adversities. They sought the protection of the government without counting much on it. So, after having thought over the matter before God, it was decided to have the missionaries leave as soon as they had the permission of the Holy See, even if there were no expectation of protection by the government. He added that the missionaries would put their trust in God, and only in Him. He concluded by begging the nuncio to let these attitudes of his and of the community be made known in Rome.⁷²³

The nuncio promised to reply before the end of January. He assured the Founder that he would obtain the permission of turning over the faculties in these circumstances and urged the missionaries to continue their preparations.⁷²⁴

719 *Ibidem.*

720 *Ibid.*, 611.

721 *Ibid.*, 612.

722 *Ibid.*, cf. *supra*, Part I, p. 98.

723 *Ibid.*, cf. *supra*, Part I, p. 98.

724 HL, Mem. 612.

On February 1, 1826, Father Coudrin was once more in Paris, and this very same day he visited the nuncio, who placed in his hands all the documents including the faculties of the missionaries and the appointment of Father Bachelot as prefect apostolic of the Sandwich Islands. The other two religious were appointed as “apostolic missionaries.”⁷²⁵

Hardly had he these documents in hand than the Founder hurried back to Picpus, brought together the persons involved, and, having invoked the Holy Spirit, gave them their assignments in an atmosphere of deep emotion.

Meanwhile, M. Rives showed he wanted very much to take the missionaries with him. The baron continued his interest in the mission, and even promised, by way of Hauterive, four thousand francs. It was known that M. Rives ship had left Bordeaux about that time and was coming to Le Havre, from which the expedition would sail.⁷²⁶

According to the prevailing laws, the faculties of missionaries were valid in their region, but not aboard the ships which brought them to its shores. So, in order to exercise ministry during the long voyage, faculties from the bishop of the port of embarkation were also necessary. In this case, it was the bishop of Rouen, the prince de Croy, who granted the faculties, dated March 29, 1826. At this moment, the whole project failed.⁷²⁷

Father Felix had already known since March 1 that M. Rives had not even mentioned the matter to the ship-owners, two Jewish bankers: the Messieurs Javal, who were the main heads of the commercial enterprise. On that same day he went to visit them. The very thought of taking Catholic missionaries on board shocked them, and the whole interview became very cool. Among other things, the bankers told Father Cummins that they did not come under the Ministry of Foreign Relations but of the Maritime Service, and that they would do whatever was satisfactory to that ministry.⁷²⁸

With this information, the tireless prior went to the Ministry of Maritime Service and, on March 4, got an audience with the minister M. Chabrol. He received a kindly welcome and a promise of passage for the three missionaries and a catechist. On their part, the Juvals repeated to Father Cummins, on March 5, that they would do whatever the minister should determine. From one day to the next, definitive permission for embarkation was awaited until, finally, on March 23, a letter arrived from M. Chabrol.⁷²⁹

725 *Ibid.*, 613.

726 *Ibid.*, 614.

727 *Ibid.*

728 *Ibid.*, 615.

729 *Ibid.*

The truth, which the long delay had covered up, was at last revealed by the letter. The bankers did not want to take the missionaries on their ship because they knew very well that the Protestant missionaries were very powerful in the archipelago and did not want the Catholic missionaries there. This was reason enough to suspect that their presence might be harmful to commercial interest. So, there would be no missionaries at all on the voyage. The minister's letter left only a vague and uncertain hope for the future.⁷³⁰

At that time also, information came to light that the Messieurs Lafitte, who were powerful in the banking and political worlds of the period, had been the main enemies of the missionaries embarking on the "Heros" which had set sail on schedule.⁷³¹

Father Alexis offered to travel alone because of these difficulties. He wrote to Father Coudrin on March 25:

My Good Father... Our brother Felix had a good idea which I eagerly accepted and which I submit to you. It would be a good idea to send one of us ahead to reconnoiter. These gentlemen will not think that just one missionary could do them any harm and damage their interests and so they will willingly let him aboard. He will be able to prepare the way for the other missionaries in the ports in which he stops. My Good Father, the expedient, with some difficulties, offers, I think, some very great advantages. It is clearly understood that, as "prefect" and for other reasons the good God knows, but which you might not wish to hear, I ask that I myself go to reconnoiter the battlefield. It is essential that a "general" know the map of the country for setting his army in proper array. Furthermore, as the saying goes, there is nothing like the eye of the master! Ridiculous expressions, my Good Father! But so long as they have their effect, it matters little to me. Think whatever you wish. Armed with a *Sub tuum* to Our Lady of Peace, in white habit and with your blessing, I would leave tranquilly and with a heart filled with joy. Please, my Good Father, answer us so that Brother Felix and we may consequently make our arrangements. The ship is scheduled to leave one of these days. Please agree. Your most humble and most obedient son, Father Alexis.⁷³²

The idea was not carried out, according to Hilarion, because the Founder refused to consent, but this letter is valuable for us because it shows us clearly the attitudes of the prefect apostolic.⁷³³

At the end of March 1826 the preparations came to naught and it was necessary to start all over again. An opportunity presented itself in May but went up in smoke. There was no hope of being able to sail on a French ship, and plans were begun to go by way of England, when, on May 2, 1826, M. Catineau-Laroche, the chief of assessments in the

730 *Ibid.*

731 *Ibid.*

732 PAC, 3134.

733 HL, Mem. 616.

Office of Commerce and of the Colonies, proposed to send the missionaries as well as a certain number of lay brothers who would be able to teach various arts and crafts to the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands.⁷³⁴

On June 30, there was a moment of fresh uncertainty, when M. Catineau sent Father Felix an article of the *Revue Britanique* which the Department of Exterior Relations had passed on to him: the article was about the Sandwich Islands and its inhabitants. This article stressed the influence the Protestant ministers had over the natives of the islands. M. Catineau was upset, and inclined to think that it would be most prudent to postpone the missionaries' departure. Without wishing to determine it personally, he left it up to what the Congregation regarded as prudent, but at the same time, brought out the frightful prospect what the Protestant missionaries might do. Father Cummins sent him a reply on July 15 which calmed him down, and the preparations could go on.⁷³⁵

Two days later, it was determined that the three missionaries, accompanied by the three brothers, would sail on the ship "La Comète". The priests had been designated, so the Founder completed the group by appointing also Theodosius Boissier, a choir brother, and Melchior Bondu and Eustace Hurel, lay brothers.⁷³⁶

"La Comète" belonged to a ship-owner of Bordeaux, M. Changeur lnerot, who came to Paris in August, and visited Father Coudrin. Founder had just left his office as vicar general of Troyes, and moved to Rouen.⁷³⁷

On the eleventh of the previous February, in the same Circular letter in which he had promulgated the new Constitutions recently approved by Leo XII, there was an important paragraph on the missions, in which Father Coudrin communicated the Congregation the decision of the Holy See, entrusting the community the new mission of the Sandwich Islands.

Without mentioning names, he communicated the report of the appointment of a prefect apostolic and of two apostolic missionaries. The fact was presented in its providential meaning:

Thus the eternal mercy offers us the means of imitating more perfectly the Evangelical Life of our divine Savior, and of beginning the important work of the foreign missions, one of the principal ends of our Institute, and which has been especially commended to us by the successor of St. Peter.⁷³⁸

734 *Ibid.*, 617.

735 *Ibid.*

736 *Ibid.*, 618

737 *Ibid.*

738 ANN., 1960, p. 224.

On September 8, another letter announced the opening up the mission of the Sandwich Islands, and the proximate departure of the missionaries. It said, after alluding to the difficulties and delays:

At last the God of mercies has deigned to open up the way. Our brothers Alexis, prefect apostolic, Abraham and Patrick, apostolic missionaries, Theodosius, choir brother, Melchior and Eustace, lay brothers, are soon going to embark to preach the Gospel in these islands, where the Catholic faith has never been announced.

We love to tell you this, our well-beloved brothers and very dear sisters, and it is a great consolation for us: because it was necessary to choose those who would be the first to enter on this holy and painful career, the only difficult thing was making the choice because a very great number of our brothers have asked us insistently and as a signal favor, for permission to consecrate themselves to a work so painful in the eyes of nature, but so meritorious in the eyes of faith.⁷³⁹

In the very designation of the missionaries it is clearly obvious that it was intended that the members of every branch of the community –priests, choir brothers, and lay brothers– be represented in this work which was rightly felt to be something supreme, a perfecting of the image of Christ which the community was to form. The Founder could not conceal his satisfaction on realizing that, as a matter of fact, the missionary ideal was an innermost ambition of his religious family.⁷⁴⁰

Father Coudrin had to leave for Rouen, accompanying Cardinal de Croy, to take over the responsibility of his office of first vicar general. The date of the voyage was scheduled for Thursday, September 14, 1826, probably very early in the morning.⁷⁴¹

The Founder bade good-bye to the missionaries in a ceremony full fraternal in tone which took place in the evening. Hilarion, who was there, tells us about it:

Up to this time, we had not been able to wear the religious habit, and circumstances did not allow of any hope it could be done in the near future, at least in France. The brothers who were going to leave for the Sandwich Islands ardently desired to wear habits before they left. Their desire was based on such strong legitimate reasons that the Founder could not help but consent to their pleas. On September 13, 1826, he solemnly blessed the religious habits which had been made for them. The three priests and Brother Theodosius put on white cassocks, white cinctures, scapulars of the Sacred Hearts, and capes; the two lay brothers wore short cassocks and white cinctures and scapulars. In this way they renewed their vows before the superior general. Our Very Reverend Father gave them a short instruction which brought tears to the eyes of all present. Then he wanted to kiss the feet of all, and their resistance could not hinder him doing such an act of humility. The other brothers present did the same thing. An eyewitness gives an account of this

739 ANN., 1960, p. 226.

740 Cf. Const. 1825, Chap. IV, *Des différentes personnes qui composent la Congrégation*.

741 HL, Mem. 621.

ceremony in a letter of 17 September to Brother Raphael (Bonamie): “Picture our six brother missionaries kneeling at the foot of the altar, in white cassocks, white cinctures and large scapulars of the Sacred Hearts. The priests besides wear a white cloak, shaped like a cope. Imagine the Good Father at the altar, like another St. Vincent de Paul. Imagine all that could inspire a heart like his at so solemn, so spiritual, so touching a moment. Conceive of all that an apostle should say to his disciples, a Founder of an Order to his religious, a father to his children, on an occasion such as this. Finally, my dear friend, look at the Good Father, after having received the renewal of their vows, casting himself at their feet and with deference embracing them, followed by all the brothers who were present. You will share the various emotions we felt.”⁷⁴²

c. *From Bordeaux to Honolulu*

On September 25, the missionaries bade good-bye to the community of Picpus:

Before leaving they gave the kiss of peace to all the brothers who wished to receive the prefect apostolic’s blessing. Tears flowed once more. The evangelical workers were welcomed with the same tenderness at the residences of Tours and of Poitiers which they visited on the way. One of the missionaries wrote at the end of October to Brother Regis, superior of the residence of Mende: “On passing through Poitiers, it was nine o’clock in the morning, so we had the good fortune of saying Holy Mass at this residence. The thought that the Good Father had begun our Congregation there and that we were saying our last Mass on leaving for our first mission, made us shed tears before we could finish the Holy Sacrifice. Our three brothers, who accompany us, have had the pleasure of receiving Communion. The whole residence was deeply moved.”⁷⁴³

The missionaries arrived in Bordeaux on September 28, and were welcomed effusively by M. Changeur and M. Catineau. The latter had moved to this city, and took advantage of every opportunity to show his good will toward the missionaries.⁷⁴⁴

There was an attempt to have some influence over the choice of the crew to protect the brothers from any misbehavior on their part, but the effort failed. Aside from this, the brothers received a lot of help, and Hilarion complimented Father Bachelot for not abusing this generosity for his own convenience, and for accepting only what could serve the liturgy: some cases of Mass wine, gilded copper candlesticks, a cross for the altar and one for processions, a tabernacle, a thurible and its censer, a holy-water font, two silver-plated copper candle holders, wicks for candles, flower vases with artificial flowers, a silver veneered sanctuary lamp, and other things. The Founder had given each priest a portable altar.⁷⁴⁵

742 HL, Mem. 618.

743 *Ibid.*, 621.

744 *Ibid.*

745 *Ibid.* 622-625.

When the preparations were almost finished, something happened which could have ruined the enterprise. A dispute arose between the shipowners and M. Catineau. It was settled, but another problem arose. M. Catineau wanted to delegate some commercial powers for the expedition, and Father Bachelot regretted very much he had to reject them. Hilarion relates:

So, he was very considerate in the refusal he was constrained to make to him. He made him see that his sacred character and the nature of his functions did not allow him to take on a responsibility which was alien to the mission. But he promised him that he would use all the influence he had to maintain peace and unity among the co-partners. M. Catineau was satisfied with this promise.⁷⁴⁶

This was not the only obstacle that arose in Bordeaux. Brother Eustace and Brother Theodosius fell ill. It was thought at first that it was only a passing illness, but by November 4, it seemed to be serious, and the doctor judged it might last a long time. Brother Eustace stayed in the Hospital St. Andre, while Father Bachelot consulted the prior of Paris, for there was no time to lose. Thus, it was that Brother Leonard Portal, twenty-seven years old, left Paris on November 9, to take his place. He arrived in Bordeaux on the thirteenth. Brother Theodosius recuperated in time and was able to embark.⁷⁴⁷ Father Alexis wrote to Felix Cummins on November 16:

So, finally, we are going on the ship that we so long desired. We shall go on board today. The weather seems favorable and we hope to set sail promptly.

The Good God has at last come to answer the desires of His sons. The customs officer has only formally inspected our luggage. He commended himself to Brother Melchior's prayers and added: "I am a Congregationalist." Our good hostess (Mme Laurent) has redoubled her efforts, as our departure approaches, and if I had not stopped her she would have done more for us than she could or should. These very days she brought her family together along with two pious neighbors and then called me. I found them kneeling in deep recollection. They wanted to receive the young prefect's blessing, having only known me as a missionary. I could not refuse. Many received it in tears. I admit I could not hold mine back. Yesterday she begged me to come and see her. She was very sick in bed. Some of her family were there also....

We have started out on our voyage. We hope you will write us. Let nothing make you forget the blessings the Good God wishes to shed over the Congregation. After the success of the work, this will be our greatest consolation, especially if there are some new establishments. With what eagerness the poor Sandwichians will read about the least details!⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 624.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 625.

⁷⁴⁸ To Father Felix Cummins, PAC, 3143.

The missionaries set sail on the twentieth of November. At the beginning, as Hilarion says, what created a problem for them was the anti-Christian attitude of the crew and their indecent conversations. This was harder on the lay brothers than on the others because they were with the sailors and shared the crew's diet, hardtack and very coarse rations, and the regulations on board were very strict: they did not allow the priests to give them anything of their menu.⁷⁴⁹

Another experience of this first encounter with the sea on such a lengthy voyage was the havoc wrought by the humidity. All metal objects rusted, and everything became covered with mold, even their shoes.

Then came the heat. The tropical sun made them perspire profusely, and they did not take off too much clothing out of modesty. In a letter of April 25 from Lima, Father Abraham went into the small details of the voyage and enables us to picture vividly what went on:

On November 20, 1826 we were on the high seas, and toward evening we lost sight of land, and even of the tower of Cordouan (a lighthouse), which is offshore, at the mouth of the Gironde. From this day on, until Valparaíso, we no longer saw any land except at a distance the mountains of Tierra del Fuego, which we saw passing close to the Isle de los Estados. On the voyage all our brothers were seasick. I was the only one who did not get seasick, and up to now I have had no illness. Father Alexis was sick only a few days; Theodosius, Melchior, and Leonard for quite a long time; but Father Patrick was constantly sick during the whole crossing from Bordeaux to Valparaíso, so that he could not say Holy Mass until after his arrival in this city. . . . Our voyage was rather rapid up to Valparaíso. We came into this port on February 8, 1827, eighty days after leaving Europe. Although we had received permission to say Mass on the ship, nevertheless, we did not do so during the whole voyage except on Sundays and holy days of obligation. But we always said it in our cabin, remaining incognito. The captain had decided we were not to say it publicly on account of the diversity of passengers with us on the ship. We set up our portable altar in the narrow space between our beds, where we could only remain standing due to lack of space. . . . We had a space of two feet by six feet, and the altar and six persons had to fit into that small space. On January 13, which was a Saturday, we saw in the distance the mountains of Tierra del Fuego. Hardly had we reached 55° latitude south when we had constant daylight, and no night at all. The sun set after nine o'clock and rose at three in the morning, but the horizon on the side facing the pole was always bright with sunlight, so that it was possible to read...⁷⁵⁰

The "Comète" reached Valparaíso on February 8, and stayed in this port until the twenty-fourth. During these days the missionaries disembarked each day at 5 a.m. to say

749 HL, Mem. 628.

750 PAC, 2931.

Mass at the convent of San Francisco and at nine returned to the ship.⁷⁵¹

The next stop was the port of Quilca, the seaport for Arequipa in Peru, where they arrived on March 8 and left on the twenty-fifth. They were not permitted to disembark, but Father Bachelot, in keeping with his principle of establishing as many areas of support as possible during the long journey, took advantage of the opportunity to write to the bishop of Arequipa. Before leaving, he succeeded in receiving a letter from the prelate promising such support.

At Quilca a prominent passenger got on, General Cordova, a twenty-seven year old Colombian hero of Ayacucho, the battle which in 1824 was decisive in the overthrow of Spanish dominion in America, and who was being sent now to Lima to get rid of him diplomatically.⁷⁵²

The ship reached Callao, the port of Lima, on March 29, and did not leave until April 27. This was almost a month's stay and was very advantageous for Father Alexis, who made friends of various religious. He also visited the "Gobernador de la Mitra" (the mitred governor), as the bishop of Quito was called, who came at times to Lima to perform ordinations and carry on some important matters, in the absence of the archbishop who, on account of his resistance to the independence of Peru, had to take refuge in Spain.

Religious, especially Jesuits, were not well-regarded by the South American revolutionaries who had achieved independence because they had been influenced by the ideas of the so-called "philosophers of the eighteenth century," that is, of Rousseau, Voltaire, and company. This indicates the significance for the travelers of an article published in a daily newspaper of Lima, *El Telégrafo*, saying that the "Comète" had brought along some gentlemen who passed themselves off as "naturalists" but who actually were "Jesuits in disguise." Fortunately, the incident had no serious consequences, but the matter was discussed even in the state council. It was finally decided to let them go since they were not bound for any port of the continent. Taking advantage of a Dutch ship which was leaving for the Sandwich Islands, the revolutionaries sent a warning to the islands, alerting them to the danger threatening them.⁷⁵³

The departure from Callao was, as we said, on April 27, and the next stop was the port of Mazatlan, on the coast of Mexico, where the ship arrived on May 27.

During the stay in Mazatlan, there was a report that Catineau-Laroche's enterprise, if it had not failed entirely, was at least in grave danger; this also threatened the finances of the missionary expedition. There were days of uncertainty. Meanwhile, the season

751 HL, Mem. 633.

752 *Ibid.*, 634-635.

753 *Ibid.*, 636-644.

demanded the immediate departure from this port, and after threat of a storm, the “Comète” set sail on June 16. The next stop was Honolulu, and the crossing was done quickly: they reached this port on July 7.⁷⁵⁴

d. First steps of the missionaries in Hawaii

Commercial rivalry among the various European countries and the United States was strong in the islands, which politically were independent. The English, especially, and the Americans were powerful. The most influential Frenchman in the past had been R. Rives, with whom contact had been made and with whom M. Catineau had entered into negotiations. In France Rives boasted about his influence in the islands, but he did not know how much the winds had changed since he had left their shores accompanying the king. His enemies in the archipelago had spread rumors that Rives had stolen the king’s gifts. Some, especially the queen mother Kaahumanu, who was powerful in the kingdom, attributed the king’s death to him.⁷⁵⁵

Rives had left children in Honolulu and the queen mother took care of them but at the same time said that if she had not had them killed, it was because she did not have proof of their father’s crime. Not only the English but also the American consul pretended at least to share the prejudice against the Frenchman, because his loss of prestige would prevent the commercial penetration of France in the Sandwich Islands.

Only by knowledge of this complex situation is it possible to understand the embarrassment of M. Plassard, the captain of the “Comète”, on arriving in Honolulu. He did not expect M. Rives would be so imprudent as to present himself in the archipelago at this moment. Also, believing there was little hope for French commerce being set up in this port, Plassard wondered who was going to pay for the passengers and the transporting of the merchandise, and sought to have the missionaries pay him for their passage. To compel them to do so, he prevented them from taking their luggage off the ship. Father Bachelot paid him a sum for the transporting of the luggage, but refused to sign for him the letters of exchange as the captain asked.

Traveling along with the missionaries was a young nephew of Catineau-Laroche, a very fine and well-intentioned person, but he could not remedy the situation and he, as well as the missionaries, was harassed by the captain. Seeing that he got nowhere dealing with them directly, the captain disembarked to inform the consuls of England and the United States about the problem. M. Morineau, the nephew, was on the alert and warned

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 645-648.

⁷⁵⁵ After this paragraph, we will follow fairly closely Hilarion Lucas’ work: *Histoire de la Mission des Iles (sic) Sandwich confiée à la Congrégation des Sacrés Cœurs de Jésus et de Marie*.

consuls, informing them about the situation. On July 12, returning on board, the captain, seeing that the consuls' views were contrary to his, informed the passengers that they could remove their luggage. Then they hired a hut and installed it there.

The difficulties awaiting them on land were a thousand times greater. The islands were, in 1820, a conquest of the American Methodists, who had organized their mission well on the basis of schools, in which writing and reading but above all religion were taught. At the head of each school was the "professor" or "kuma", who became a religious authority in each little village or settlement. On a higher level were the American ministers, stationed in all the central locations Bingham, the archipelago, and who, under the direction of Bingham, constituted a real power in the kingdom.

The population of the islands, at the time of their discovery by Cook in 1778, was around 330,000, and although the missionaries estimated it was 700,000, it is possible that the number was somewhat inflated, and that there was not very much difference between the population at the time of their arrival and what it was at the time of the explorer.

The race and the language of the inhabitants were basically the same as those of all Oceania. Politically they formed four distinct kingdoms until 1785. At this date, Kamehameha, a chieftain of the island of Hawaii, rebelled against his king, who was assassinated. Later, in 1789, a brother of the dead king wanted to regain power but he, too, was assassinated, and the power of Kamehameha was consolidated.

His good fortune encouraged him to continue his conquests. He took as his wife the widow of the king of Maui, and annexed this kingdom. The rest was the fruit of warfare. In battle, the "kanaka" warriors were cruel and ruthless, and did not, as a rule, take prisoners. Kamehameha won and made the archipelago might kingdom. Unscrupulously he simply eliminated all those who might be the root of opposition and such cruelty stifled resistance.

The monarch had three wives: a daughter of the chief who had eliminated the old king of Hawaii, the widow of the king of Maui, and a princess of the isle of Hawaii, who gave him two children.

Kamehameha admired foreigners but did not trust them, and took great care they did not threaten his power. With great ability, he took from them all the advantages he could, them at a certain distance. With the help of an English captain he built a fortress in Honolulu, succeeded in getting the Americans to supply it with cannons, and acquired some ships. He also formed around him a militia which served him as a personal guard.

The Russians at one time wanted to set up a fortress on one of the islands, but, by an opportune display of arms, he forced them to withdraw.

As far as finances were concerned, he accumulated a large treasury, collecting from foreign ships very high dues.

The Hawaiian people were at that time idolatrous. "Akea", the king or primitive father, had formed with his successor a kind of beyond-the-tomb kingdom, whence he influenced the life of mortals. Pele was a goddess who was identified with a mountain which was an extinct volcano, in which everything was consecrated to her.

The priests exercised a tremendous power, especially by way of the declaration of the "tabu", the violation of which was punishable by death, and to which the king too was subjected. Kamehameha won them over so ably that they were always on his side.

They determined what human sacrifices were to be offered, and designated the victims, at times exercising clemency. This law was in force during the reign of Kamehameha, who died in 1819.

The successor of the first king of the archipelago was Liholiho, who was famed for his openness toward foreigners and his admiration for Western civilization and culture. He was the son of Kamehameha. Jean Rives, a Frenchman, was his confidential personal secretary. He was very popular in the kingdom, and even more so when he brought about the abolition of the "tabu", the destruction of the idolatrous temples, and the suppression of human sacrifices.

Perhaps the American Methodist mission had something to do with this. When it came to the islands in 1820, one of its principal achievements was the conversion of Queen Mother Kaahumanu, who became a disciple of Bingham, the head of the ministers and of the mission, who from then on had a redoubtable access to power, because Kaahumanu was not only a very intelligent woman, but also a clever intriguer and had great influence at court.

In 1823, the king decided to travel with his wife to London, accompanied by his grey eminence Jean Rives, where some months later, in 1824, both sovereigns died. The king was succeeded by one of his brothers, Kauikeaouli, only ten years old, who was not able to take over the government and so a regent, Boki, was appointed.

Having spoken about "the king" and "the court," we must quote a correction made by Father Bachelot which seems urgent at this point. We must be careful not to think that there existed in the archipelago a formal etiquette on a European or oriental style. There was simply no formality. The king and the chiefs were treated without ceremony,

in a most familiar and simple way and were almost always addressed by their personal names, rather than by their titles. This was joined with a deep respect and a spontaneous submission, which was very loyal and constant.

It is not surprising that we find it difficult to imagine the life of this primitive people, which at times we fancy as “semi-paradise,” in which clothing was practically non-existent, and authority did not involve itself in regulating marriage, leaving everything up to the spouses. Nevertheless, we do not believe on this account there was candor and innocence. There was a subtle and insidious policy coupled with intrigue which was not entirely a European or American import.

We said that the Methodist mission was powerful in the archipelago. That did not mean that everyone was in agreement with its principles and policy. There was a whole faction which, perhaps out of loyalty to its ancestral traditions, perhaps out of resistance to the queen mother’s intrigues, was in opposition –muffled and astute but very real– to everything Methodist. At the head of this current, for it cannot be called a “party” since it was not organized, was none other than the regent Boki, who had to direct the public life of the archipelago, with due reverence to the old queen, and without displeasing the young king who, like his brother was very receptive to all that was foreign, yet maintained sufficient independence in regard to the Methodists.

In this year of 1827, the Protestant ministers had baptized very few people, although they had a large number of disciples. They did not do so because, perhaps quite rightly, they did not consider them sufficiently prepared.

As for Catholicism, the abbé de Quelen, a cousin of the archbishop of Paris, had spent some time in the islands in 1819, and had performed two baptismal ceremonies, with some kind of instruction. At any rate the neophytes, instead of receiving the missionaries they expected, saw the Methodist mission arrive the next year. These two who were baptized and taught the catechism by the abbé de Quelen were not the only Catholics in Hawaii when the missionaries arrived in 1827. Apart from the Spanish family of Don Francisco Marin, a merchant, there were some twenty who had traveled, either to Spanish America or to other countries where there was a Catholic mission and had been instructed and baptized in these places and did not follow the Methodists.

It is quite understandable that the arrival of missionaries, sent by the pope, produced in the Methodist masters of the field a certain distress. The missionaries did not know the language, and the sole fact of arriving in a strange land counseled them to be most prudent and discreet. The only thing they requested was permission to live there, taking advantage of the English, which, at least, Father Short had.

They rented a hut and began to organize their life, making short explorations of the surrounding country and, above all, striving to learn the language, which was essential for future catechesis.

Although the six missionaries tried to be inconspicuous, they could not help but arouse curiosity among the natives. It may be said, however, that until the end of this year, 1827, they did not enter into any formal religious dialogue with them.

On November 29, they performed the first baptism, that of a son of Don Francisco Marin. During this time also they began the first religious conversation with the “kanakas”, although very much obstructed by lack of current usage of the language.

Concerning everything related up to now, we have a valuable document, Father Bachelot’s “diary” which ended before December, so that it could be sent to the Founder. Afterwards we have letters of the missionaries.

e. The first bases of the Catholic mission

While they were in a rented cabin, the missionaries felt the provisionality of their life in the archipelago accentuated and could not attempt to acquire a more adequate residence.

August 1827 was the decisive month. The fifteenth, the feast of the Assumption, was for them an intense day devoted to prayer, and between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. they took turns adoring the Blessed Sacrament, in an atmosphere laden with trust in the protection of God, on whom they felt everything depended. Humanly speaking, there was very little reason to think that the missionary adventure would make progress.

At the end of this August, the prolonged negotiations came to a successful conclusion. The young king granted them a concession of land in Honolulu, and from this moment they had the property needed for opening the mission.

Their first official appearance in society occurred in December when they were invited to a grand banquet in honor of the king, on the tenth of the month, and a little later, to another, hosted by the consul of the United States.

On January 11, 1828, the new residence was ready, and two days later, on Monday the fourteenth, they moved in, with the sensation of beginning a new era.

In April a little oratory was finished, where some forty persons could attend services. Already for some weeks they had admitted the natives who wanted to come to Mass, especially on Sundays, beginning with the baptized Catholics along with the family of Don Francisco Marin.

The women at first thought, perhaps with reason, that they were forbidden to come in, but some Christian women (who had attended Catholic worship on the continent) told them that it was enough to cover their heads and make the sign of the cross in order to enter. It was quite a sight to see how curiosity led them to come in frequently with some strange rag on their heads making the sign of the cross over and over again like a charm.

Despite all this, the situation of the missionaries in the political sphere was far from being very secure. Pressure by the Methodists was constant, but the consuls, both the English and the American, had good relations with them because the Protestant ministers regarded them too as harmful to their mission, and were doing everything possible to get rid of them. Informed by their respective governments of the calumnies with which they smeared them and taking advantage of the presence in the port of a French corvette, they presented themselves before the elderly queen, accompanied by the captain. The queen denied everything. In those days something happened to undermine the position of the Methodists. There came into port a ship filled with Methodist missionaries sent from Europe. It arrived without a captain and without part of the crew, that is, with clear suspicion that a mutiny had taken place. The Protestant missionaries were held responsible.

Father Bachelot, who was always concerned about having relations with the missionary posts on the coast, had received from the Franciscans of California a very fraternal reply to a letter which he had written them at the beginning of the year. The missionaries, despite the width of the seas, felt less alone.

Moreover, the horizon seemed to be opening up. Knowledge of the language was progressing, and in August they began to stop being afraid to speak, although they did not dare to do so yet in public. At any rate, starting out from this period, Father Bachelot gave two catechetical instructions daily. On Sundays they all appeared in white habits. Around them a community of faithful began to form, friendships arose, and a marvelous fraternity grew.

On December 28, 1828, the death occurred of a little son of the American consul who had been baptized by the prefect apostolic shortly before. A solemn funeral was held which impressed the people very much and attracted them to the missionaries. Furthermore, by the end of the year they spoke the language fluently and everything was ready for intensifying apostolic labors.

Until November of this year, no letters had been received from France, and they

were astounded to learn of the adventure of Kami, the Hawaiian who had arrived in France on a Peruvian ship in April of 1827.

1829 began with good prospects for the mission, although tension did not lessen. Each day there were more catechumens. On February 2, the prefect administered baptism to nine adults in a ceremony which impressed everyone, and on June 6, for the first time he administered confirmation to the better-prepared adult neophytes.

August 1829 stood out due to the reaction of the Methodists. On August 6 they had the widowed queen visit Don Francisco Marin, who was no missionary, and who in the expression of his faith was rather timid, because he had to be concerned about his business interests. The visit had as its purpose to forbid him to say the rosary publicly or to sing the *Salve*. This prohibition was more than anything else an admonition directed to the missionaries.

Two days later, on the eighth, the regent Boki promulgated a prohibition against all islanders attending the “prayer of the French,” as the missionaries were called. The penalties were enormous: exile, or be abandoned in a canoe without oars. The islanders did not stop frequenting the mission and, for the moment, there were no consequences.

Louisa, a Catholic baptized some time before in the Mariana Islands, who enjoyed some influence, was summoned by the widowed queen, who put pressure on her to become a Methodist. Louisa, who seems to have had a very uncommon personality, not only refused but also gave her good arguments in favor of Catholicism, even to the point where the queen had to recognize that the “prayer of the missionaries” was “good,” but that in any case the Methodists had arrived first. With this affirmation truthfully not very triumphant, the old intriguing woman left the poor woman free.

All this increased the tension but did not put off the baptisms the prefect had prepared for August 14, and actually on this day, with full solemnity, fourteen adults were baptized.

At this time the French ship “Magellan” arrived in Honolulu, and the missionaries decided to take advantage of this opportunity to have Father Abraham Armand go to France to give the Founder a report on the situation. Brother Theodosius Boissier went with him because he did not find enough work to do in Hawaii.

Perhaps things would have turned out differently if it were not for a strange thing that happened in the first days of December 1829: the disappearance of the regent Boki. During the month of November a report spread on the islands that an English captain who came from Botany Bay (Sydney, Australia) had discovered some islands, a

month's sailing distance from Honolulu, on which there was an abundance of priceless sandalwood. Despite the captain's precautions to keep this secret, two passengers felt they were capable of giving the information necessary for finding them, and Boki was enthusiastic about the idea of organizing an expedition and of bringing back a cargo of this wood which, he thought, would pay off many debts of the state. The expedition was a large one with two ships and 500 natives, with armament and provisions for eight or ten months. The ships did not leave together, and the fate of Boki's vessel and its crew were never known.

The last feast of the year was a solemn one at the mission. At Christmas twenty-two adults were baptized, while the number of those under instruction increased. But a threat of a storm appeared on the horizon.

Boki had been a protection for the missionaries against the pretensions of the Methodists and had moderated the influence of the intriguing queen; his death changed that and in the first days of January hostilities began.

f. The crucible of persecution

As early as December 1829, when Boki had barely embarked, the persecution recurred, this time with unusual violence.

There was a tumultuous invasion of the missionaries' residence, and especially of the chapel; all the islanders who were at prayer were made to leave, and guards were stationed at the entrance of the residence to prevent them from coming back or others from entering.

On January 3 the prefect apostolic presented himself before the queen to protest the violation of domicile to which they had been subjected, and the insult to religion committed against the mission. Instead of getting explanations, the queen threatened bluntly to prohibit formally the teaching of the Catholic religion.

Two days later, on January 5, 1830, all the Catholics were summoned to come before the king. Father Bachelot encouraged the best Christians to present themselves, thinking they would give a fine testimony, but he was mistaken. In the presence of the king the interrogators began by questioning a woman whom they attempted to force to abandon the Catholic Church and become a Methodist. She protested that she was ready to suffer everything rather than abjure her faith. The young king, whom all thought a partisan of the foreigners and especially of the French, spoke last; he supported the old queen's position and condemned the Catholics. This disconcerted the poor woman, who gave in,

and said she was ready to do whatever they ordered her to do. This defection produced great dismay among the neophytes who were present, and they all followed the woman's example.

As can be imagined, this was a very harsh blow for the missionaries, especially at first. It was an instance of apostasy which promised nothing good. In fact, it was a humiliation which made the Christians less presumptuous and more profoundly humble and was a profound lesson for the missionaries themselves.

Those who had abjured before the king, instead of remaining in peace under the protection of the authorities, were tormented in conscience and ran away from the missionaries out of fear of being condemned by them and out of shame for their cowardice.

The woman who gave the bad example fell into a kind of despair coupled with signs of madness. She felt herself despised and hated by the Christians who up to then were of her community.

Indeed, in the recently formed Christian community of the mission, which had remained loyal, there was a movement of indignation which was quite difficult for Father Bachelot to calm down. Many conceived a real hatred for this woman and it was not easy to uproot this tare and make pardon bloom. But this burning crisis was, as it were, an anvil on which was forged a new type of loyalty, more humble and more based on the grace of God.

Andronic, one of those who defected, condemned himself to keep silence as a penance, because, as he said, "my mouth was at fault."

The "kumas" (schoolteachers), who were always the most active agents of the persecution, took advantage of this breach which was opened up in the new Catholic community to ruin it. They went to all the homes of the neophytes to make them abjure the faith, and without exception they were rejected, and this in turn provided another motive for persecution.

Easter of 1830 was a breathing spell for the missionaries and for the whole Christian community. All the baptized fulfilled their Easter duties with great fidelity.

The queen, advised by the Methodist ministers, decided to set in motion a nationalist policy, and one of hatred of foreigners, and for this purpose, toward the end of May she called a meeting of the court and of the principal chiefs of the islands. It was decided to convoke the meeting on the distant island of Hawaii rather than on Oahu because Boki had been an influential person in Oahu while chief of the fortress in Honolulu and had

many sympathizers on the island who might be in opposition to the assembly were it held there, Consequently the court had to travel and the young king found himself away from his habitual environment and consequently alone in his sympathy for foreigners.

Simultaneously with the departure of the court, there came about the arrest of Louisa, who, deprived for fifteen days of food, was transported in her weak condition to the island of Maui, and put under the surveillance of a zealous Methodist, who endeavored in vain to make her abjure. Louisa remained nine months and more in exile.

Meanwhile, the “kumas” unleashed a campaign against the neophytes. They moved into houses of Catholics with groups of devout Methodists and set themselves up in them to “pray” from morning to night. The Catholics resisted. When they arrived very early in the morning, they pretended to be sleeping. In the afternoon they left the house and left them alone.

This was not sufficient to discourage the missionaries, who thought of building a larger chapel, and in January 1831 they inaugurated it with utmost joy. It could hold around 200 persons. This does not mean they had many illusions about the result of the assembly of the court. Rumors were not good.

At the end of March 1831, that is, after ten months, the court returned to Honolulu, and the missionaries did not have to wait long to find out what had been decided. On April 2, in fact, they were summoned to appear before the chiefs and were told they were to leave the islands within three months.

The prefect apostolic and his companion Father Short had recently begun a delicate and important work: a written exposition of the Catholic faith in the language of the archipelago.

The missionaries had observed that the formulation of the Christian faith used by the Methodists had many inexact terms, especially in reference to belief in the Trinity. The words used implied the existence of three gods, to which a fourth was to be added: Jesus Christ. This danger had to be avoided very carefully and a formula was found. The faithful grasped this point of the message.

The composition was concluded with a Formula of twelve articles which were used to fill the need for a way to learn the faith. Two articles were to be recited daily during the working days of each week: one on praying in the morning, and another on praying at night. An effort was made to distribute the text among the faithful; the handwritten reproduction was not only arduous but also subject to mistakes in the copies, and so less reliable. The prefect got in contact with the procurator of the missions of Macao (China).

Unfortunately, the publication was not available before the missionaries were expelled.

After the return of the court, the persecution became ever more violent. As usual, the attacks against the faith and the Church produced results which spontaneously recall the early Christians.

Simeon was a neophyte filled with zeal for the faith he had embraced and was so brave he had no fear of running risks. He converted a dying man and baptized him “in articulo mortis”, and he was buried as a Christian by the missionaries. This was enough to have Simeon and the convert’s wife, Alodia, put in jail.

The men who did not deny their faith were sent to jail and condemned to forced labor. Each one had to extract from the bottom of the sea a hundred pieces of coral. They were held for almost two months without a single defection. The women were condemned to weave straw mats out of a fiber with many thorns which hurt their hands. The torment lasted four months.

The reaction in the Catholic community of natives was extraordinary. A group of five young catechumens asked to join those in the prisons whom they regarded as martyrs.

One time they were deprived of food, and with great difficulty the missionaries managed to get to them some taro (an edible root very common in Hawaii); they did not want to even taste it but passed it on to Alodia, who was so very weak and ill that shortly afterwards she died in prison.

One night, when she was in agony, they came secretly to find Father Bachelot, and let him into the fortress. He was able to hear her confession and administer Extreme Unction to her as she was dying. This was done with the complicity of the chief of the fortress, who was a follower of Boki. The prisoners were instructing the guards in the faith, and the prefect let the missionaries in to recite the last prayers, before returning to the mission cloaked in darkness.

Simeon stood out in this work of evangelization and succeeded in converting many, even two chiefs.

On April 1, 1831, the dowager queen had full power delegated to her by the king, so nothing good could be expected and it was felt that the date of the missionaries’ departure from the islands would soon arrive. Three months passed, but since no ship was available they could not be expelled.

On December 15, a French ship left port and Brother Leonard Portal embarked on it in order to let the Founder know by word of mouth what was happening. He would not reach Picpus until June 12, 1832.

On December 23, the missionaries observed that the number of inquisitive persons who stopped in front of their door was increasing, and for a moment they thought they came to search for them, but nothing happened that day. Let us let Father Bachelot tell us what happened on the twenty-fourth:

On December 24, 1831 at dawn we said Holy Mass. We thought rightly that we were saying it for the last time in Oahu. The inquisitors were besieging our door, which we had been very careful to lock. We waited for what was to happen. At nine o'clock a chief with two or three others appeared. The brother who was with us opened the iron gate, after the chief had promised not to let the crowd come in. He entered alone. He said to us: "Now is the time for you to leave." "Do you intend them to force us to leave?" "Yes," he answered, taking me by the shoulder. Then we took our breviaries, our hats, and our canes. Hardly had we left the enclosure than we were escorted by some thousands of 'kanakas', men, women and children. Some climbed up on the walls to see us pass by. A small number seemed to be glad.

All the others looked astonished. The chief marched a few feet in front of us. Another followed us, at some ten feet, and held back the crowd on both sides. We were in the middle with a foreigner who, though he was a Protestant, always showed us great favor. Some other foreigners came as we went along, bidding us goodbye. When we arrived near the sea, we saw the English consul, who was going to his office, but very slowly. We soon reached him. He stopped and said to the chief in a very excited tone: "You intend to take them away, then?" The chief answered, "Yes." "And their luggage, where is it? Do you want to seize it? Take care!

See that it is brought to the ship. Do not leave behind even a pin! Woe to you if anything is missing!" He was so angry he could not speak in "kanaka". Since the chief had accompanied the old king to England, he knew a little English and understood what the consul said, but he did not say a word. Then, seeing that his silence had soothed the consul somewhat, he told us to move on. We followed him. A small craft was waiting for us at the shore, for the vessel was still outside of the port. The craft waited to set sail only so long as it took to bring our luggage. The chief ordered it brought.... I do not want to speak about our poor neophytes. We saw quite a few of them in the crowd, but it was not prudent to call attention to them. Our eyes met more than once. Their hearts were suffering no less than ours. Most of them had visited us on previous nights. These visits, which they found always too short, were not spent in futile conversations.

The luggage arrived after we had waited for half an hour. It was put on board. A "receipt" was requested and we gave them one. The ship set sail and we left....⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁶ Alexis Bachelot, letter of 18 Dec. 1834 in which he gives an account of what is happening, copied by HL, in his work cited above, pp. 63 ff.

During the voyage, the captain, who was an Irishman, kept the route secret, but by making observations of their own the missionaries were able to calculate that they were en route to California. On January 21, they saw the coast in the distance and passed the island of Santa Catalina on the left. On January 22, they were put ashore on a deserted beach, and the captain hardly waited until he saw them in contact with the countryfolk of the place before he left them there with their luggage and sailed away.

g. *Five years in California*

For a long time the prefect apostolic had been in contact by letter with the Franciscan mission of California and so was not a stranger to it. Besides, the Franciscans were well-informed about the situation of the mission of Hawaii, and it is very probable that they were not surprised to see them arrive.

Brother Melchior Bondu remained in Honolulu where his carpentry and cabinetmaking were of great service to the city and provided enough work for a good livelihood. He would now keep the prefect and his companion informed and would be able to maintain some contact with the neophytes of the recent community.

In California the missionaries would have work to do. They would be able to get enough direct information about what was going on in the islands and, besides, they would be in the area of the continent nearest to them.

On January 25, the missionaries arrived at the Mission San Gabriel, today a district of Los Angeles. Father Bachelot settled in San Gabriel itself, and Father Short went to Monterey, a port some 500 kilometers to the north where there was a large colony of English, Irish, and Americans who wanted a priest.

The stay in California was only a transitory phase in the missionary history of the community, and both Father Bachelot and Father Short were always on the alert regarding the situation in Hawaii.

It was not long before news reached them about the community of Oahu. Hardly had the missionaries been expelled than the persecution increased in intensity. The death of the dowager queen on June 5, 1832 brought about no modification of the policy of the government. Bingham found in the king's sister the precise person he needed to continue his domination in the archipelago.

On August 26 of this same year, the Christian prisoners were given a sort of ultimatum: if they did not submit to the Methodists, their homes would be destroyed, their property confiscated, and their wives prostituted. No one gave up the faith.

On September 1, the order was given to separate the wives from their husbands, an order resisted by the Christians who, taking advantage of their having to pass by the English consul's residence, appealed to his humanity, and he did intervene firmly.

The effects of the ill treatment and the forced labor appeared at the end of 1832. On December 15, Hilinou, the mother of little Margaret, who was hardly seven years old, died. In March 1833 Philip and Esther died.

On March 15, the king, perhaps giving way to a current of public opinion sympathetic to the victims of so much cruelty, abrogated the laws enforcing the persecution and a period of relative peace followed.

Father Bachelot, ardently desiring to contact and visit his community of Hawaii, had written the previous year:

Next year, 1833, if I do not learn that there is a priest in our islands, and I find a ship which can bring me there, I will go back to Oahu to give the help of religion to Melchior and all those I will be able to see. If I do manage to set foot on land, I will try to stay there. If I am not allowed to disembark, they will come to find me on the ship. What I fear is that in this last hypothesis, there will not be a ship to bring me back to California. For then I would be forced to take the first ship leaving for Europe or the United States of America....⁷⁵⁷

In mid-1833 a great change was about to take place in the organization of the missions of Oceania. The whole region of the southeastern Pacific, forming an apostolic vicariate, would be entrusted to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. The Founder proposed to Rome that Father Jerome Rouchouze be the vicar apostolic. As we shall see later, this gave occasion for new missionary expeditions. For the moment, let us follow the lot of the missionaries of the Hawaiian Islands.

Father Coudrin, concerned about the situation of the mission of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), decided to send Brother Leonard Portal to the Pacific again since he already knew the language of the islands and was better informed than anyone else about this mission, its circumstances and its personnel, as well as its recent history.

Brother Leonard left Le Havre on August 25, 1833, for Vera Cruz, on the eastern coast of Mexico. In this way he thought he would avoid going around Cape Horn and would not have to run into at least three permanent storms. The experience had been so terrible for Father Short that, according to Father Bachelot, he was seriously afraid he would lose his life. Brother Leonard's assignment was to visit the missionaries in California, go to the islands to join Brother Melchior until others arrived to help him, and then return to France to inform the Founder.

⁷⁵⁷ Alexis Bachelot, letter, 4, III 1832, in HL, Mem. IV, 30.

On August 20, Father Coudrin had written him farewell from Rouen:

You know that He for whom we labor is rich and magnificent in His rewards, and that the sufferings and fatigues and labors we endure for Him are nothing in comparison with what He promises you. So go on courageously toward the goal you have set for yourself. Do not listen to the spirit of evil who would discourage you, for he is envious of what you are doing to snatch souls away from him. . . .⁷⁵⁸

The crossing of the “Bougainville” was untroubled until the ship reached the port of Vera Cruz on October 16, where a storm arose which was so fierce that it was not possible to disembark for four days, and three ships like it, as well as a great number of small craft, were wrecked.

It was but the beginning of a real odyssey which would be too long to narrate. Brother Leonard, at least on this journey over a country whose language he did not know, was like one of those heroes of adventure novels who seem destined to defy all kinds of adversity.

On a journey that lasted nine months, he went on from one risk to another. As soon as he set foot on land, he caught cholera. On the road to Puebla, he escaped bandits by a miracle. In Mexico, where he expected to find information about California and the means to reach it, he found neither one nor the other. He made plans to get to some port on the Pacific, and decided to go by way of Guadalajara to Mazatlan. On the road he lost his mule with all his luggage and money, and recovered them further on in an almost miraculous way. When he reached the coast he had another attack of cholera and found no hope of finding a ship for upper California. Finally, he embarked at San Blas, where he found a sailing ship which accepted him as a passenger. But the adventure was not over. There was a calm and the water ran out. When the winds arose again, there was a fire which burned one of the sails. The nightmare ended on July 25, 1834, when he landed at the small port of San Pedro, and on the twenty-seventh he could embrace Father Bachelot, who was informed of his arrival and came out to meet him on the way.

Brother Leonard wrote some days later:

I had a very hard time of it during my long journey. I never knew when, if ever, I would reach my destination. Twenty times I was tempted to give up. I resisted this temptation which cost me many a tear. To get strength, I turned aside to the Good God, and said to Him: “Do with me what You will. It is not for myself that I am here. Dispose of all things as it pleases You.” After having spoken to the Good God, I was satisfied and content. I had only Him and the Holy Virgin to whom I could have recourse. I am also so bold as to assure you that if I had many

⁷⁵⁸ BP, 1827. For Brother Leonard’s voyage we follow HL, Mem. IV. 30-32.

sufferings, I also had many consolations. The Lord abundantly compensated me, and I cannot tell you what I felt in my heart.⁷⁵⁹

After almost a month's rest at San Gabriel, Father Alexis and Brother Leonard left for Monterey, or rather Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, which was the missionary post where Father Short was. After a week together –September 12-18– Father Bachelot and Brother Portal returned to San Gabriel to prepare for Brother's voyage to Honolulu. In fact, he was able to leave on October 15, and reached his destination, to the great consolation of Brother Melchior, during the last days of November. The voyage had taken a year and five months.

This humble missionary adventure is told for a number of reasons: it is well-documented and can be followed step by step; it exemplifies the extent to which the missionary ideal had penetrated the whole Congregation, and it shows how those brothers who did not have the consolation of exercising the priestly ministry were generous enough to offer their lives that others might carry out this ministry with greater efficacy.

h. Southeastern Oceania

Shortly after Father Coudrin's return from Rome in 1829 and, perhaps, after Mother Aymer's attack of apoplexy on October 4, the abbé Henry de Solages, accompanied by a Captain Dillon, came to Picpus to propose to the Congregation- a common missionary enterprise in the Pacific Ocean.⁷⁶⁰

The abbé de Solages was then a priest of forty-three, of fine presence and refined and dependable manners, of a piety and fervor more than ordinary. He was appointed prefect apostolic of the Isle of Bourbon (Reunion) and of Madagascar on May 29.

It may seem strange to us that a missionary of southeastern Oceania should conceive of an enterprise in common with the missionaries of the Sandwich Islands, more than 16,000 kilometers to the northeast. But it would mean we did not know the abbé de Solages who was a person for whom distance meant nothing and the world was very small. Actually, he had nothing, neither money, nor an organization or society on which he could rely. He looked around for everything he needed and his capital was his zeal and his fantastic ideas.

Father Coudrin, who was a man with his feet firmly on the ground, was not inspired with confidence in him personally. The same was true of the Propagation of the Faith of Lyons, which on January 30, 1830 notified the branch in Paris: "The General Council of

⁷⁵⁹ HL, Mem. IV, 32 note.

⁷⁶⁰ In the history of Eastern Oceania, we follow HL, *Histoire des Missions de l'Océanie Orientale*.

Lyons regrets it cannot respond to the wishes of the Council of the North in regard to an enterprise which appears to it as too colossal.”⁷⁶¹

What was, in substance, this “overcolossal” enterprise? It was simply the evangelization of the whole Pacific, to the east of the Philippines, New Guinea and Australia, along with New Zealand. Of all this extensive field, Father Coudrin was especially interested in the archipelagos which were populated in the southeastern Pacific, and the reasons were those he explained to the Holy See on January 11, 1830: (1) constant relations with the Sandwich Islands; (2) facility of communications between the priests of both territories (the area of the Sandwich Islands, which had been already granted, and the area of the southeastern Pacific, which was requested); (3) the advantage of entrusting to a religious community the care of this territory to ensure a certain stability of personnel, which was less attainable for the secular clergy; (4) the enemies of the mission are everywhere the same: the American Methodists, established throughout Oceania, more or less in the same period; (5) the situation of the islands made mutual relations advisable; the consul of England residing in Honolulu was consul of the Marquesas and of the Society Islands.

Father Coudrin had sent his first petition along these lines to Rome on December 5, 1829. Before receiving it, the Sacred Congregation of Propagation had appointed the abbé de Solages prefect apostolic, but Providence had other ways, and initiatives never met on the level of reality. What the Propagation of the Faith decided is suggestive:

The Council has reached its decision after considering these points: this enterprise has not yet been undertaken, nor does it seem it will soon be; Father de Solages did not clearly present the means for its achievement, nor anything positive about when he would depart, nor the extent of his actual needs. Nevertheless, he explained his apostolic projects to the Holy Father and received most ample faculties and most flattering approval, so it is decided to hold some funds in reserve to be applied to this mission when it is shown it will be carried out and that the need exists.⁷⁶²

He had hoped for support from the government, overthrown by the fall of the regime of the Restoration in July 1830. Since he obtained neither personnel nor money for his gigantic enterprise, he decided finally to leave “without purse or knapsack” for his prefecture of the island of Bourbon. He embarked, accompanied by two priests, on September 6, 1830. In July 1832 he embarked alone for Madagascar, to try to penetrate this island on which, up to then, not a single missionary had set foot. His goal was “the

⁷⁶¹ Cf. *Lestra*, III, p. 377.

⁷⁶² *Lestra*, II, pp. 378-379.

forbidden city of Tananarive” where he thought he would obtain freedom to preach the Gospel. He died of fever after a few days in Devouranta, on December 8, 1832, when, incognito, he tried to fulfill the urgent mandate recently received from Rome.

If Father de Solages could not himself achieve the establishment of the missions of eastern Oceania, there is no doubt that he contributed to inspire those Marists and Picpusians who did undertake it.

The Holy See, learning of the missionary’s death, acceded to Father Coudrin’s request, and created the apostolic vicariate of eastern Oceania, which extended from the Hawaiian Islands to the Cook Islands, and eastwards to Easter Island. The decree is of May 20, 1833, and it was confirmed by the Supreme Pontiff on June 2, 1833.

On June 14, Father Jerome (Stephen) Rouchouze was declared bishop of Nilopolis, and another brief of the same day appointed him vicar apostolic of eastern Oceania. On September 21, Bishop Garibaldi, papal nuncio in Paris, handed over to Father Hilarion the corresponding documents.

At the end of 1832 Father Jerome Rouchouze, then in Mende, received a communication from the Founder, in which he notified him of his intentions to present him to Rome to be the vicar apostolic, if the negotiations were fruitful. He replied, protesting that he did not wish to disobey, but imploring Father Coudrin to think of another person. When he called him to Paris, after having received the documents, Father Rouchouze could not overcome his state of anxiety, and hoped some change would come about. He reached the capital when Father Coudrin was in Rouen. Hilarion passed on to him the two briefs in his name, but he was literally terrified and did not want to accept them, but left for Rouen to speak with the Founder. We do not know how the Good Father calmed him down, but when they both arrived in Paris on October 5, Father Jerome had already accepted.

The Founder wanted the new bishop to be consecrated in Rome and arranged that he be accompanied by Father Hilarion, who had journeyed already twice to the Eternal City –in 1814-16 and in 1825– and Father Frederick Pages, who was to follow him to Oceania. The departure was on October 18, 1833. Bishop Rouchouze stopped over at Lyons for some days to get in contact with the Council of the Propagation of the Faith. He left Lyons on November 5 and arrived in Marseilles on the seventh, where, after visiting Bishop de Mazenod of that city, who was very attentive to him, he embarked on November 11 en route to Civitavecchia. Before embarking he received a letter from the Founder, sending him correspondence and informing him of the proximate departure

of missionaries for Oceania. Among other things, he told him: “Remember that you are three apostles who go to put at the feet of Saint Peter all the dew of Heaven, to keep it as a provision for life.”⁷⁶³

The prelate arrived in Rome on November 19, and the same day visited the secretary of the Propagation of the Faith, Bishop Mai, who was at the College of Propaganda. He was very well received by him and by all the cardinals and prelates he visited in Rome. On the advice of the Curia, which was in difficulties with the government of France over the appointment of bishops without prior consultation, he paid a courtesy visit to the ambassador.

On November 24, Bishop Rouchouze presented to the Sacred Congregation a petition requesting financial help for the mission of Oceania and received a sum of 3,000 Roman crowns (9,000 francs).

Of course, one of the most ardent desires of the new bishop was to be received by the pope, and an additional reason for this was to soothe his conscience. The pope received him on December 2. It was an extraordinarily cordial reception. Gregory XVI remembered Hilarion at once and made a pleasant little joke.

At the request of the secretary, who called to his attention the prelate’s scruples, His Holiness took him kindly by the arm and told him:

I command you, not however in virtue of obedience which strictly obliges, but through my prayers, exhortations and most earnest invitations. You were recommended to the Propaganda. It designated you, on the basis of the information it received. You may be calm.

The bishop answered with great compunction: “Holy Father, I submit myself.”

After December 5, the new bishop and his companions stayed at the College of Propaganda, where the bishop could conveniently make the usual eight-day retreat. The ordination took place on Sunday, December 22. Cardinal Pedicini, prefect of Propaganda, wanted to perform the ceremony; he was assisted by Archbishop della Porta, patriarch of Constantinople, and Archbishop Cardelli of Acride, former archbishop of Smyrna. The ceremony was held at la Trinità dei Monti.

On January 6, 1834, after a Pontifical Mass at the Propaganda, he was again received in audience by the pope. After a quarter of an hour, his companions also entered. Hilarion presented to the Pontiff various “supplications” on behalf of the missionaries, and the pope immediately put his “placet” on them, sending them to the Congregations. Before leaving Rome, he had a third audience with the pope on January 21, and left for France the

763 BP, 1848.

next day. The journey was this time overland, and the bishop and his suite did not arrive at Marseilles until February 7. From there the bishop went to Mende, where he arrived on February 11. It had been the field of his apostolate, and he could not leave it without taking leave of so many friends before departing for his distant mission. On March 13, he traveled to Lyons, passing through Le Puy. On March 20, he left for St. Sauveur to say good-bye to his mother. He administered continuation in various parishes and went on pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Francis Regis in La Louvesc.

Bishop Rouchouze arrived in Paris on April 26. On June 17, on the advice of some well-informed persons, he left for England, in order to obtain fuller information about Oceania, but without getting any better information there than in France. On July 8, he returned to Paris, without any other concern than to find a ship which would bring him with his companions to Valparaíso.

The companions of Bishop Rouchouze on his voyage to Oceania were: Father Frederick Pages, Father Cyprian Liausu -no relation to Father J. Chrysostom- and Father Desiderio Maigret, then professor at the seminary of Rouen; assigned as catechists were Brother Gilbert Souillier, Brother Fabian Costes, and Urban Florit, who lived as a “donné” at Mende for many years and who had the great dream of consecrating himself to the mission.

The bishop took a lot of luggage with him: a press, a lithographic machine, a complete set of tools for carpentry, ironwork, and other things, which altogether weighed more than 5,000 pounds. Therefore, he decided to embark at Le Havre which was nearer Paris, and took passage on the merchant vessel “Delphine”, which was to weigh anchor at the end of September or the beginning of October. The passage cost 1,500 francs per person.

On October 10, 1834, the new bishop left Paris. In Le Havre, the weather was not too favorable: contrary winds had forced many ships to return to the port, and the “Delphine” did not set sail until the twenty-ninth.

i. Valparaíso, Gambier

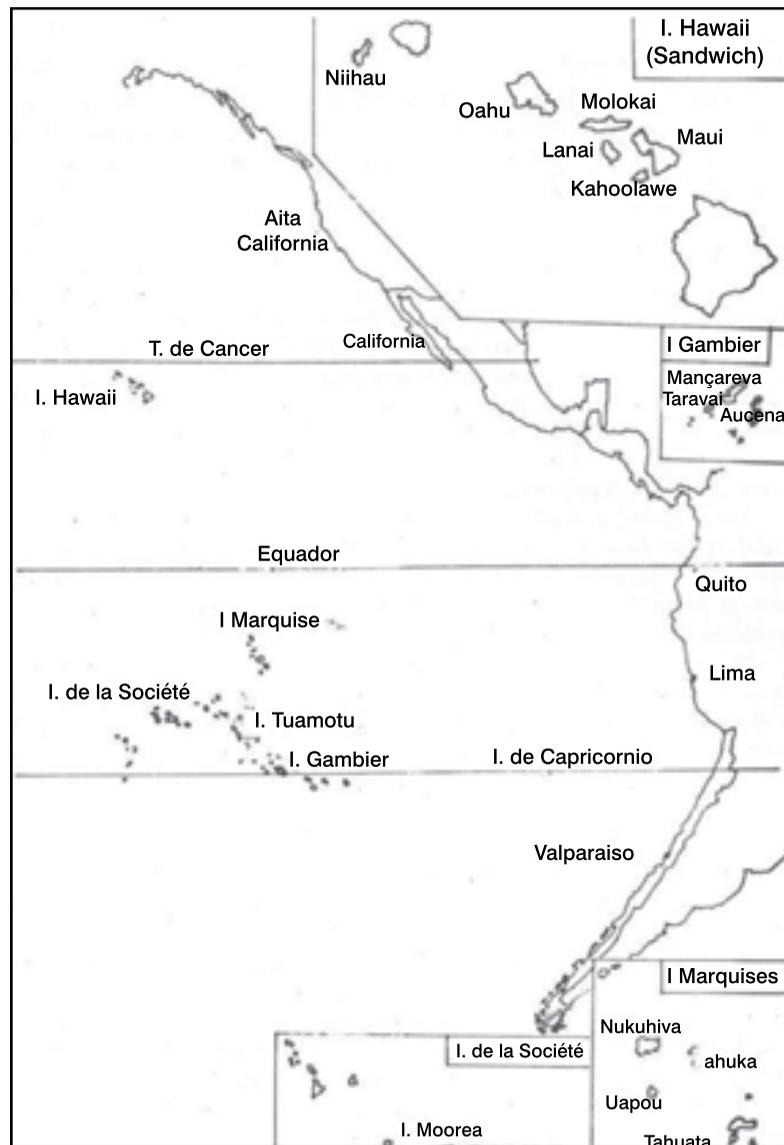
Father Coudrin did not wait until the vicar apostolic consecration to send a group of missionaries to southeastern Oceania. On July 6, 1833, the Congregation of the Propaganda had appointed Father Chrysostom Liausu (twenty-six years old) prefect apostolic of the archipelago situated south of the Equator.”⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶⁴ For Valparaíso we follow HL, Mem. IV, 33ff.

The young priest was one of those who had fled Paris in 1830. He took refuge at the residence of Sarlat, and in 1831 accepted a branch church in Tamniès, fourteen kilometers from Sarlat, through the kindness of the bishop of Perigeux, who was very fond of him seeing how much good he did for his parish.

On August 9, the Founder wrote some few lines to the new prefect, asking him to come to Paris as soon as possible.

Father Chrysostom left Tamniès on August 18 and arrived in Paris on the twenty-ninth.



Map of the Pacific

Father Barnard Jaussen, superior of Sarlat, wrote to Father Hilarion on August 25:

Our dear Chrysostom has left Tamniès amid the tears and sobs of his parishioners, to whom he had been a father.... Also, these poor people regarded their pastor as a rare individual whose equal they would never find.⁷⁶⁵

In Paris a group was formed comprising Father Francis of Assisi Caret, thirty-one, now appointed “apostolic missionary,” and Father Honorat Laval, twenty-five, whom the prefect requested of the Founder. There was also Brother Columban Murphy, twenty-seven, as catechist, who was to join the missionaries in Poitiers.

The Founder, having recently and definitively left the diocese of Rouen, bade farewell to the missionaries on November 22, the date of their departure from Paris for Bordeaux, where the archbishop had taken charge of obtaining passage for them. The missionaries arrived in Tours on the twenty-third, and were in Poitiers the following day, where they came in time for celebrating Mass in the chapel, in which the Founders had taken their first vows in 1800. By the twenty-fifth they were in Bordeaux, where they were lodged by the archbishop in the seminary.

A variety of reasons, some meteorological and others commercial, held up the departure of the “Sylphide”, which took on its passengers only on January 6, 1834, to go to Pauliac; from there it sailed on the thirty-first.

The voyage had one moment of anguish when, on March 21, after leaving behind the summit of Rio de Janeiro, a gust of wind arose which forced the cutting of the cable of one of the sails. On April 22, they saw the Isle of the Estados and on May 1, they rounded Cape Horn, arriving in Valparaíso on the thirteenth at 3:00 p.m.

At this port Father Andrés Caro, a Spanish Franciscan who was highly respected in the city, greeted them. At first they had difficulty understanding each other because the missionaries did not know Spanish and Father Caro did not speak French, so that the only solution for the moment was speaking in Latin.

On May 25, Father Francis of Assisi wrote a long letter giving details of the voyage to Valparaíso:

The Good God led us by the hand to the house of a venerable recollect of the Order of St. Francis, who spent twenty-four years among the savages... In Chile the people love and respect the priests. Since the people are good, there is but need of men who know and want to keep their goodwill; but, alas! good priests are rare in this country.

⁷⁶⁵ PAC, 3367b.

Providence led us to the most holy and the most zealous in the city. We did not go out very often. . . . Valparaíso is built along the shore on the slope of very high mountains, in such a way that the site is quite picturesque. Earthquakes are very frequent. That is why what is built is not very high. However, every day new buildings are constructed, and the population grows a lot. What a great deal of good could be done by priests filled with zeal! The people, although crassly ignorant, always keep the faith the Spaniards gave them... The word of God is only announced in the church of Father Andres, where every day we offer up the Holy Sacrifice.... They would like us to stay in Chile, to evangelize the mountain savages who are very numerous. One of the ministers of the Republic spoke of this to Father Andre's. We told the venerable old man to tell him that if he wants some missionaries for the savages of Chile, he can write to our superior general.... This mission would be very advantageous if we were driven from our islands...

We had but one desire for ourselves, that of finding means to get ourselves to Oceania. We will have to part company if we cannot do otherwise. Each one of us would want nonetheless to arrive at the mission for which the Lord destined us....⁷⁶⁶

This letter gives the basic outline of the situation which this missionary group, and especially the prefect apostolic, Father Chrysostom Liausu, encountered a few days after arriving in Chile.

There the possibility of a foundation in Chile was presented, which would be of the greatest interest for all the missions of Oceania. It would be a place of refuge in cases such as that of Father Bachelot, but a foundation in Chile would entail the necessity of separation, and this no one liked.

While all this was going on, time passed, and there was no possibility of going to the archipelagos of the South Pacific or to Tahiti, which made up the area recently entrusted to the Congregation.

Father Caro was a former missionary who, expelled from his mission in the period of independence, had decided to travel to Spain, and had sailed on "La Comète" –the same ship which had carried Father Bachelot to Honolulu– and, returning to Europe, had been so buffeted by storms while rounding Cape Horn, that only by a miracle was it able to return to Valparaíso. The old missionary, who in 1834 was sixty-six, considered this as the voice of Providence, wanting him to be in Chile, and, using the wreck of the ship, he built the house in which he lived, and devoted himself to preaching and the ministry in Valparaíso.

⁷⁶⁶ HL, Hist.Mis.OO, 8.

Father Caro had organized a retreat house which he handed over to a cleric of Santiago, Father Urriola, but hardly had he seen these French missionaries fall from heaven, as it were, than he had the idea of handing it over to them.

Father Liausu, who was concerned about arriving at the islands, inquired of the sailors who passed through and who were able to inform him about the situation of the islands. The result of his inquiries was not very encouraging. In most of the islands of the archipelago, and above all in Tahiti, the owners were Methodists, and the fate which might be expected to be met by any “Papist” who should dare to disembark on their shores would not be any better than that met by Father Bachelot. The islands not occupied by the Methodists were inhabited by cannibals, and there was a risk of perishing during some banquet. The missionaries preferred the cannibals and got ready to leave. Father Liausu wrote to the Founder from Valparaíso on July 19, 1834:

For two months we have sought in vain for the means to get to our mission. We have already made many novenas; when the feast of St. Peter came we began another, and we talked things over many a time. I had already seen various persons and several ships' captains, who knew about the islands the Holy See entrusted to us. . . . On the day of Our Lady of Peace, July 9, after Mass, I got the idea of going to see Captain Morne, who was back from a short voyage to the coast. I went on board with brother Columba Murphy. The captain showed me a chart of Oceania which he had drawn up himself, and on which he had marked a countless number of islands I did not know. He had on board two savages, one from New Zealand, formerly a cannibal, the other from around Otaiti. The New Zealander had followed the captain to the Gambier Islands, with the language of which he was somewhat acquainted.... I could not hold back my tears, on seeing these two savages. One had a rosary around his neck without knowing what it was. I spoke to them through an interpreter and asked them whether they wanted to come with me. They told me that they were quite willing. I asked them further whether they would eat me in their country. They replied that, on the contrary, they would defend me. I gave a *real* to each one, and invited them to come and see me. On leaving Captain Morne's ship, we went to see a captain from Boston who was to leave for Otaiti, and who had offered us, by special favor, to bring us there for 150 piastres a person. We had turned him down and I thought he had already left. But God whose counsels are impenetrable had other views He wanted to know how much we could pay. We offered him 4 ounces, 460 francs, and at first he refused, but I pressed him, and he consented, “because”; he told us, “you seem brave men to me.” We settled for him to bring us to the Gambier Islands, where he would land two of us or all four if we desired it...⁷⁶⁷

767 PAC, 4017.

On July 9, 1834, it was decided, then, that they would go to the Gambier Islands, and the possibility of a foundation in Valparaíso did not seem to counterbalance this very much.

This was the situation when there happened what Father Liausu relates in the same letter we quoted:

The next day, July 10, Father Andre's (Caro) came to tell me that he did not think it prudent for all of us to leave, and that I would do well to leave Father Caret in Valparaíso. This good religious told us:

"I think God has prepared a refuge for you here and He inspired me to receive you. You see what is related about your islands. You must bring only what is needed to clothe you, but you must make sacrifices to win over the savages. You will not be able to be accepted by them except by giving them presents. What would have become of you if you had been obliged to rent here one or two rooms and to pay for your meals? Six piastres a day would not have been enough, and to that you would have had to add the cost of maintenance and your laundry. What will you do if all four of you leave for the islands and you are not received there? You would go to Otaiti. But there are your cruelest enemies. What will become of you without money? For you are not to tempt God. You see that Father Liausu wrote Father Bachelot to come. What will he do when he will come, if he finds none of you? What will the bishop, the prefect apostolic, do? Where will he go to take you? What information will he have? Is it not better that you endanger a part rather than the whole? And who will receive those who will come later on, if you do not take proper measures? You will see, besides, how much you are desired here. I know that all of you cannot stay here, no matter how much I want you to, and how much the inhabitants do, too. But at least see that you need a stopping-off place for those who will come from Europe and who would otherwise be in danger of having to spend what they would have set aside for continuing the voyage. I desire, for the good of the mission, that my house belong to you one day. Take care not to go against the will of your superior who would do other than you think, if he saw the difficulties which are encountered."

We were all struck by these considerations. We agreed that one of us should stay in Valparaíso. Only they all thought I should be the one to stay. I could not accept their view, for it seemed to me that I must be the first one to launch the mission. So I wanted to leave Father Francis of Assisi here. He would have submitted to stay but it would be painful. Father Andres wanted to question him privately. I do not know what went on among them, but after questioning them, Father Andres called me, tears flowing down his cheeks, and embraced me. He said to me: "Let Father Francis of Assisi leave, and you stay." I called our companions and told them that Father Francis of Assisi was going to leave.

Once this decision was reached, preparation was made for the departure. The people of Puerto, who learned of it, brought them as a gift provisions for several months. Father Liausu named as superior Father Caret, and six days later, on July 16, the feast of Our Lady of Carmel –observes Father Liausu– they took with them what was necessary and left for the Gambier Islands.

On August 7 the ship entered the barrier reefs surrounding the islands. The major island, Mangareva, is of volcanic origin and has a surface area of almost fourteen square kilometers, and adding the other smaller islands –Aukena, Akamaru, and Taravai– comprises altogether twenty square kilometers. According to the missionaries, they had less than 2,000 inhabitants at this time, and all were pagans. They were cannibals and had never had any contact with missionaries.

When the missionaries arrived, there was a Methodist who was working on the extraction of mother-of-pearl, but was not the least bit interested in preaching. There was also a French schooner, which accepted them very kindly and offered to take care of their luggage because Captain Sweetland with his ship the “Peruviana” left for Tahiti on August 9. The tenth was a Sunday, and the priests celebrated Mass on deck, the first Masses in their mission territory.

The French sailors advised the missionaries not to trust too much in the goodwill of the chiefs, but the missionaries, seeing that they had to arrange things in such a way that they could live under their authority, preferred to try to win them over.

On August 10, when they first tried to make contact, they went to the major island, Mangareva. On first sight of the beach, the prayer of the Church came spontaneously to their lips: “Pax huic insulae, et omnibus inhabitantibus in ea.” When they reached the coast they saw a crowd awaiting them, and setting foot on land, beyond the barrier of language, they thought they saw on the faces no hostility. In fact, they repeated “ia ora na,” which the interpreter using English through the catechist Brother Columban Murphy told them meant “good day.”

After a period of mutual inspection, the missionaries were brought into the presence of King Maputeoa. The interview was not very encouraging, because the monarch remained stretched out on his mat, and said substantially that he had no need of missionaries. They sought another chief later on who seemed less antagonistic, and who gave them a vacant hut, but they did not have their things with them and so returned to the ship for the night.

The next day, when they attempted to return to Mangareva, they met with unanimous resistance, a result, of course, of the king's decision. Before this rejection, the missionaries wanted to go to the isle of Akamaru, but the wind was contrary, and they went to the smaller isle of Aukena. Captain Chesdin, a Frenchman, remarked to them that if he had accompanied them, the king would have given them a better reception. Concerning this, Father Caret observed: "This is because, as a matter of fact, everything is obtained from these people through fear. But that is not the means missionaries of Jesus Christ should employ."⁷⁶⁸

On Aukena, one of Chesdin's fishermen very willingly let them stay in a cabin where they spent the night. On August 15, they said Mass, proceeded by a *Veni Creator*, and ended with the hymn *Salve*. Father Laval was greatly satisfied this day, because finding a dying child, he was able to perform the first baptism of the mission, with the conviction that he gave the first passport to Eternal Life, and sent to Heaven a first fruit of the Gambier Islands. Two days later the child died, and the missionaries gave him a Christian burial, impressing the natives very much.

At the end of August, Father Caret made a journey of some hours to Mangareva, and some days later the whole group of missionaries moved to the main island, with the hope of making some progress in relations with the people. Captain Chesdin had them brought there on September 2. The rejection was universal. They made signs and shouted at them in "kanaka" to go away.

The missionaries did not give up easily, and fled from one cove to another, until night, during which they did not suffer very much. The next day, September 3, the attitude of the people was more aggressive, and they were ordered off right away. It was too late to return to Aikena and they thought they could hide among some bushes, but the kanakas set fire to them on several sides; only for the fact that they were agile enough to climb up on a rock wall and run out, they would have been burnt to death. The next morning, they once more took refuge in Aukena. They realized that the people of Aukena and of Akamari had a different attitude which was more receptive, and for the moment they had no thought of returning to the main island.

On September 8, the chief of the island came to greet them in a friendly way. The missionaries had noticed that there were, especially among the children, many skin diseases, and that they went about dirty and untidy, eaten alive by fleas, mange, and ringworm. The chief ascribed all this to the dead who punished and harmed the living.

768 HL, Hist.Mis.OO, 60.

The missionaries began to clean things up and, under the guise of medical aid, cut the children's hair, washed their heads with much soap, causing the plague of misery and filth to disappear.

It was a good symbol of baptism, they thought, and further more, they were following the teaching of Christ: first, heal the sick and then, when they had ability to speak the language, teach.

Another thing which concerned the missionaries was the sparse and unvaried menu of the natives who practically knew only how to fish and collect some fruit and roots, but did not know agriculture. Ever on the plane of "doing," these advances made the presence of the missionaries begin to be seen as a benefit by the islanders; they felt that they were at the service of their human welfare.

After October 8, 1834, they decided to alternate their work, devoting one week to the island of Aukena, and another to that of Akamaru, at least until their knowledge of the language would allow greater communication.

In the middle of December, Father Laval testifies to the progress in the study of the language made by the missionaries. They managed to compose, with the help of Father Bachelot's writings, a small dictionary of 1,500 commonly used words.

How they managed to organize a school under these conditions we do not know. To natives so primitive, everything seemed marvelous, and the fact that, with some scribbles on a piece of paper, ideas could be transmitted from one part of the island to another was received in all its stupendous novelty, perhaps with greater admiration than we give today to the prodigies of modern technology. To them everything seemed miraculous and almost religious, and their curiosity was intense when the missionaries offered to teach them the secrets of reading and writing.

The schools, which were restricted by the slight knowledge of the language the missionaries had as yet, were very successful, so much so that those of the main island who came to know of this became envious.

On December 30, 1834, the missionaries of Gambier were able to appreciate the importance of having a brother in Valparaíso. Almost as soon as they arrived, they had written Father Liausu, sending him a list of what they needed most urgently: shoes for themselves, pieces of calico for clothing the natives. On this day the first shipment arrived, to the joy of all.

On January 1, 1835, they wanted to start the year with a new adventure, and they set out to visit the isle of Taravai for the first time. They were well received. Maputeoa

was on the island and they were brought to his presence right away. Father Caret, who had by now some ability to speak the language, made him a speech all about the existence and power of the one and only God they served. It seems that he was so convincing and eloquent that it impressed the king to the point where, according to the chronicle, he perspired copiously.

The reaction this time was very different from that of the encounter in Mangareva some months before. The inhabitants of Taravai begged the favor of a school, like those of Aukena and Akamaru. The king, after perspiring so much, showed himself very friendly. On her part, the queen had the kindness to send the missionaries a bunch of bananas.

January 4 was Sunday, and the missionaries said Mass in public, before a crowd of curious people who observed with surprise the mysterious ornaments and gestures of the Roman liturgy.

In February the missionaries had already composed the text of the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed in the language of the islands, and began to teach them.

Moreover, since Easter of 1835, April 19, they felt they really knew the language, and began preaching and teaching more systematically and positively. And it was possible to arrive at "overthrowing" the idols in Aukena and also in Akamaru. It was a massive conversion.

But let us return to Valparaíso, for Father Chrysostom, too, did not waste time. Neither did the good Father Caro who felt himself, with good reason, to be one of the founders of the Gambier mission, a feeling which Father Liausu fully shared.

Father Liausu himself, and also Father Caret and Father Laval, had written the Founder, telling him about the ideas which Father Caro had suggested to them so efficaciously in July of the previous year. This correspondence reached Father Coudrin's hands during the time that Bishop Rouchouze was getting the departure for the Pacific underway, and succeeded in explaining the problem to him. He left the decision in the hands of the bishop.

While the vicar apostolic was sailing across the South Atlantic, and was voyaging up the west coast of South America to reach Valparaíso, Father Caro was writing various letters to the Founder upholding his thesis, and offering the Congregation a wide field of apostolate in Chile.

The good Franciscan, already in June 1834, had been careful to put the religious in contact with the local bishop, who at this time was also bishop of Santiago, Bishop Manuel

Vicuna. He governed the diocese as apostolic administrator, with great difficulties under the regime of "Patronage," established in the colonial period and lasting until 1925.

The bishop, as well as the president of the newly founded Republic, were interested in the new Congregation being established in Chile; since it was not Spanish, it would not cause problems of a political nature after the recent struggle for independence (1810-18).

On February 19, 1835, Father Chrysostom wrote a long letter to Father Coudrin, insisting how opportune the establishment of a residence of the Congregation in Valparaíso would be.

In it he repeated more or less the same arguments as Father Caro, and complemented it with the weight of the facts: news about Gambier and how Providence had protected Father Caret and Father Laval; reaction of the people of Valparaíso, who, knowing of the penury of the missionaries in the islands, had organized a campaign to send them supplies: the government and the merchants of the port had sent 400 yards of calico for the natives, and the bishop of Santiago had given 100 pesos.

Then began the requests: for the residence of Valparaíso one more priest and a brother would be needed. A residence would surely bring about vocations, which were lacking, because the religious of the country were not very edifying. This last point was illustrated with the example about an order which had to choose a new provincial. When he had been chosen, while a *Te Deum* was being sung in the capitular hall, those who opposed his election sang the *Miserere* and the tower bells tolled a *Requiem*.

Father Liausu had just mailed his letter when, that very afternoon, Bishop Rouchouze and his companions arrived in Valparaíso. The vicar apostolic wanted to collect some information which would be as complete as possible, and firsthand. So, on March 4, he went to the capital following Father Caro's advice and remained in Santiago for twelve days. He visited the bishop and the president of the Republic, Don José Joaquín Prieto. Everyone received him very well. The president offered him a mission in Chile, and told him that he would write the Founder about this offer. A priest could stay in Valparaíso who would receive vocations for the missions.

On April 24, Bishop Rouchouze wrote to Father Coudrin giving him detailed information about all this, and expressing his views: Father Chrysostom ought to stay in Valparaíso; if the government made a concrete offer, it would have to be accepted. The missions of Oceania would not be able to be maintained without a pied-à-terre in America, and Chile was the most favorable place. Meanwhile, Father Caro made a provisory donation of his retreat house to Father Chrysostom,

the only price being that of giving retreats as a permanent mission. Concerning Father Liausu he wrote:

Father Chrysostom is better here than anyone else. Everyone appreciates him. The mission of the Gambier Islands will lack nothing while he is here. He has the talent to get along with Chileans. With his white habit and his good manners, he has won over all Santiago. I am delighted with him.⁷⁶⁹

While the bishop was in Santiago, Father Desiderius Maigret wrote his impressions to France:

Here we are embarrassed by the kindness the people of Chile have shown us. They fight over which one will do us a service. They send us for our food, the best they have. They took nothing in payment for unloading our effects. Even the poor want to contribute to the good work. From the day of our arrival more than eighty women came to us, begging we let them give us the alms of washing our clothing, and that without any pay.... Bishop (Rouchouze) of Nilopolis writes us from Santiago: “Bishop Manuel Vicuña treats us as if we were kings. He lets me stay in his rooms; I even think he has granted me his -own bedroom. If I had anything to complain about, it would be the over-kind welcome I receive from them. I am really confused over so many honors.” Then he adds: “So send some good priests. You would hardly believe the great good Father Chrysostom has done during the eight months he had been here. He has the confidence of the whole/ city and of the whole diocese, just as Father Andres (Caro) does. Here is what he does. He preaches in the simplest and most personal way, explains catechism in brief conferences, and from time to time gives points for meditation during the retreats, and he wants the same thing done after him at the retreat house.”⁷⁷⁰

Shortly before Bishop Rouchouze’s arrival in January 1835, there had landed in Valparaíso, from Europe, a Franciscan prefect apostolic with a group of twelve missionaries, who of course had been lodged in Father Caro’s residence. This visit was a test for the old benefactor of the missionaries, because the prefect did not look with favor on the fact that Father Caro should have so much concern about, and leave the retreat house to persons “who did not belong to his order.”

Bishop Rouchouze decided to leave Father Frederick Pages in Valparaíso, in order that Father Chrysostom would not be alone, and could better prepare the future foundation. On April 4, he set sail on the *Peruviana* and arrived in Gambier on May 9.

The bishop’s arrival was a great event in the archipelago: the appearance of the “Great Missionary” whom Father Caret and Father Laval had promised. Evangelization was already well in progress, and idolatry was like a tree waiting for the final stroke of

769 HL, Mem. IV, 87.

770 *Ibid.*, 89.

the axe to make it fall. This was given it by the arrival of the bishop backed by two priests and three catechists.

The process of change was very rapid, and must have been carried on with a certain psychological violence in many cases, although there the feeling of liberation predominated and an unheard of opening-up to the way to progress in every area. It suffices to say that the idols were overthrown in Mangareva on June 14 and 15, 1835, and that these were the last bastions to fall.

The queen was baptized on August 12, 1835. The king must have had a hard year, being one of the few who did not yield, although he advised and received the missionaries amiably. He took the final step the next year, and was baptized on August 5, 1836. On this date it may be said that the Christian conquest of the Gambier Islands was achieved, in the sense that the faith had been accepted by the mass of the people along with their rulers.

Gambier, and the recently established post in Valparaíso, became the basic points of support for the mission of eastern Oceania. In the archipelago life became a haven of peace.

In Valparaíso, perspectives had changed in the second half of 1835. Father Chrysostom and Father Frederick, together with Father Caro, had come to the conclusion that the retreat house was not enough to effect a solid change in idle youth of the city. Consideration of establishing a school was necessary. It seems that Bishop Vicuria had the same idea, for Father Liausu wrote:

His Excellency urges me to set up a small school where the young would be prepared for the priesthood. The residence we occupy is not suitable for such an establishment. I am going to try with the help of Father Andrés to purchase a neighboring house. Some friends have already given me 5,000 francs for this purpose.⁷⁷¹

There was a tangle of documents which prevented Father Chrysostom from taking possession of the above residence. But while these matters were being cleared up, the nascent foundation of Valparaíso underwent a great loss. Father Errero, the Franciscan prefect apostolic, ordered Father Caro to go to Bolivia, where he was needed as master of novices, and the Religious of the Sacred Hearts were deprived of his company and support. Father Andres Caro left for Bolivia on May 3, 1836.

Perhaps Father Caro's absence, along with the instability of the situation of the religious who had no residence as yet, contributed to accentuation of certain differences

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

in character between Father Chrysostom and Father Frederick. What is certain is that Father Errero was aware that there was a certain tension between them. The impression which the documents give is that he dramatized somewhat this difference when he reported it to Father Coudrin, on a visit he made to him at the end of 1836 or at the beginning of 1837. There is no doubt that much more decisive was a note by Father Caro, of March 14, 1836, shortly before leaving for Bolivia, in which, after confirming the praises he always gave so abundantly to Father Chrysostom, he wrote:

He is very studious and has other virtues of a good religious; but as a superior I noted in him an over- harsh character, filled with suspicion. Besides I observed in him a certain avidity for money. I pass this information on to you, not to make you dislike him, but for the good of your Congregation which I love as I do my own Order, and in order that you may prudently warn him. I implore you in no way at all let him know that I tell you this about him, *pro bono pacis*... Yours...
Andres Caro.⁷⁷²

Father Coudrin, instead of following Father Caro's suggestion and warning Father Liausu, chose a more simple way: choosing Father Frederick in his place. He handed over the corresponding documents to the group which left Le Havre with Bishop Pompallier on December 24, 1836, and reached Valparaíso on June 28, 1837. The following made up this group of missionaries: Father Manuel Costes, Father Potencian Guilmard, Father Louis Borgella (then a subdeacon), and Brother Besarion Delon.

As might be expected, this news was like a bombshell in the residence which had only two fathers and a brother: Father Chrysostom, Father Frederick Pages, and Brother Neil Laval (a brother, four years in minor orders, of the mission of Gambier). Besides, the news came when Father Liausu was busying himself in preparing to receive not only the group of missionaries of the Congregation but also Bishop Pompallier and all his Marist missionaries, altogether some twenty-two table guests.

The reaction revealed that the crisis was very superficial, as may be seen from the letter of Father Maigret of July 4, six days after the receipt of the Founder's document:

The news of the change you have just made in the administration of the retreat house has been received with most respectful submission. But for the good of the work, Father Frederick and all of us thought that things should be left, exteriorly only, in statu quo, until Father Caret's return from France where he went last May 6 on the frigate Flore. The donation of the retreat house, which has up to now been made conditionally and under private deed, the purchase of a new residence about which you must know, a school the opening of which has been announced, in a word, the present state of things and the present attitude of minds seem to

⁷⁷² Arch. SS.CC. Rome. Section Chile: 2G.

require this measure. Yet, be assured that we have only the desire to do what is good and at this moment we all have but one heart and one mind.⁷⁷³

In a longer letter of July 18, Father Maigret adds some information for the Founder which it seems opportune to quote:

As to our private life in the residence, your orders will be carried out and everyone will acknowledge as superior him whom you appointed, and our brother Chrysostom is too virtuous not to obey him. One will be charged with giving retreats and the other will run the school which will be opened right after our departure, which will probably be next week....

As for me, I will tell you frankly what I think on this matter. Father Chrysostom will not be able to leave Valparaíso for a long time. He has the full confidence of the bishop and of the president, of the ministers and the principal authorities of the country. He has many and influential friends who have supported him in many a circumstance and who are always ready to sustain him. In a word, he is not regarded as a foreigner in Chile....⁷⁷⁴

The residence of Valparaíso would have many problems fundamentally, due to the fact that the superior was too far away for making decisions, but it is a great credit to the first religious that this defect did not produce too grave difficulties, nor did it ruin the life of charity of the community. The service of the faithful kept on improving more and more.

For many months Father Liausu had been preparing a residence for the sisters, and on May 28, 1838, the first group embarked at Bordeaux with Mother Cleonisse Cormier in charge. They arrived in Valparaíso on November 1, but the proceedings for the official approval of their establishment were not completed until the following year: May 23 on the part of the government, and June 28 on the part of the bishop of Santiago.

We shall now return to what went on in the missions of Gambier in 1836. It may be said that with the baptism of the king, the conversion of the people of the archipelago was complete and quite solid. The Methodists of Tahiti, who at the end of 1835 had written Father Caret and Father Laval asking them to withdraw, because they had prior possession, must have felt offended. Their readiness to receive Catholic missionaries in the very headquarters of their mission was not very great, as was easy to foresee. Despite this, the vicar apostolic knew he was responsible, by order of the pope, for the whole of eastern Oceania, and organized an expedition to sound out the possibilities of establishing a mission in Tahiti.

⁷⁷³ PAC, 3695.

⁷⁷⁴ PAC, 3696.

On October 31, 1836, new reinforcements arrived at Gambier: Father Armand Chausson and Brother Alphonse Vincent, who had left Bordeaux on December 16, 1835. With their arrival there was now adequate personnel: not counting the vicar, there were five priests and three catechists. Life and progress were remarkable at this moment. In September the composing of a catechism was completed which consolidated the pedagogy of religious instruction. During this time there was initiated the construction of an enormous stone church, which would hold three thousand persons, and is still the largest in all of eastern Oceania. The cornerstone was blessed on January 17, 1839. Taro, bananas, and potatoes were cultivated all over the islands. Yet all this did not let Bishop Rouchouze forget that the Gambier Islands were only a small part of the territory entrusted to him.

So, on November 5, he sent Father Caret, Father Laval, and Brother Vincent to Tahiti. The opportunity came when least expected. Captain William Hamilton, who had arrived a short time before on his small schooner *Elisa*, had come to visit the bishop, and had offered not only to bring the two priests to Tahiti, but to let them stay at his house, and plead for them before the queen and before the chiefs. The captain made a surprising statement: "I am sure that they will be welcomed, because the queen and the chiefs want to have missionaries from Gambier, and are fed up with the Methodists."

By November 20, they reached Tahiti, after sailing against a strong wind which even prevented them from entering the port, and they were obliged to drop anchor at one of the points of Tairapu. This was providential, for it enabled them to escape the vigilance of the Methodists who would not have let them disembark in Papeete.

But not even there was the landing easy, for if the missionaries had not hastened to land as soon as they did, they would not have been able to do so. A chief came on board to warn the captain that there was an order not to let any missionary land, but when he arrived, it was too late, for Father Caret, Father Laval, and Brother Alphonse were already ashore.

What had happened? A Methodist who sailed from Gambier on another ship the same day as the missionaries and who had arrived one or two days before, had alerted everyone. The Methodist ministers had held a meeting, the queen had met with the chiefs and it had been decided to set up a cordon of lookouts around the coast of the whole island, so that they would not be allowed to disembark.

The missionaries spent the night in the house of a Swede who lived there, with the intention of traveling on foot the next day, for they were certain that if they boarded the

ship they would not be allowed to land. They left very early on the twenty-first, and on the way met people who seemed friendly and even laughed because the Methodists had not succeeded in stopping them. Worn out from the first day on the road, and without finding any place to sleep, they ran into a “kanaka” who was so kind that, as soon as they let him know they were “missionaries from Gambier,” he offered to let them sleep in his house, gave them coconut water to drink as refreshment, and provided some mats on which to lie. Father Caret says: “He was the first Tahitian who dealt kindly with us.” Hardly had they rested a while when the owner of the house asked the missionaries to sing the “hymns of Mangareva.” The inhabitants of the place had meanwhile come together and listened to the hymns of the missionaries of Mangareva.

At dawn the missionaries were already on the way, and they noticed that the crowds of curious people increased, and that many kanakas had a book of the Bible under their arms. Father Caret again tells us:

They spoke to us a lot about their *orometua* (their term for the Methodist missionaries) and that they sold them the Word of God and the sacraments, and that they are very desirous of having money and oil of coconut. They added; “Do you do that too?” We asked them for the Gospel of St. Matthew, and we showed them these words of the Lord: “*Gratis accepistis, gratis date.*” (the gift you have received, give as a gift) (Mt 10:8).⁷⁷⁵

Around 10:00 a.m. they met a Fleming, who was married to an Indian and who had lived on the island for many years. He went into abundant detail about the harm the Methodists had caused by commercializing everything. Further on, they met with two chiefs who earnestly recommended that they visit the queen, and left them very amiably, expressing their wish that they remain in Tahiti.

They spent another night on the road and very early in the morning of the twenty-third, set out for Papeete, hoping to reach it before nightfall. Throughout their journey throngs of people came out to see them pass, because the news of their arrival preceded them.

“Are you the missionaries of Mangareva?” they asked us. We said we were, adding that we were French priests.

Here there came many questions.... “Do you have wives? Are you merchants?” We answered: “We do not have wives. Real missionaries do not have them at all. They must think only of loving God and of making men happy. We are not merchants, for neither Jesus Christ nor His Apostles were.” These poor Tahitians, who always had the Bible at hand, felt strongly that we were telling the truth, and added: “But our *orometua* have wives and do business every day. They are not good. They sell

775 HL, Hist. OO.161.

us everything, prayerbooks, sacraments, etc. for so much oil, so much money.” (A Gospel of St. Matthew for five bamboo stalks of oil.) “Our mountains are covered with their cows. They are very rich. But their riches are for themselves, and their women and children. They do not like us; they chase us out of their houses when we enter them. They do not love you either. They hate you very much. They told us you were wicked and should not be allowed to land. How did you manage to disembark?” We told them, “We disembarked at Tairapu, and came from there by land.” “But you speak the language of Tahiti well. Where did you learn it?” “We do not speak it well, but in a short while we will speak it better.” Since the language of Gambier and of Tahiti are closely related, we could in fact stammer a bit the language of this last island.⁷⁷⁶

Walking, always walking, they reached a house where the family welcomed them very kindly, and informed them that the “orometua”, and especially “Piritati” (Mr. Pritchard, the head of the Methodist pastors), were furious about their disembarking, and wanted nothing other than their merciless expulsion.

“We replied, ‘We did not come to do harm but to bring good to the queen, the chiefs, and all the people. Piritati and the other orometua hate us. As for us, we do not hate them, but neither do we fear them since we are God’s messengers.’”⁷⁷⁷

The missionaries finally reached Papeete. A crowd surrounded them right away. Many greeted them, but the majority looked at them in silence. They went directly to the residence of the American consul, who was a Belgian. They brought a letter from Bishop Rouchouze for him. His name was Antoine Moerenhaut and he was known for his sympathy for the French. He received the missionaries very amiably, and offered his house and his table to be at their service while they were in the city. The next day was spent overcoming the innumerable obstacles the influential Pritchard dreamed up to put in their way on all sides, with the hope of preventing Father Caret and Father Laval from speaking to the queen. Finally, the audience was scheduled for the next day, November 25, at the residence of Papaoa.

The missionaries, accompanied by the American consul, met Queen Pomare, very dignified and squatting on a mat, with Pritchard present seated on a stool, and a good number of chiefs, who filled the hall, the “barn,” as Father Caret said.

Pritchard, as a last resort, had managed that no interpreters would be present. The missionary relates:

It was hoped that we would be mute. However, with the help of God, we were not, and what we said was understood and repeated. Here is what we stammered:

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

“Queen, we come from Mangareva. We are priests of the true God, France is our country. We are not evildoers. We have not the slightest intention to do any harm to Piritati (Pritchard) nor to any of the orometua who are here. We desire to bring good to you, Queen, to the chiefs and all the people. We know that this land belongs to you and you have power over it. We ask you for hospitality, and we hope you will not refuse it. If you yourself or your subjects went to France, the king would not drive you out. He would give you hospitality. In great kingdoms, such as France, England and America, unoffending foreigners enjoy full freedom, priests just as others. So it is that French priests move freely about England and America.” The American consul strongly supported this freedom of instruction. However, a chief asked if it was true that we adored Mary.... I asked him, “Who told you we adored Mary?” The poor man was very embarrassed. He did not dare say it was Pritchard, because he was present. He only answered: “We learned it in school.” I told him: “You have learned a great lie!”⁷⁷⁸

The missionaries offered presents to the queen, and she, to Pritchard’s rage, accepted them amiably. While a chief was explaining his objection, the queen showed signs of being bored, and Father Laval, who was closely looking at her, and who was closer to her, heard her murmur very softly, but loud enough to be understood: “Aita maitai Piritati” (“Pritchard is not a good man”).

Pritchard, later on, had the gifts returned, telling the queen that the French were trying to “buy” the right to remain on the island. It would take too long to relate all the details of the sixteen days our missionaries spent in Papeete. They very seldom left the American consul’s house, but continually received visits from natives who showed them they wanted them to stay in their land.

On December 11, they were put by force on Hamilton’s schooner. This time he treated them very badly, putting them in the hold. After a few days the schooner, had a new captain.

The captain took advantage of the course through the “Tuamotu” to release the missionaries from the hold and landed them in Gambier on December 31.

The vicar apostolic did not let Father Caret rest very long, because he had to send him to Valparaíso. In fact, only after many efforts, and after signing a declaration that they had no intent to disembark in Tahiti, but had found a ship which would bring them to Chile, did Captain Williams consent to take them in his brig Colombo. They sailed for Tahiti on January 13, 1837, and arrived at Papeete on the twenty-sixth.

Although they did not land, the arrival of the recently expelled missionaries made a great impression on the people. During the five days they were at anchor in the port, there

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 162.

were many visitors, not only the American consul who had kept at his residence Brother Alphonse Vincent as a workman in his service, and who visited them every day, but also many natives who wanted the missionaries to stay. Doubtless, the most interesting visit was that by an old man, a confidant of Pritchard, who held prayers in his chapel when he was absent, and who went out of his way to come to the schooner to say a few words to them, words which Father Caret quotes:

“I too am a Papist (Taata Pope au). I want to be one of yours.” We said to him: “We are going to leave for Valparaíso. As for you, tell God: ‘My God, make me know who are the true missionaries and who are the false.’” He answered us: “I know that you are God’s true missionaries. God made it known to me. So go to Valparaíso and hurry back.”⁷⁷⁹

These words must have been a great consolation for Father Caret, and at the same time were like a call, whose words revealed fully a work of the Spirit, despite human miseries.

So, on February 1, 1837, the brig Colombo sailed for Valparaíso. Thanks to the influence of the consul Moerenhaut and the payment of 200 pesos, which was enormous for the missionaries, Williams consented to change his route and leave them at this port, where they actually arrived on March 22.

From there, on May 6, Father Caret left for France, in total ignorance of the Founder’s death, which he learned of on his arrival in Europe months later.

For his part, Father Maigret waited for a ship to return to Gambier. None was available at Valparaíso until June 28, when the “Delphine” arrived; among its passengers who had embarked at Le Havre, along with Bishop Pompallier and a group of Marist missionaries, were two priests and two brothers –Father Manuel Coste and Father Pontencian Guilmar, a subdeacon, Louis Borgella, and Brother Besarion Delon, a catechist– all bound for Gambier. After some days in Valparaíso, the ship Europe with Samuel Shaw as captain left for Gambier, and Father Maigret took advantage of the opportunity to rejoin the mission, and arrived in the archipelago on September 13 (He had left Valparaíso on August 10).

The vicar apostolic had been worried for some time over the situation of the mission of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). He had hardly arrived in the Gambier islands (May 9, 1835) when he had sent Brother Columban Murphy there, by way of Tahiti. Brother Columban left the archipelago on May 16, was in Papeete between May 21 and July 29, and arrived in Honolulu on August 21, and stayed with Brother Melchior and Brother

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

Leonard until October 1, when he left for California. He stayed there with the Franciscan missionaries with whom Father Bachelot and Father Short were working, during part of December 1836, and left again for Honolulu, where he arrived on January 19, 1837. On March 17, he embarked for Valparaíso, in order to return to Gambier, and inform the vicar. He reached Valparaíso on June 13, fifteen days before the arrival of Bishop Pompallier, and taking advantage of the opportunity, he sailed, together with Father Maigret and all the other missionaries, Marists and Sacred Hearts, on August 10, arriving, as we said, on September 13 at Gambier.

The news he had by letter, and that which reached him by word of mouth about the persecutions of the Christians of Hawaii, made the vicar think that the best that could be done was to send them a priest who was not known in the archipelago. Taking advantage of the departure of Bishop Pompallier's ship, which was bound for the Sandwich Islands, he had Father Maigret go there. So, two days after his arrival, Father Maigret set sail again and reached Honolulu on November 2.

j. *Of Father Bachelot's sacrifice for freedom*

With the help of the British consul, and with a British passport in hand, Father Arsene Walsh, an Irishman, landed in Honolulu on September 30, 1836, after having left Valparaíso on August 20. What was most remarkable was that he stayed on the islands, which was not an easy feat to accomplish.

Two days after his arrival, the Methodists had already denounced his presence, and the assembly of chiefs was convoked for the next day. He was ordered to appear before the assembly at 3:00 a.m. What they apparently, did not know, or feigned ignorance of, was that on October 1, the British consul had presented Father Walsh to Princess Kinou, sister of the king, but actually the person who ruled over the court. During the visit, and overcoming Kinou's reticence, the consul had obtained permission from her for Father Walsh to reside in Honolulu. Now the missionary presented himself accompanied by the consul.

The princess was lying on a mat, while two slaves kept the flies away with a kind of fan. About her were the chiefs, some seated on chairs, others lying on mats. Father asked what they wanted from him. The reply was he should withdraw from the islands. Then, taking his passport, he handed it to the consul, who, showing it to everyone made them see that it bore the seal of the king of England. The chiefs alleged that he belonged to the French missionaries. Father Walsh protested that he was a Catholic priest, a subject of

Her British Majesty. It was a case outside of the categories of the court, and, since it had already been authorized by Kinou, it was decided to postpone a final decision until Lord Russell arrived on the corvette, “Acteon”, which was expected within a few days.

As a matter of fact, Lord Russell arrived on October 23 and the missionary wasted no time in presenting to him, in writing, a detailed explanation of his situation and of that of the Catholic natives. The result was that the authorities limited themselves to prohibiting him from teaching his religion. Father Walsh noted: “I will act prudently, but I will not forget that I was sent to preach the Gospel. Despite persecutors, I exercise my ministry, but discreetly.”⁷⁸⁰

In the last months of 1836, Father Walsh was able to baptize some children, as well as three adults, prepared by the heroic Simeon who continued influencing the people from prison. But the persecution continued without much hope of stopping. The king had clearly much sympathy for the French and for the Catholic missionaries, but he did not dare to impose his views, and it was his sister who governed the kingdom.

In November of 1836, Father Bachelot, still in California with his companion, Father Short, began to think seriously about returning to Hawaii. He constantly received letters from the Christians and knew of their sufferings. He kept in communication with Brother Melchior and Brother Leonard, and knew about Father Walsh’s arrival and how he had managed to stay in the archipelago.

Animated by this hope, he determined to await a propitious opportunity for going to Honolulu.

He was preaching and arousing fervor during Holy Week –March 19-26– when he received from Father Short in Monterey the information that a ship was leaving for the Sandwich Islands. Hardly had this news arrived when Father Bachelot interrupted his work, and hastened to Monterey, where he met Father Short. The captain of the *Clementine* gave them passage, and they embarked on March 28, the Tuesday after Easter. On April 17 they anchored in the bay of Honolulu.

Father Alexis had no illusions. In 1835 he had talked so much about the matter with Father Patrick, who, on learning about the prefect’s desires to return, gave him the information he had about the persecution of the faithful and the overwhelming power of the Methodists. The return might be regarded as a provocation and only increase the sufferings of his Christians. Very reluctantly, Father Alexis resigned himself to staying in California. It was more prudent.

But precisely during this year, the missionaries received a brief of Gregory XVI, in reply to a communication sent to the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith.

780 HL, Hist. Miss. Sandwich.

The pope exhorted them “not to be discouraged” and Father Alexis believed he should draw the conclusion that he should make another attempt. The news about what happened to Father Walsh encouraged him even more. Lastly, he thought that, if he failed to disembark, he had Father Chrysostom’s invitation to come to Chile, and also could pass on to Gambier, to live in a more missionary environment.

On April 27, both missionaries landed and went to the house in which Brother Melchior and Brother Leonard lived with Father Walsh. The Methodists were informed by Pritchard of the expulsion of Fathers Caret and Laval from Papeete, and had regained courage to throw the “papists” out of their territory. Scarcely had he learned that the religious were in Honolulu than the governor summoned Father Bachelot. He ordered him to come with the messenger, but Father Bachelot excused his not coming since he was exhausted, as he actually was.

The next day, on April 18, the governor insisted again. Father Short presented himself, with the consul of England. Father Bachelot excused himself because he was ill. The governor ordered the prefect apostolic to embark without delay on the *Clementine*. Prior to this he had called the captain of the brig and ordered him to prevent the removal of the missionaries’ luggage. In spite of this, the luggage was delivered on April 20. In addition, the captain had the ship handed over to M. Dudoit, who was the owner.

On April 21, a new summons was issued by the governor. Father Bachelot appeared accompanied by M. Dudoit, while the English consul had arrived before them. The governor threatened to use force to deport the missionaries. The consul argued that Father Bachelot was waiting for a ship which would bring him to Chile. Then the governor presented the prefect with a document summing up all the calumnies made by the Methodists against the missionaries, in order that he sign it. The prefect refused, of course, to sign it and left without anything happening.

The next day, another paper, of similar content, was presented to the missionaries for them to sign. Father Bachelot simply answered: “All these writings are what you think. Sign them yourself. If you wish, I will make one for myself and will sign it.” The governor did not know what to do. Under pressure from Bingham, the head of the Methodists, he sent the missionaries a printed order to embark. Nevertheless, things remained in suspension.

This was the state of things when, on April 29, Princess Kinou returned from Maui, with an order of the king which decreed the expulsion of the “Frenchmen.” Father

Patrick rejected it, saying that it did not apply to him since he was a subject of his British Majesty. Father Bachelot pointed out, rather audaciously, that the king's signature was in print, and that there was no proof that it was his. The princess wanted to oblige them to embark at once. Father Bachelot replied that he would be delighted to do so, if he knew the "Clementine" was going to Valparaíso; otherwise, he absolutely refused to go on board. M. Dudoit for his part stated he would not receive the missionaries on his ship without their consent and without their paying for their passage.

After this last confrontation, which took place on May 1, summons were issued daily. They tried to make the missionaries leave voluntarily; the catechists in whose homes they dwelt were threatened, and a shameless attempt was made to bribe M. Dudoit, promising him the goods of the missionaries, but he was indignant at the suggestion. Then, on May 20, they went into action.

Two strapping youths came to the missionaries' house with orders to embark right away. Faced with the foreseeable rejection, they withdrew, and a short while later came back with twenty-three men, and brought them by force to the Clementine. M. Dudoit lowered the English flag, as a sign of protest, and sent it to the consul of England, who burnt it publicly. During all this procedure the cannons of the fortress were aimed at the ship. Guards were placed on the beach to prevent anyone from disembarking; they were practically prisoners in a ship which could not sail at once.

They remained there until July 8, when the English corvette "Sulphur", under the command of Commandant Bielcher, cast anchor in Honolulu; on the tenth, the "Venus", a French frigate commanded by Dupetit Thouard, arrived.

By common agreement, both commanders required the government to free the missionaries, on condition they embark on the first ship that might bring them to their destination. In fact, Father Short left for Valparaíso on an English schooner on November 2, and reached that port in early January.

Father Bachelot had remained in Honolulu, and was "rather dangerously" ill, when that same afternoon, November 2, the sailing vessel "Europa" arrived in port, carrying Father Maigret, sent by the vicar apostolic, accompanied by Brother Columban Murphy. The appearance of Father Maigret startled the Methodists who firmly opposed letting him disembark, and did not even want to allow him to change ships, which would have been quite inconvenient because the "Europa" was to sail for China. What was to be done?

Father Maigret got the idea to buy a schooner which was offered for 3,000 pesos, take Father Bachelot, and sail to Gambier and Valparaíso, a port where he could pay the money. However, before being definitively handed over to the buyer, the schooner would have to leave the passengers for five or six months on the island of the Ascension (Ponapa, one of the Carolines). There was not much choice, so the missionaries chose this solution.

On November 23, they set sail. We have Father Maigret's diary, in which there is an account of this voyage, and this is what he relates about those days:

Thursday, November 23, 1837. Departure for Ascension (from Honolulu) around 8:30 a.m. Light breeze. Father Bachelot is weak. He vomits a lot of bile.

Friday 24. Father Bachelot is suffering a great deal....

Saturday 25. Father Bachelot had a very bad night. He was delirious....

Monday 27. It rained all day, heavy seas, Father Bachelot is not better.

Tuesday, 28. Father Bachelot spent a very bad night, he is delirious. Worse.... heavy seas. Father Bachelot slept and was calm.

Wednesday, December 1. Continuously the same winds. It is raining. Father Bachelot is calm but weaker. Saturday 2. Same weather, Father Bachelot is not better.

Sunday 3. Good weather. Father Bachelot is even weaker than yesterday.

Monday 4. Good weather. Father Bachelot less strong. I give him Extreme Unction and the plenary indulgence. He was drowsy. He no longer spoke. I watched over him until around 11:00. At 11:00 I stretched out on some mats beside him. At 1:45

I got up and looked at him. I found him very low. He had hardly any pulse. At 2:00 he expired.

We were then at 176.33 eastern longitude and 13.14 northern latitude.

Tuesday 5. The day on which we celebrate the feast of St. Francis Xavier, postponed from the third.

The mortal remains of the Venerable Father Bachelot, first apostle of Oceania, are deposited in a case so it could be carried ashore if possible. He will be condemned to exile even after his death. Office of the Dead.

Wednesday 13 This morning we sight the island of the Ascension. We arrive there around 4:00 p.m.; Bishop de Maron^{6e} (Pompallier) is no longer there; the chiefs come on board.

Thursday 14. Burial of Father Bachelot in Naha. Return to the ship.

Thursday, January 11, 1838. I work in the cemetery where Father Bachelot is buried...

Wednesday January 17. Gate in the garden where Father Bachelot is buried.

Wednesday April 11. I began to set up Father Alexis's tomb.

Monday April 30. I worked at Father Alexis's tomb. Saturday May 5. I began the building of a small chapel adjacent to the tomb...

Saturday July 2... I finished covering Father Alexis's tomb...

Tuesday July 24. I finished the chapel... Friday 27. I put up the cross, the epitaph, and fastened the gate. I left Naha.⁷⁸¹

Thus Father Bachelot died and was buried, before he was forty-two, and his sacrifice soon bore fruit: the liberation of the mission of the Sandwich Islands.

With the expulsion of the missionaries in November 1837, the Methodists felt triumphant and to secure their power they had a law passed which forbade Catholic priests to land in the archipelago. It was dated December 18, 1837.

The persecution increased, with the objective of forcing the "kanakas" to abjure their faith, by imprisonment, forced labor, and a constant harassment of the faithful, subjecting them to summons, to bias, making life for them impossible. Their reaction was heroic.

It must be said that in 1837, when Dupetit-Thouars visited the Sandwich Islands with the frigate *Venus*, he signed a treaty with the king, and left as consul M. Dudoit, of whom we have spoken. The commandant had no instructions from his government, and could not effectively intervene to protect the missionaries more than he did. But the new consul, taking advantage of the voyage of one of his schooners to Valparaíso, sent a document to the head of the Station française du Chile, with headquarters in this port, informing the authorities about the situation of the missionaries and of the Catholic natives and demanding protection by France.

It was a long time before this call for help was answered. Especially for those who were being persecuted, those nineteen months were a long, long time, and there was little hope of an answer. Then, on the morning of July 9, 1839, the French war frigate "L'Artémise", commanded by M. Laplace, arrived. He had been sent to the Pacific expressly to make the liberty of the French citizens respected and to put an end to the discrimination to which their missionaries were subjected because of their religion.

⁷⁸¹ Bishop Maigret, Journal.

In Tahiti, after a stay of two months, from April 22 to June 22, he had obtained the abrogation of all laws directed against the missionaries. Now he arrived in Honolulu with a similar mission. On arriving, he demanded of the king: (1) that Catholic worship be declared free throughout the kingdom, and that the members of this community have the same privileges as the Protestants; (2) that the government provide a site for the construction of a church for the Catholics; (3) that all Catholics imprisoned by reason of their faith be released immediately; (4) that as a guarantee of his future conduct, the king give the sum of \$20,000. The conditions were "accepted," and the liberation was celebrated by a Mass said by Father Walsh in full solemnity while the military band played.

It was the beginning of a new era for the missions of Eastern Oceania. The next year, on May 14, the vicar apostolic, Bishop Rouchouze, made his entrance into Honolulu, accompanied by several missionaries.

It is to be recalled that in Papeete Brother Alphonse Vincent had assured a missionary presence on the departure of Father Caret and Father Laval on December 11, 1836. During these three years, he had bought property for future missionaries, and had gained a good reputation as a skilled worker, constructing a sugar mill which improved the yield above that hitherto known on the island. In August 1838, his superiors called him to the Gambier Islands where he could exercise his talents as a catechist.

2. Babylon and Smyrna

In April of 1831, the see of Babylon became vacant. It was dependent on the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation, but according to agreements it was always to be occupied by a Frenchman. In order to find a suitable person, Cardinal Pedicini, prefect of the Sacred Congregation, wrote on October 1, 1831 to Cardinal de Croy, asking for names for the ternary of candidates for the see of Babylon.⁷⁸² The archbishop of Rouen had recourse immediately to his vicar general, Father Coudrin, and asked that he submit the names of three members of his Congregation. The Founder's understanding of his responsibility in this matter was very complicated and he did not answer for a long time. After much insistence, Father Coudrin finally handed over to the archbishop the ternary made up of: Father Raphael Bonamie, Father Jerome Rouchouze, and Father Alexander Sorieul. The names were immediately sent to Rome and on March 3, 1832, Cardinal Pedicini reported to Cardinal de Croy that the matter would be taken up at the next

⁷⁸² Throughout this section HL's *Mémoires* III, 124 ff., are followed.

session of the Congregation on April 12. At this session Father Bonamie was presented to the pope, who appointed him in a brief of May 4, 1832. On the twelfth, the prefect of the Propagation wrote to the new bishop elect, imploring him not to put off his consecration and his coming to this diocese, and sent the letter to the archbishop of Rouen, asking him to see that it reached the person to whom it was directed.

Father Raphael was at the time in Tours and for more than a year was professor of theology at the major seminary of this city; he had not the slightest knowledge that his name had been presented. On July 16, he received the letter and all the documents. The shock was tremendous and he almost became ill. Thinking things over in the presence of God, and trusting in Him, he accepted, not without a great effort, and in this sense wrote Cardinal de Croy. In his letter there were these significant words: "I do not dare to address to Your Eminence neither complaints nor thanks...."

On August 13, Father Raphael left for Rouen. First, the possibility of asking the archbishop of Paris to consecrate the new bishop was considered. Actually this was requested on August 20, but later difficulties came up in the archbishop's relations with the government of Louis Philippe and it was found advisable not to do so. In agreement with the chargé d'affaires of the Holy See, Bishop Garibaldi, it was decided to have the consecration in Rome.

On September 11, Bishop Bonamie left for the Eternal City, accompanied by Father Ephrem Lafont and Brother Dominic Tricoche. He arrived in Lyons on the fourteenth, where he visited the directors of the Propagation, which had already been informed by Rome of his appointment and had prepared an enthusiastic reception. The travelers left Lyons on September 21, passed through Turin on the twenty-fourth, hired a stagecoach and arrived in Rome on October 11. On the fifteenth the bishop had an audience with Cardinal Pedicini who had them stay at the College of the Propagation of the Faith.

During October, he took his vacation in Rome, and Cardinal Pedicini was in his see of Palestrina. In order to see him again in Rome, he had to wait until November 3. But Rome does not permit one to waste time, so these weeks passed quickly for Bishop Bonamie, visiting the city, its monuments, and its shrines.

On November 8, the bishop elect was received in a private audience by the pope with whom he was able to converse for a half an hour. On the twelfth he began his retreat, and the episcopal consecration took place on the eighteenth at the French Church of St. Louis. Cardinal Pedicini was the consecrating prelate, assisted by the patriarch of Antioch, Archbishop Mathei, and by Archbishop Falconieri of Ravenna.

Even at that early date the new bishop had heard that his see city of Baghdad was involved in a revolution, as he mentioned in a letter of November 20.

The time came for leaving Rome, and on December 16, he had a second audience for saying good-bye to the Supreme Pontiff. On the next day, the seventeenth, he received full powers for handling the difficult problem of the Church of the Chaldean Catholics, and left for France on the eighteenth traveling by way of Marseilles, Cahors, Tours, and Rouen, where he embraced the Founder. Together they traveled to the capital and reached Paris on March 14. Two days later was the second anniversary of the sacking of the residence in 1831, and since then only low Masses had been celebrated. The presence of the new bishop resulted in a change, and the Founder sang a high Mass in the chapel of the sisters on the feast of St. Joseph, and the bishop of Babylon preached. The annual retreat had begun the evening before.⁷⁸³

The last days of March were days of intense activity for the prelate, who had to visit the charge d'affaires of the Holy See and the minister of foreign relations. The government of France appointed him its charge d'affaires in Baghdad. Visits to prominent persons and friends took up his last minutes, and on April 2 in the afternoon he took the stagecoach to the south, stopping at Tours where he had left many friends. Then he went on to Poitiers and Sarlat, and by April 29, was once again in Albas.

The mission of Babylon was not one entrusted to the Congregation but personally to Bishop Bonamie, and the community as such, which had given it one of its members, had no juridical responsibility over it. Of course, it had the fraternal responsibility not to leave a brother alone when in trouble. Therefore, the Founder did not want to impose an obligation of "obedience" on any religious, and only sought someone who would volunteer to accompany the new bishop.

This gave rise to some difficulties because Father Ephrem, who had volunteered to travel with him to the Mideast, became ill and was unable to do so, and had so informed him on March 31. Father Simeon Dumontheil, after having asked for time to reflect, gave a negative answer on June 13. On the twentieth, Father Coudrin wrote to Father Stanislaus Caupert, who after many struggles of conscience also said no. Father Magloire Doumer also did not feel inclined to go. The new bishop was very upset and the Founder no less so. Finally, on August 4, 1833, the prelate reported to the superior general that Father Anaclet Lestrade, thirty-one years old, had agreed to accompany him along with Brother Dominic Tricoche, thirty-five, who had accompanied him to Rome.

⁷⁸³ The bishop arrived in Antibes December 31. He was in Marseilles on January 4, 1833, and from there he went to Cahors and Albas, where he remained until February 17, when he left for Tours, whence he departed March 2 to Rouen. Cf. HL, Mem. III, 134.

The bishop had been promised passage on a ship of state, but the sailing was not announced. Meanwhile, the bishop lost no time but gave conferences and carried out his ministry in his own land. The days passed and the prelate did not leave. Ill-informed and garrulous people started to murmur, and their gossip even reached the Founder who wrote him a letter, as usual affectionate, but with a very serious admonition. The letter was of September 17. The bishop bade good-bye to his friends on October 1, and on October 3 wrote to the superior general that he was now on the way.

At Marseilles he would have liked to embrace the recently appointed vicar apostolic of Oceania, Bishop-elect Rouchouze, who was to embark at this port to go to Rome and be consecrated there. He was waiting for him to arrive when he was asked to go to Toulon and embark there, so he had to leave Marseilles. On October 16, the bishop and his companions boarded the *Emulation*, which was to bring them to Smyrna, where he would have to look for means to arrive at his destination.

His voyage, apart from the troubles of a heavy sea or of a contrary wind, or of a calm, was quite normal until Smyrna. A special emotion was stirred up in the bishop by the geography of the Mediterranean, so strongly and mystically linked to the Christian tradition and to western culture. By way of his letters there are heard echoes of the apostolic and patristic age, and of the Homeric world, which he recorded throughout the voyage.

On November 10, the travelers entered the port of Smyrna. The next day they disembarked and stayed at the convent of the Lazarists. In a relatively short time they had the opportunity to continue their journey toward the coasts of Syria. On the fifteenth a brig, the *Grenadier*, left, passing through Alexandria, and leaving them off at Beirut. By the twenty-first, they were in the first Egyptian port.

The ship stayed in Alexandria for several days, and the missionaries visited Cairo. The excursion went along the river route, the canal and the Nile. So, between the departure, which was November 25, and the return, on December 8, they were able to see the pyramids, observe how the market for slaves functioned, and, above all, immerse themselves in the oriental world of this city, which at the time had 300,000 inhabitants.

On Tuesday the tenth, the *Grenadier* set sail on the way to Cyprus, and on the fourteenth it reached Larnaca, where it anchored. Wanting to go on shore on December 16, while they were sailing toward the coast in the captain's launch, a mishandling of the oars caused the boat to overturn, and the bishop, who did not know how to swim, almost

drowned. The next day the brig left for Beirut, and anchored at this port on December 18.

The bishop planned to travel to Jerusalem, but on learning there was a terrible pestilence in the Holy City, he did not make the pilgrimage. The bishop's immediate goal was the city of Aleppo, and so he continued the voyage to Laodicea, where he was able to disembark on December 22. There was in the city a small Christian community, and in its church the missionaries celebrated this first eastern Christmas.

In order to reach Aleppo, it was necessary to wait for the departure of a caravan. M. Geoffroi, the consular agent, hospitably received them at his home, where they spent six days, without any opportunity to leave. Then they dealt with a chief of caravans, asking him to accompany them and supply the camels needed for the travelers and their luggage. A small group was formed, comprising the three missionaries, the caravan chief along with two youths, and a relative of M. Geoffroi, who wished to accompany them as drogman, as interpreters are called in the East.

On December 30, the little caravan left, with its mouckre at the head. They had to cross some 200 kilometers of semi-desert land to reach Aleppo. At the same time that they experienced the sensation of entering biblical lands, filled with memories of the Apostles and patriarchs, there were the understandable fears of a real adventure with all its insecurity. Rain began to fall on the thirty-first, and kept on until they reached Aleppo. It was feared that the streams they had to cross would rise and then they would have to camp on their banks and wait until the streams subsided; this did not happen, and they reached their destination on January 6, 1834.

The last stretch of the road was of greatest concern because it was over a plain often raided by the Bedouins of the desert. Before moving on through it, they stopped to investigate how things were in the area. Upon learning that the way was clear, they proceeded across the barren plain. At about a league from the city they distinguished in the distance a troop of men on horseback. Hardly had they seen the travelers when one of them approached at a gallop, and the others followed him. It was an anxious moment that turned out fortunate. It was an envoy of the consul of Spain, Señor Durighillo, who was in charge of French affairs in Aleppo, and who had come out to wait for them and to welcome them.

Aleppo was the key or the gateway to Mesopotamia and on it depended the possibility of getting to Baghdad. There was the prospect of a long wait, which would not be too bad, for it was necessary to learn Arabic, and learn it well.

So, without hesitation, the bishop committed himself to preach during Lent in the church of the Observant Franciscans, of course for the colony of foreigners who understood French. According to the testimony of a Franciscan, it was a great success due to being a change from the usual.

Aleppo at that time was a city in which there still remained the ruins of the earthquake of 1822. There were swarms of dogs and cats and numerous snakes, which appeared in rooms and even in beds. Less annoying were the swarms of harmless turtles which also came in from all over.

In the early days of February, seeing that the voyage to Baghdad was not very near at hand, the bishop rented a nice house where he could live in private, and since it was near the church of the Europeans, turned out to be very well placed. Some, among the various consuls, took charge of furnishing it, and it was very pleasant to live there.

At this time Syria was in a political situation which the bishop felt was very unstable, although, in fact, it lasted six years more until 1840. In the previous year, 1833, it had been conquered by the pasha of Egypt, while Mesopotamia continued under the dominion of the Ottoman Empire. The Bedouins of the desert proudly maintained their autonomy, and practically controlled the routes of the caravans, to the point of their being wholly blocked. From Aleppo itself no one could go safely even a few kilometers. The bishop relates in one of his letters how a European who wanted to organize a hunting party was attacked and robbed of everything, even down to his shirt. This explains why the journey to Baghdad was put off for such a long time.

However, on April 6, the bishop received a pompous passport from the Grand Sultan of Constantinople, in which he stated that his supreme will was that:

the celebrated Bonamie, a nobleman of France, the one chosen among the nobles to represent the government of France in the city of Baghdad, would be recognized as consul of France by all higher authorities and subalterns of the Ottoman Empire; that he have priority over all representatives of other nations; that he be the sole judge in all disputes which might arise among the people of his nation or religion residing in the region of Baghdad and its dependencies; that whatever might come for his use or sustenance from any part of the world be exempt from all taxation and duties; that he would be protected and respected throughout the Ottoman Empire; and that, should he have any dispute with one or many subjects of His Majesty, no judge is to abrogate the right of sentencing in said matter, because he, His Majesty, the Supreme Emperor, reserves to himself exclusively the pronouncing of the sentence in such a matter.

The bishop commented: "You see that in the eyes of His Majesty, persons readily become personages, and pygmies become giants."

In spite of everything, this document would have been something great in the hands of a personage such as the bishop, provided that it could be applied in Baghdad. Unfortunately, for this purpose, the magnificent parchment was of little or no use. Meanwhile, the study of Arabic was intensified, but not to such an extent that it prevented the missionaries from thinking of their future mission in Mesopotamia. For the moment, at least one thing was clear, that is, that the city of Aleppo was a strategic place, and the bishop began to dream of having there a point of support, a foundation of the Congregation. He thought of a school for the children of the European colonies and for the Catholics or simply the eastern Christians. In the city there were no schools and, with two priests and a brother, they could well make a start... he suggested to Father Coudrin. Such a foundation, according to Bishop Bonamie, would have the advantage for the Congregation of being easily converted into a school of oriental languages for its religious. He also thought about what might be considered as a center of communications with Europe and of future foundations in Mesopotamia and in Persia.

Unfortunately, all of these projects became castles in the air when the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith required Bishop Bonamie to transfer to Smyrna. He wrote of this to Father Coudrin on July 30. On August 24, he received a letter from Cardinal Pediccini, prefect of the Propagation, officially informing him of the transfer of his see.

The departure was on September 2, and the customary itinerary was changed to satisfy the desire of the bishop to visit Antioch, Peter's first see, where the disciples were first called Christians, the first base of Paul's operations. Seeking the trail of the Apostles, he found only a great grotto where tradition recounted that the early Christians assembled. Everything else remaining was Arabic and pure Turkish.

On September 7, the small group of missionaries left for Latakia, where they arrived on the ninth; two days later they boarded the corvette Cornelia, whose commandant was Cuneo d'Ornando, who had orders to conduct the prelate to Smyrna.

On September 15, they sailed for Beirut. In the Lebanese capital the ship stayed until the twenty-second, when it set sail for Tripoli of Syria, remaining there from the twenty-fifth to the twenty-ninth.

It must be said that on passing through Lebanon, the bishop admired the cedars so much that wherever he went later on during his life he planted them, perhaps as a symbol

of biblical “justice.” Albas, his home town, has one or two beautiful ones, but especially the “villa” at Cahors, where he spent his last years and where he died, has four or five giant cedars which he brought back as seedlings from Lebanon.

From Tripoli they went on to Acre where the corvette remained five days, so that the voyagers could visit Nazareth and Mount Carmel without haste.

From Acre, the route went on to Alexandria, where the corvette anchored between October 9 and November 1. It did not reach Smyrna until November 15. He stayed at the convent of the Lazarists, and the next day at 9:00 a.m., the clergy came solemnly to meet him in order to enthrone him at the cathedral. It was a regular procession through the main streets of the city, which ended with a *Te Deum* and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

In spite of all this, on December 20 he wrote: “I do not know as yet under what rank I am in charge of the diocese of Smyrna, so I take on for the time being the title of administrator.”⁷⁸⁴

This canonical instability did not restrain the bishop’s apostolic activity. On January 31, 1835, commenting on the news of the death of Mother Aymer which Hilarion had communicated to him, along with that of the election of Sister Françoise de Viart as superior general, he added:

We have just opened up a school where reading, writing, and speaking in Greek, French and English are taught. The principal purpose of this school is to give the young a religious education. This school will bring about, I hope, a great deal of good in this country. We already have some fifty students. Some Protestants have sent their children there. Many schismatics seem disposed to do the same. Father Lestrade (Father Anaclet) gives two French lessons every day, and although he is already quite busy, I am going to be obliged to send him to the admiral’s ship once a day to prepare for their first Communion some fifty French sailors who want to be instructed and prepared for this wonderful sacrament. The admiral, to whom I have spoken about this, will do his best to have this done. If one or two of our friends (Fathers of the Congregation) come and join us, we would be able to make good use of them. An Englishman or an Irishman would be of great help to us. I have to pay 125 francs a month for a teacher of English. If we had the funds we would purchase a house for founding a school, but we are too poor.

We hope in divine Providence which is rich. I began last Sunday a series of conferences which I intend to continue up to Easter. I hope the Good God will derive some glory from it.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸⁴ HL, Mem. III, 142, note

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Up to this time Bishop Bonamie was only apostolic administrator of Smyrna. Only on January 26, 1835 did the Sacred Congregation propose him to the pope as titular archbishop. The Supreme Pontiff gave his confirmation on February 13, and on the twenty-first of the month, Cardinal Frasoni wrote to the archbishop, informing him of his promotion to the see of St. Polycarp.

On April 7, the Archbishop again wrote to Hilarion. In it, apart from the prescribed commentaries on the promotion to the see of Smyrna, there was also a report on the pestilence which struck Asia Minor. It roved around the city like a pack of hungry wolves, making victims everywhere, but without as yet entering Smyrna.

On July 15, he reported that the pestilence had raged in the city for a month, but up to the moment it had not affected anyone of the Catholic community; yet death hovered over everyone and they were all very upset. The archbishop wrote:

Pray the Good God to deliver us as soon as possible. How happy we would be if we were always ready to appear before God. This is what our divine Savior asks of us. But he asks even more, we may say, of those who devote themselves to the foreign missions. They are indeed closer to death. Look at our brothers of Oceania.

Does it not seem they are even now under the teeth of the savages? And your poor Asiatics, are we not daily among the dead and the dying? So then, may our young brothers who burn with the desire to come to the missions learn well how to die, before starting out on the way, and may they pray for those to whom death is so near. You will not, my dear Father Philippe (Fzendier), conclude from this that we are overcome by fear and immersed in sadness, thanks to the Lord who sustains us in our weakness; we are as calm and contented as if there were no pestilence at all in these lands.⁷⁸⁶

The school had to close due to the pestilence. Fortunately, it seems that the scourge was over relatively soon, because in December, the correspondence mentions that even at that early date there was a school of more than eighty youths, in a more suitable residence. What was lacking was the personnel needed for the school to make progress. Finally, on May 4, 1836, the Founder was able to send Father Athanasius Labouyssette, twenty-four years old, accompanied by the Irish Brother Dennis Kenneley, thirty-six. They did not arrive at their destination until June 5.

The archbishop was very faithful in giving his weekly conference, although it was restricted to those who could understand French. Not only Catholics but also Protestants and Orthodox came, but this did not stop the speaker from showing a certain apologetic aggressiveness, which under some circumstances drove some away.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

We have no notable information about these years up to May 1837, when he was chosen successor to the Founder, who had died the previous March. The General Council informed him of his election, and he replied in a letter of June 2, placing himself at the disposal of the Congregation.

After June 15, Father Alexander Sorieul went to Smyrna, as we saw, to bring to the archbishop the report of the pope's consent to his election. We do not know the precise date of his departure from Smyrna, but it must have been within the second half of July, because on August 12 he was in Leghorn, in quarantine for forty days because there was a cholera epidemic in Italy and particularly in Rome. This circumstance prevented him from seeing the Supreme Pontiff as he would have wished.

Up to that time there was no residence of the Congregation in Smyrna, although there were three of its members there.

Not even when two other religious were added was consideration given to erecting a formal residence. Now that a new bishop was to take charge of the see, the new superior general decided to establish a residence of the Congregation in Smyrna, in order to assure the permanence of the work of the school.

With this in mind, Bishop Bonamie, in the month of October 1837, sent three more religious: Father Augustine Souchon, as superior, accompanied by Father Maurice Gerard de Rivières and Father Nicephore Amadon. In 1839, or at the end of 1838, Father Stephen MacArdle and Father Pacid Saury were sent to the school, thereby forming a community of nine religious, seven of whom were priests.

The relations of the new residence with the bishop of Smyrna were not good, for from the beginning he wanted to intervene too much in the administration of the school. Archbishop Bonamie recalled his religious in 1840, and the residence was definitively closed. It was a loss for the Congregation, because this window opened up on the Orient promised it much enrichment, apart from the good it seemed destined to bring to the city.

3. Mission in New England (United States)

In 1832, Bishop Fenwick of Boston made his first visitation to the extreme north of his vast diocese, the territories of Maine, which border on New Brunswick, Canada. These areas were populated by the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot Indians, the remainder of a people who a century before were so powerful that the English colonists had assassinated them with special fury, because they maintained good relations with the French of

Canada, thinking that they would support their independence. In this campaign the Jesuit missionary who had devoted his life to this tribe, Father Rasles, was assassinated on August 13, 1724. The bishop had the idea of erecting a monument on the site where he had given up his life and where his remains were kept.⁷⁸⁷

What most impressed the bishop was that the Indians were pastorally abandoned, and he returned to his see with the resolve to do something to fill up this vacuum. Thinking that French missionaries would be better received, he wrote on September 26, 1832 to Father Pelagaud, director of the Propagation of the Faith of Lyons, asking him for missionaries for Point Pleasant, the center of that region. On February 3, 1833, the bishop renewed his request for two French speaking missionaries.

On November 18, 1832, Father Pelagaud had already written Father Coudrin requesting two missionaries, but the Founder ran into a difficulty, that is, there was a request for priests who would be at posts distant from each other. The Founder wanted them to be near each other, as he told Father Pelagaud on December 19. This insistence by Father Coudrin prolonged the negotiations, until the bishop promised to place them together at the service of the Passamaquoddies.

The superior general then appointed Father Edmund Demilliers and Father Amable Petithomme. He wanted to send a brother to accompany them, but funds were not available at the Propagation of the Faith for a third passenger and the Fathers assigned left alone. On July 17, 1833, they left Paris for Le Havre, and embarked on the twenty-sixth, arriving in Boston on August 23, 1833, after a monotonous but comfortable crossing.

The bishop was not in Boston when the missionaries arrived. On that very day, August 23, he was inaugurating the monument to Father Sebastian Rasles in Maine. While they waited for him, they realized they could do nothing worthwhile without learning English, and the language of the Indians. They had many a pleasant surprise. In Boston there were various Irish priests who had made their studies at the seminary of Picpus.

After Father Rasles's death, no further efforts had been made to study the language of the Passamaquoddies, so that tools for doing so had to be created, such as a dictionary and a grammar. In Boston the missionaries realized that the financing of their livelihood was also problematic. The diocesan community, very well divided and organized, supported its ministers, something that could not be asked of the Indians who lived in greatest poverty.

⁷⁸⁷ We also follow here HL's *Mémoires*: III, 143-151.

The missionaries arrived on September 27 at Point Pleasant. On the twenty-ninth, the feast of St. Michael, Father Edmund said the first Mass among its people. Father Amable sang a high Mass the same day, and the melodious tone of the Indians' singing seemed pleasant to them.

On October 8, a Frenchwoman who knew the language of the Passamaquoddies visited them. The missionaries asked her to be an interpreter and they were able to communicate with the natives and tell them about their plans, which consisted of opening two schools of French, which in fact began to function on the fourteenth. Father Edmund taught the boys, and Father Amable the girls.

In November, the tribe began its hunting season, and a large number left their dwellings to go hunting in the woods. On the tenth, Father Amable left to follow them in the woods, where he built a cabin. On the twenty-eighth he was able to begin teaching the children again, the boys in the morning and the girls in the afternoon. Most of the natives did not return until March 1834.

Father Edmund stayed in Point Pleasant and could, or rather "had to," study the language, and made good progress.

On April 2, 1834, Father Amable made a trip to Nova Scotia, Sainte-Marie Bay, and, having visited some villages, returned to Point Pleasant on May 3. At this center he found a letter from the bishop of Boston, asking him to give some missions to the French who lived in the towns of the diocese near the St. Lawrence River. Father left Point Pleasant on May 7 to comply with the bishop's request.

Once again, Father Edmund was alone. Father Amable wound up establishing himself in Burlington, a more civilized city, while at Point Pleasant the missionary continued his task of learning the language and made great progress. The mission was very difficult because of the hunting customs and migrations of the Indians, who practically spent the whole winter in the woods.

The condition of the mission in September 1835 is reflected in a letter of the bishop to the Founder, who complained that, contrary to the agreement, the missionaries were separated:

I just visited Father Demilliers, and I was very satisfied on seeing the admirable order he has established among them (the Indians). Despite the great labors in the exercise of the holy ministry and privations of all kinds he is forced to undergo among these uncouth and almost savage people, he nonetheless enjoys good health. I administered with great satisfaction the sacrament of Confirmation to ninety- four natives, and I saw a very large number approach the Holy Table in

a very edifying manner. These people venerate Father Demilliers as their pastor and love him as their father. He already speaks their language very fluently, and he preaches in it with such facility that it amazes me. Father Petit-homme, who during the last year zealously exercised his ministry in Burlington, Vermont, where there are more or less a thousand Canadians who speak only French and who before his arrival were wholly without a pastor, has already brought about great good among them, although he had to struggle against many an obstacle. The only reason which obliges me to take him away from there and send him among the natives at Point Ola on the Penobscot is to conform myself to the wise regulations of your excellent family, which requires that your missionaries be placed in such a manner that from time to time they can have communication with each other....⁷⁸⁸

Actually, Father Amable had been among Europeans up to the end of 1835 and had not learned the language of the Passamaquoddies and so was far behind Father Edmund in the study of the Indian language and in the friendship of the Indians. It was natural that he felt strange among them, and already approaching forty, it was difficult for him to begin the study of a difficult language with such limited resources.

So it was that, when a request for help came from Canada to work in Nova Scotia among people who spoke French, he went there. A French priest, who had emigrated as a youth during the days of the Revolution, was now old, with a field of ministry growing each day. He had built eight churches, and at this moment was building a ninth. What he lacked was strength, and he called for a companion. Father Petithomme left for Nova Scotia.

This situation lasted until 1838 when the doors of all the islands of the Eastern Pacific were opened up to the missionaries, causing an ever-growing demand for more personnel. Bishop Bonamie weighed the matter, and not being able to give more personnel to Father Edmund for his Indians, decided at the end of that year to withdraw the religious sent to Boston, and this mission was closed.



788 HL, Mem. III, 151, note.



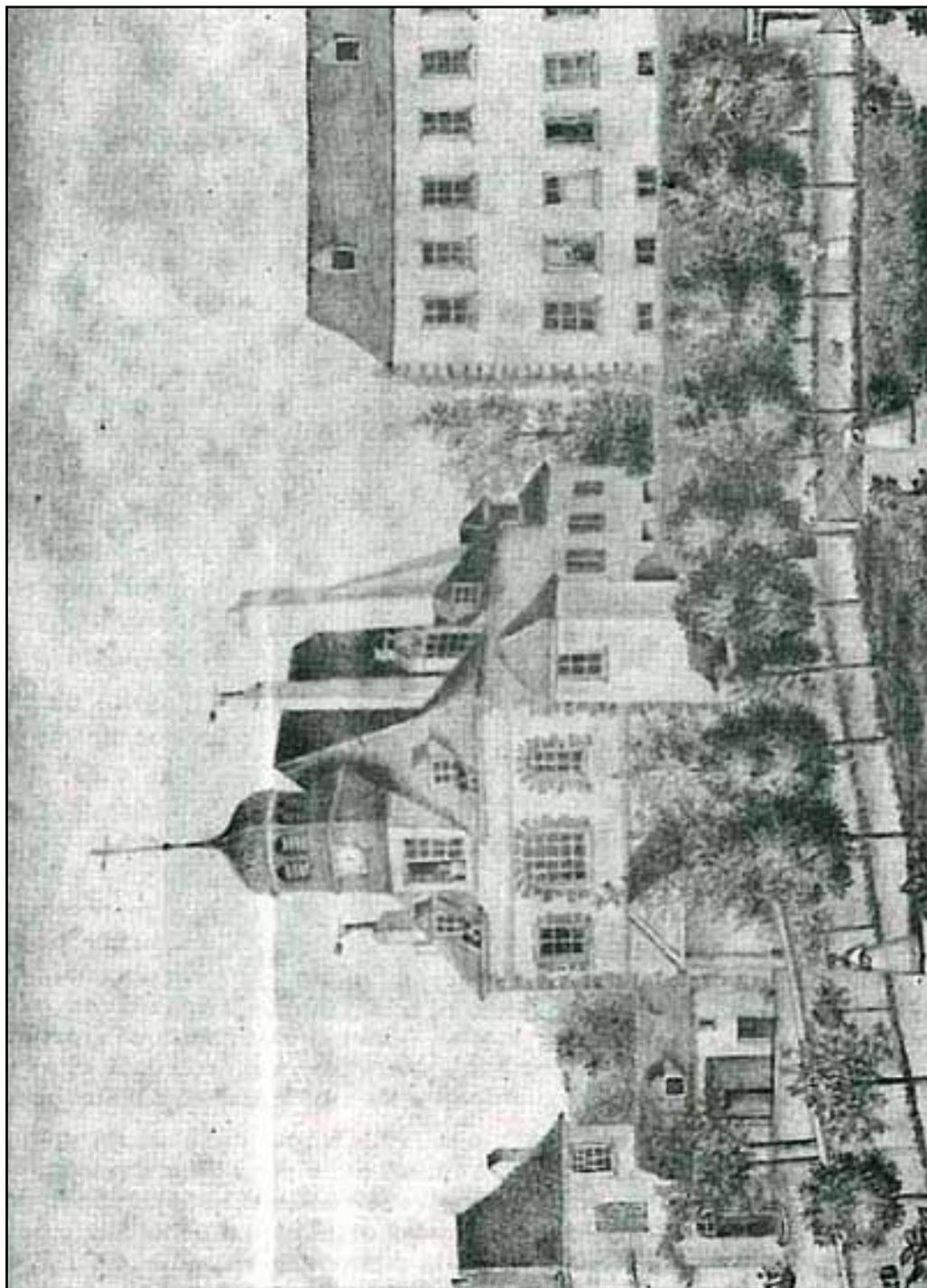
His Holiness Pius VII



Mgr. Jean Baptiste de Chabot



Our Lady of Peace



Chapel in Picpus, 1829



Part III

Community Life

In Part I of this work, we covered the main facts of the historical life of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, as they developed in the first fifty years of its existence.

In Part II, we reviewed the activities of service of the Congregation during that period. Now in Part III, we intend to fix our attention on the Congregation itself in its internal life. This will help us better understand the same historical facts and activities of service.

It is certainly important to situate the Congregation we are studying in the context of the religious life in the bosom of the Church. In view of what we have already seen, undoubtedly this is one of the congregations “committed to apostolic works” of which the Second Vatican Council speaks in the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* 8. The Founder himself intended from the very beginning to form an apostolic Congregation which would bring the Gospel “everywhere,” and indeed it turned out to be an Institute wholly engaged in diverse works of the apostolate, as the needs of the Church called for at any given moment.

Yet this is not enough to satisfy our need to know more clearly and more profoundly this religious community. The same Decree of Vatican II recognizes that the “Apostolic Life” is realized in the Church in a great diversity of ways. We are interested in being able to establish what was particularly the way of this Congregation, especially in what refers to its own community life.⁷⁸⁹

In this regard, from the very beginning one fact must be brought out: the relatively precocious character of Father Coudrin’s foundation. Let us recall that we divided our history into four periods. The first ended in 1801-1802, when having obtained diocesan approval in Poitiers, he moved the Generalate to Mende. At that point it may be said that the process of developing the character of the community was over. Later on it expands, grows in number, takes up new works, but adds no traits which alter its particular character.

⁷⁸⁹ Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 8: “There exist within the Church a great number of clerical and lay institutes devoted to various aspects of the apostolate. They have contributions to make which are as various as the graces given them: some exercise a ministry of service, some teach doctrine, some encourage through exhortations, some give in simplicity, or bring cheerfulness to the sorrowful (cf. Rom. 12:5-8). ‘Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.’ (I Cor 12:4).”

Speaking about a slightly earlier time, Sister Gabriel de la Barre explicitly says: “It must be said that thenceforth this fragile beginning, this seed, as it were, had within it all that subsequently developed.”⁷⁹⁰

Very significantly, Mother Aymer, on her part, after approximately 1803, no longer sends messages to the Founder which describes the proper character of the new Congregation. Apparently she thinks that the description is complete.⁷⁹¹

From this is evident the special importance of the first period studied, 1793-1802, with its circumstances, to understand the nature of the community. These circumstances, as we have seen, were the Reign of Terror (1793-1794) and the persecution by the Directory afterwards (1795-1799), ending with the Consulate and Napoleon Bonaparte’s rise to power. These were generally heroic times which forced the simple faithful to live under repression. This repression was even worse for those determined to restore the religious life which had been so fiercely suppressed, and whose existence no longer seemed possible. This applies also to the Consulate which, though it did give some relief to the Church, nonetheless maintained the very aggressive policy of the Revolution regarding religious life.

The first consequence of these facts is that any intention of restoration, such as that of Father Coudrin, was obviously “illegal.” The Constitution of 1791 says in its introduction: “The law does not recognize any longer religious vows nor any obligation contrary to natural rights and the Constitution.”⁷⁹²

In the stringently secularized society which the Revolution is constructing at this time, there is no room for the religious life, which the mentality of the time blames for more than one of the infamies of the “Old Regime.” The society is “lay,” and in its complete break with the past, abominates the religious life it has just suppressed. This “illegality” is not a simple exclusion by law, but an impassioned effort to stamp it out.⁷⁹³

A second consequence of this situation is that the Institute will necessarily be clandestine. In its practical consequences this is one of the major and most influential differences between this Foundation and subsequent communities founded during the Restoration or later on. It seems to us that this in itself makes it so distinctive.⁷⁹⁴

790 PAC, 5212, 33.

791 This is confirmed by the conduct of the General Chapter of 1819. When it was seeking references to charismatic statements by Mother Aymer, it found nothing in writing after these early years. Fr. Hilarion testifies to this in HL, Mem. 312: “Here is the place to note that a great part of the regulations of the General Chapter of 1819 is taken from what Mother Aymer had written in 1801. The principal points of the plan she gave then are maintained. Only changed are a few articles which dealt with certain austerities which it was feared could not be sustained, such as sleeping on a plank, rising at 2:00 AM, habitual abstaining from meat by the brothers, etc.”

792 Garnier-Flammarion, *Les Constitutions de la France depuis 1789*. 1970, P. 35.

793 Cf. Bernard Plongeron. *La Vie Quotidienne du Clergé Français au XVIIIe Siècle*. Hachette, 1974, pp. 153 ff.

794 The context of the Restoration is triumphalism, while that of the Terror is persecution.

The “underground” nature of the community, during the Reign of Terror especially, and the Directory, entailed the strictest secrecy, imposed at the risk of life at each step. It was a risk common to any such organization we might today call the “Resistance.” Such a risk fully affected the “Immensité” (the original Society of the Sacred Heart), in the bosom of which, stamped with the seal of secrecy, was born the community we are studying.

Operating as an underground involved the elimination of any external indication which might betray the reality of a religious way of life. This would be the result of wearing a habit, publicly performing common religious exercises, and other practices which usually help the members of a newborn community to develop an awareness of their shared journey toward a consecrated life and thus build the foundation for living together in fellowship.

Of course, there could be no thought of making the residence look like a typical religious house. Even the chapel inside the residence must look like a parlor, and the tabernacle is carefully hidden in the wall. This, however, is but one detail of the series of drastic measures undertaken to eliminate the external manifestations of traditional religious life under the veil of strictest secrecy, and revealed only under the seal of confession.

Evidently, when the first religious of Father Coudrin’s community, including the Founder himself, undertook to restore religious life, they dreamed of a way of life which, in the future, would include all the elements of the traditional religious life - habits, convents, etc., etc. - and would enable them to carry out their function, and create a communitarian environment as in the traditional religious life. What most of all distinguishes his Institute in this regard is that the conflicting circumstances do not develop after the religious life is already well established; rather, it has to be created from the beginning under these conditions. As a result of this privation, there will be developed in the new community deeply rooted customs arising from doing without the traditional. Indeed, strict clandestinity lasted until 1814-1815, so that the new community had to have recourse to other means for attaining its communion.

A third consequence of these circumstances of heroic life is the notable radicalization of the evangelical endeavor, and the tendency to leave aside what is secondary, in order to try to stress what is primary. Christian generosity is moved to the point of heroism, and seeks to safeguard every essential element of true Christianity. This seems the proper perspective for viewing the surrender of self made by Pierre Coudrin and Henriette Aymer. Pierre Coudrin, following the example of the martyr St. Caprasius, leaves his

hiding place of La Motte, and at the foot of an oak, consecrates himself to God. Miss Aymer, spending long months imprisoned in the “Hospitalaires,” preparing herself for death, finds a new life.

As in every community, so too in this early group it is difficult to trace the steps of every individual, and to adequately evaluate each one. But there is no doubt that the Founders had a determining influence on all, and that their total consecration became “part of the furniture” and thus a basic heritage for all.

The Church, in times of persecution, constantly recalls her origins, and this was true of the “Society of the Sacred Heart.” Gabriel de la Barre writes, in 1795, that it is made up of “faithful who still know how to imitate the zeal of Aquila and Priscilla...” There is created an identification with the epoch of the Apostles and martyrs, to the point of feeling transported back to that time. For what is particular to the religious life there is a return to the most ancient, to the great founders, and to the Fathers of the Desert. This is what happened with the Congregation.⁷⁹⁵

There is one final consequence of the circumstances in which Father Coudrin’s Institute was born. They brought about a certain liberation from many traditional practices and customs, and an opening to the new and unaccustomed which the special circumstances authorized. In other times no one would have thought of creating a mixed community of men and women, and still less of having them live together in the same residence, for instance.

So, then, taking into account this fact of the specific formation of the community of the Sacred Hearts in the crucible of persecution, with all its consequences, of which we have noted those which seem to us the most important, we shall try to study more closely the information which the documents give us about the life of the community in the period of its founding. We have therefore divided this Third Part into six chapters:

1. Membership of the community
2. Building Up of the community
3. Principal Practices
4. Community Liturgy
5. Legislation of the community
6. Exercise of Authority



⁷⁹⁵ Cf. Ch. II, below.

Chapter I

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY

To satisfactorily know the community of Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer, it seems we must take at least a quick look at the persons who formed it, although we will have to make it a rather general view.

1. Composition of the Membership

In the first Statutes of the Congregation, which come immediately after the Constitutions in the Bull *Pastor Aeternus*, there is a chapter, the first, which treats “Of the Various Persons Who Make Up the Congregation.”

1. The Congregation under the title of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, in the branch comprised by men, is constituted by brothers consecrated to the missions, brothers who teach children, choir brothers, lay brothers, and brothers who are oblates (donnés).
2. In one and the same class or rank are placed the brothers dedicated to the missions and those who teach children, and very often the same brother can carry out both functions.
3. The choir brothers are particularly dedicated to the public recitation of the divine office and perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.
4. The lay brothers are assigned to manual labors.
5. All of those listed under the above three numbers, by profession of vows belong to the Congregation.
6. The brothers who are donnés live in the houses of the Congregation, and live in solitude, but are not bound by vows. They are subject to the authority of the superior of the house where they live, in all that concerns the good order of the house.
7. Everything above is to be applied to the sisters who devote themselves to the education of girls, to the choir sisters, to the lay sisters, and to the sisters who are données.⁷⁹⁶

This document regards the branches of men and women as one single Congregation, and it is characteristic of it that it formulates the organization of both in the same articles.

The diocese of Poitiers had not granted approbation of the Congregation with this provision. This is quite understandable if we take into account the uncertainties of the time, and that the See was vacant. This called for special caution on the part of the administrating Vicars Capitular. At any rate, the sisters and brothers had applied for approbation separately. They had obtained it in the same form, and on different dates, with almost a year's difference, and without the slightest allusion to there being one and the same Congregation appearing in the documents.

It is not to be thought, nonetheless, that the concept in the text just quoted is something new, introduced later. We have documents which show that, from the time of La Motte, the sisters were associated with the brothers in the Founder's mind. They show, too, that a few months before signing the petition for approbation, in June 1800, the Foundress had dictated to Bernard de Villemort a proposed Rule which in its Fifth Chapter "Concerning the Organization of the Order," includes the same set-up stated in the Bull of 1817:

The Order being divided into monasteries of men and monasteries of women... Each monastery will be composed of choir religious, missionary religious, lay religious, and donnés... The organization of the monasteries of women is the same except in what concerns missionary religious.⁷⁹⁷

The Constitutions of 1825 follow the same plan, elaborating two parallel sets of rules for the brothers and the sisters.

To summarize, the membership of the Congregation was composed of one branch of men and another of women, comprising in their turn brothers or sisters: 1) dedicated to teaching; 2) dedicated to the choir, that is, to the recitation of the Office and to perpetual adoration; 3) dedicated to manual labor under the name of lay (*converses*); 4) donnés, who without vows, and without being involved in the life of the community, can live in the house, performing some service, in order to devote themselves to their sanctification. Apart from the "missionaries" in the branch of the brothers, there is perfect symmetry.

2. The Number of Those in the Community and its Growth

There is no need to speak of the membership prior to 1797, when for the first time there was formulated the intention of founding an explicitly religious community. In counting the number in both branches during the period we are studying, we note only the professed, those who have committed themselves to the community; we do not speak of the novices, who in principle are testing their vocation, and have not yet decided

⁷⁹⁷ The original is kept in the Archives of the sisters in Rome.

definitively to join the community. This basic norm leads us to start out with 1800, the year in which the first profession was made, on October 20. However, despite this, there is some interest in the names of those who made up the Congregation in the period of its coming to birth, 1797-1800. Thus we will give a summary of the situation of those early years, even though no religious profession had yet taken place.⁷⁹⁸

1797-1801

The definitive formation of the group of the “Solitaires,” within the Society of the Sacred Heart, and the unanimous choice of Henriette Aymer as Superior of that group, accepted by the Superior of the Society, Susanne Geoffroy, occurred in 1797.

There is no doubt that this choice is one of the steps which led to the foundation. It had its first effect on the feast of St. Louis, King of France, August 25, when the Solitaires wore wool under their outer garments, and pronounced their first resolutions. They were not all living in the residence of the Association at this time. They numbered six, including Henriette who was still living at her mother’s house.

It was under these circumstances that the Solitaires moved to the recently acquired residence on la rue des Hautes-Treilles.

Three years later, June 1800, they signed the petition requesting diocesan approbation, addressed to the Vicars Capitular. The signatories were: Henriette Aymer, superior; Helene de la Barre (Sister Gabriel), Mistress of Novices; Louise Michel; Marie Louise Chevallier; Fulgence Boefvier, choir novice; Monique Bezard, choir novice; Magdalene Lussas (de la Garelie), donnée; Louise Rochette (de la Garelie), donnée; Annette Batard and Genevieve Pijeuau, lay novice, who, not being able to sign, was represented by the Mistress of Novices. Altogether there are ten persons, whose various levels of commitment to the community are not, as is evident, canonical, since the Congregation has not had formal approval by the Diocesan - Authority. However, it is requested at this time and will be granted June 17.⁷⁹⁹

The petition has no date, but it must be after June 8, Trinity Sunday, when three Solitaires left the community to join the Society of Susanne Geoffroy. They were Miss Bert, Miss de Prin, and Miss Babinet.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ In this chapter our preferred source is the *Livre des Emplois* Vol. I, of the General Secretariat of the brothers, Rome, for all that refers to them. (Cf. *Preliminaries*, P. 18, Part I. Tr. Note: There it seems to have been translated inaccurately as a “Book of Professions” listing only Professions 1865-70. It seems rather to have attempted a list of all professed from the Congregation’s origins.) For the sisters, we use a register entitled *Noms des Sœurs Professes de la Congrégation des SS.CC. de Jésus et de Marie, et de l’Adoration Perpétuelle du St. Sacrement de l’Autel, depuis 1800*. We had begun the work with an older register, but it disappeared from the archives after their transfer to the Via Aurelia Generalate, where we consulted it.

⁷⁹⁹ ANN., 1963, p. 177.

⁸⁰⁰ GB, Mem. 46.

On October 20 of the same year, as we have said, the first ceremony of a canonical profession took place. Annual vows of chastity and obedience were made by five Solitaires: Henriette Aymer, Gabriel de la Barre, Therese de la Garelie, Madeleine Chevallier and Gertrude Godet. Some days later, the scrupulous Louise Michel left. At the same ceremony, resolutions were made by Father Coudrin and his first two disciples, Bernard de Villemort and Hilarion Lucas, who, after various setbacks, seemed on their way to persevere.⁸⁰¹

Note that no vow of poverty was taken at this profession. This most likely was because it was difficult to find a way to administer common property for a community which, being clandestine and illegal, could hardly assume a status recognized by civil law. Since it was not known how to solve the problem, the vow was omitted.

On December 24, 1800, at the Chapel of the Grand'Maison in Poitiers, there was held a ceremony at the same time simple and solemn. Before going to the altar to celebrate the Midnight Mass, Father Coudrin pronounced the three vows and placed the signed document on the altar. Then Mother Aymer did the same. These are the first two perpetual professions of the three vows, and from then on they are regarded as the official beginning of the Congregation.⁸⁰²

On February 2, 1801, there was another ceremony. The Founders renewed their vows, prostrating themselves under the Funeral Pall which was used for the first time. Sisters Gabriel de la Barre, Madeleine Chevallier and Gertrude Godet made their three vows.⁸⁰³

After the first days of January 1801, there had come to the main residence a youth who was 29 years old, an ex-seminarian of Poitiers, Pierre David. He made his profession the same day and at the same ceremony in which Hilarion made vows for one year. A few days later, Brother Isidore (Pierre David's name as a religious), left for the mountains of Ardèche looking for Bishop D'Aviau, who on April 4 ordained him, as a religious, to the priesthood.

March 29, 1801, Bernard de Villemort made his profession for one year. He had recently returned from Paris where he had gone for two reasons. He wanted to find the Archbishop of Vienne's residence, to have him ordain him to the priesthood, and then to contact the Apostolic Delegate and study how to negotiate for the approbation of the

801 GB, Mem. 56. Cf. Part I for the "setbacks" mentioned, pp. 49-54.

802 Cf. Father Médard Jacques, *A propos de la Profession des Vœux de nos Fondateurs*, Cahier de Sp. no. 11, Rome 1975.

803 In this first period we follow especially: GB, Mem. (PAC, 1204-1205); HL, Qq.R.I. and Qq.R.II, VBP, VBM, and Mem. Vol. I.

Congregation by the Holy See. At the capital his vocation had wavered and there was no thought now of ordaining him soon. Despite all this, he took his vows for one year on returning to Poitiers.

April 18, Hilarion Lucas made his perpetual vows, again in Poitiers.

Perhaps during the spring of 1801, a priest entered the novitiate. He was a prominent clergyman of Poitiers, highly respected for the testimony he had given by his exile to Guiana, and had just returned to the city. He was Jean Brumauld de Beauregard, 51 years old; after brilliant studies at St. Sulpice in Paris, he had been a canon and Vicar General of Luçon before the Revolution. During the Reign of Terror he had emigrated to England. Not long after his return in 1798, he had been sent to jail and banished.

Father de Beauregard took the name of Brother Polycarp. He did not remain long in the community. Gently he was told he had no vocation. It is easy to understand that at his age he found it difficult to get used to common life. He remained ever friendly toward the Founders and the community. He died in 1841, as Bishop of Orleans.

August 15, there was another ceremony of profession. Vows were taken by Scholastica Bezard, a Sister Isabelle whose last name has been forgotten, Louise Devillards and Sister Radegundis, whose family name is also unknown.

On November 17, vows were taken by Françoise de Viart, Ludovine de la Marsonnière, and a Sister named Abra.

There were soon some deaths in the newly-founded community. As early as November 21, 1799, one of the Solitaires, Marie Pineau, died; at what age we do not know. In the second half of April 1801, there were two deaths: that of Therese de la Garelie, at 36, on the 23rd, and that of Madeleine Chevallier, at 46, on the 27th.

At the end of 1801, the brothers branch had two professed priests, and a student who had finished his studies, but was not yet old enough to be ordained: Hilarion who was 19. The sisters' branch had ten professed.⁸⁰⁴

1802-1817

In this period, the number of professed sisters rose from ten to 248, that is, there were 238 professed, of whom 178 were choir sisters and 60 lay sisters. In the same period four professed left, of whom three were choir sisters and one a lay sister; 62 died, of whom 44 were choir sisters and 18 lay sisters. Thus, as of January 1, 1817, there were in the sisters' branch 172 professed, of whom 131 were choir sisters and 41 lay sisters.

⁸⁰⁴ Cf. HL, *Tableau General des Profès de la Congrégation des SS.CC. de Jésus et de Marie, et de l'Adoration Perpétuelle du très S. Sacrement de l'Autel, depuis le commencement de notre Institut.* Arch. - 91/1.

During this same period, the number of professed brothers rose from 3 to 60, that is, there were 57 professed, of whom 32 were priests, 12 lay brothers and 16 choir brothers or scholastics.

Six priests left and four died during this period. As to the lay brothers, 4 died and 3 left. Eight choir brothers or students died and 3 left, so that the choir or scholastics group lost 11. The community of the Brothers lost altogether 28 members, so that as of January 1, 1817, it had a total of 32 members, of whom 22 were priests, 5 lay brothers, and 5 choir brothers or scholastics.⁸⁰⁵

1817-1826

During these 9 years, in which the social climate changed, so that it was now favorable to the Church, the community emerged from the restrictions of its underground existence. Still it had not yet obtained civil recognition so it endeavored not to attract too much attention. Nevertheless, what was sown in the past now began to bear fruit.⁸⁰⁶

The sisters during this brief period professed 593, of whom 411 were choir and 182 lay sisters. Of the 17 who left, 16 were choir sisters and 1 lay. One hundred thirty-five sisters died - 105 choir and 30 lay. Thus on January 1, 1826, there were 612 sisters - 420 choir, 192 lay.

The brothers had in this period 150 professions, of which 66 were priests, 58 lay brothers, and 26 choir brothers or scholastics. In these years 4 lay brothers and 11 choir brothers or scholastics died. Five priests, 3 lay brothers and 11 choir brothers or scholastics left the Congregation. Altogether, the brothers lost 34 members, so that on January 1, 1826, there were 148 professed, of whom 83 were priests, 56 lay brothers and 9 choir brothers or scholastics.

1826-1840

During these fifteen years, the social climate of the Revolution reappeared, coming back into power from July 1820. An up and down movement is noted in the number of vocations, or more precisely of professions, which reflects the atmosphere of uncertainty of those years, although it is not excessive.

⁸⁰⁵ We say "choir brothers or scholastics" because in the documents, for those who died or withdrew before ordination, there is no indication of the class for which they were destined.

⁸⁰⁶ During this period the whole administrative apparatus of the community begins to be organized, with registers containing the names of the professed including their personal data, along with the names of novices. In general, it may be said that after 1816 no professed is omitted. But there is very incomplete data about the deceased or those who leave the Congregation before this date. We have already noted that before this, during the underground period, these data could not be written down.

During this period the sisters had 815 professions of which 510 were choir and 305 lay. Twenty-three professed choir sisters and 3 lay sisters left the Congregation. There died 181 choir and 82 lay sisters. Thus by January of 1840 there were 1,195 professed, of whom 703 were choir and 492 lay sisters.

In the same period the brothers had professed 188 of whom 67 became priests, 105 were lay brothers, and 16 choir brothers or scholastics. During these years 15 priests died, 12 lay brothers, and 3 choir brothers or scholastics. Departing from the Congregation were 28 professed, of whom 9 were priests, 6 lay brothers and 13 choir brothers or scholastics. In January 1840 there were in the community 278 professed, of whom 126 were priests, 143 lay brothers, and 9 choir brothers or scholastics.

OVER-ALL VIEW OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY

BROTHERS	1800-2	1803-16	1817-25	1826-1839	TOTAL
Priests (Brother Missionaries)					
Professed	3	28	66	67	164
Deceased	-	4	-	15	19
Left	-	6	5	9	20
Present	3	21	82	125	125
Choir Brothers or Scholastics					
Professed	-	10	26	16	52
Deceased	-	3	11	3	17
Left	-	3	11	13	27
Present	-	4	8	8	8
Lay Brothers					
Professed	1	16	58	105	180
Deceased	-	9	4	12	25
Left	-	3	3	6	12
Present	1	5	54	143	143
Overall total of professed					396
Present					276

SISTERS	1800-2	1803-16	1817-25	1826-1839	TOTAL
Choir Sisters					
Professed	13	176	411	510	1,110
Deceased	3	44	105	204	356
Left	-	3	16	23	42
Present	10	139	429	712	712

Lay Sisters					
Professed	1	61	182	105	180
Deceased	-	18	30	12	25
Left	-	1	1	6	12
Present	1	42	93	143	413
Overall total of professed					1.659
Present					1.125

N.B. The term “present” means the number of professed after subtracting the number of the deceased and the number of those who left, adding those of the prior period who remained.

3. Vocation Work

Although our information on this point may be very fragmentary, we think it worthwhile to present briefly what we were able to find on the vocation work of the community. At the risk of boring the reader we shall trace this apostolate in the various periods, in order to facilitate our synthesis.

1793-1802

During these early times, especially under the Reign of Terror and the persecution of the Directory, it was particularly difficult to suggest that anyone enter a religious institute. To do so seemed so impractical that it might be considered madness, and humanly speaking, a provocation. The Founder, who left la Matte on October 20, 1792, could not devise any plans, for the area in which he was able to act was very limited, and his basic ministry was a full-time adventure. Despite this, he never gave up the idea of carrying out his providential mission.

Yet the underground apostolate of Poitiers itself offered him an opportunity to take some steps toward the founding of a community. By means of the ministry of confession and spiritual direction which he began, and which expanded rapidly, he was able to make a great deal of contact with the young. Thus he would find those who were attracted to the religious life.

Protected by the seal of confession, Father Coudrin recruited all the members of the community of this period. Especially difficult for him was the task of inducing them to join the brothers’ branch, and he had to undergo many a failure before finding the first two who persevered: Isidore David and Hilarion Lucas, who made their profession in 1801.

1802-1817

Napoleon did not want religious life to re-emerge in French society. Therefore in spite of the Concordat signed with the Pope, Father Coudrin's religious had to keep on acting clandestinely.⁸⁰⁷

The way which the Founders saw open to do this was to disguise their religious life under the title of "clergy of Mende" for the brothers, and "pious school mistresses" for the sisters. Of course, this presupposed that the local bishop had full confidence in them. In fact, if Mende was chosen for the second establishment and as the site of the Generalate, it was precisely because in Bishop de Chabot there had just been found the bishop willing to protect them and convinced that here was the "Work of God." Without him the recruiting of members, especially vocations to the priesthood, would have been impossible.

At the end of May 1802, the bishop came to Mende to take over his diocese. He brought with him, as personal secretary, Father Coudrin, who was then 34 years old. He also had him accompany him during his pastoral visitation of the diocese of Viviers (Ardèche), recently annexed to that of Mende after the Concordat. The visitation lasted almost the whole month of July.

In the course of this journey, the Founder took part, among other things, in the transfer of the remains of St. John Francis Regis from where they had been hidden during the Revolution, to the shrine of La Louvesc. Before this event and on the way to the shrine, Father Coudrin wrote from Chelard: "I think that if the good God gives us a residence for men, we will have as many as we want." On May 15, already back from the "transfer of the remains," he wrote from Annonay: "I have been in contact with young students of Saint Symphorien. I am pretty sure that some of them will come to us. Pray and be consoled..."⁸⁰⁸

Saint Symphorien is in a mountainous region, a short distance from La Louvesc, where Bishop D'Aviau, then archbishop of Vienne, had set up a minor seminary. He entrusted it to the local pastor, Father Lapierre, a man particularly gifted for such an enterprise. The seminary had opened on November 1, 1800, beginning courses for some 50 boarding and day students. The second year, when the Founder visited, the number had risen to more than 140, and more than could be taken in applied. There were so many applicants that, the next year (1802-1803), the seminary was moved to the old convent of the "Cordeliers" (Observants or Conventuals O.F.M.) of Annonay.⁸⁰⁹

807 HL, *Première Mémoire*, ANN., 1963, p. 199.

808 BP, 39, 40.

809 Lyonnet II, 190-191 (Life of Bishop d'Aviau).

In this milieu, and in this group of youths, Father Coudrin conducted his first recruitment outside of Poitiers. A group followed the Founder, among them one who was to become Father Regis Rouchouze, then 22 years old.⁸¹⁰

In Mende, Mother Aymer convinced a deacon who was ordained before the Revolution, and was four years older than the Founder, to overcome his scruples and be ordained a priest. He wanted to consecrate himself to God in the religious life, and was received into the community. His name was Antoine Astier. From the beginning he showed great enthusiasm for the “Work of God.” He was the first superior of the house of Cahors, opened in 1803. Later he was rector of the Major Seminary of Sees (1806). He died August 14, 1816 at the age of 52, leaving behind a reputation for virtue. The Foundress called him “the Man of God.”⁸¹¹

Up to 1806 it may be said that the house of Mende, with its relations, principally with Ardèche, was the only recruiting center for the brothers’ branch. In Poitiers, Father Isidore collaborated in the formation of the youths who were sent to him from Mende, but he himself could not, in this early period, devote himself to forming a minor seminary. The new house of Cahors in the Department of Lot would not produce vocations until some years later.

In 1806, when Father Coudrin traveled to Sees to open the Major Seminary, the bishop presented to him Isaac Launay, 34 years old, who was about to be ordained to the priesthood and wanted to become a religious. The following March he was admitted to profession, and some months afterwards was appointed superior of Cahors. There he would become one of the best recruiters and formers of vocations coming from Lot and nearby Aveyron. The same can be said of Father Regis Rouchouze in Mende, and Father Antoine Regal, also from Ardèche, in Laval.⁸¹²

The little college of Father Isidore in Poitiers first began in 1805. Particularly important for recruiting in these early years was the collaboration of the pastor of St. Pierre de Maille, Saint Andre Fournet, an old friend of Father Coudrin. It was he who sent to Father Isidore the first vocations from the region, after the departure of the Founder in 1802. In 1810 the first of them, Father Joachim Deletang, would make his profession, and two years later, so would Father Hilaire Maignet, future professor of Theology at Picpus. Father Maignet would see two of his brothers make their profession: Desire, in 1822 (later Vicar Apostolic of Hawaii), and Bernardin, in 1828, who stayed in France.

810 Patern Roué, *Le Reverend P. Regis Rouchouze*. PAC, 2848.

811 PAC, 2910-2913. BM, 187a, 367, 369, 495, 497, 499. BP, 265, 346, 513.

812 PAC, 3073, 5213, no. 159, 296.

In Cahors, Father Hippolyte had to overcome a severe test of discouragement, before he succeeded in starting a steady stream of vocations. It is very likely that his example had more than meets the eye to do with the vocation of Alexis Bachelot, his nephew, who made his profession in 1813. The youth had made his studies in Paris, at the school of Picpus, and Father Coudrin highly esteemed him. He completed his studies with distinction, but without showing signs of a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Thus his decision must have consoled Father Hippolyte very much, even though it promised him nothing to remedy the futility of his efforts at the school of Cahors. This school was about to close when Brother Macaire Cavalier died. Brother had promised before his death to intercede before God for the fruit of vocations. Everyone saw the fulfillment of this promise in the arrival of several former students who aspired to enter the novitiate, among them one who was later Bishop Bonamie, and another, Father Ambrose Panel, future rector of the Seminary in Tours.

The underground condition required concealing the fact that the several institutions were actually parts of one Institute. So, until the fall of Napoleon, recruiting was very decentralized, and in practice each superior also a master of novices. The period of novitiate was quite different in the early times, and when the subject already had had an ecclesiastical vocation for some years, as was the case with seminarians about to be ordained, too often it was shortened.

We say too often since there were many who left in those early days. Around 1810 it was required to last 18 months, at least six of which were to be in Paris, under the Founder's eyes, and the profession was to be made into his hands.

Recruitment of sisters was relatively easy. One obvious reason was that they were not drafted as soldiers for fighting in Napoleon's constant wars. Moreover, of the women of that time less was required. No studies were imposed on them, at least in the beginning. The main difficulty was the austerity of common life, which was quite severe. They had to abstain from meat, sleep on cots in a common dormitory, their sleep interrupted by constantly taking turns for adoration, etc., etc. Especially at the beginning, such a life made those who knew about it frightened, and the first impulse was to have nothing to do with it.

The sisters, from the beginning, found vocations in the already adult group of the "Exterior Association," whose members shared the community's spiritual ideals and adoration during the day, and were present in shifts at the house. Thence there came many vocations of mature persons, called to consecrate themselves to God, who due to

the suppression of religious congregations, had not found the means to do so, on account of the circumstances of which we are well aware.

The main source of vocations, however, as time went on, was the work of the schools and caring for boarding students, in which the girls lived a life apart from the world and their families. At the end of this period, every house had a school, large or small, almost all of them with boarders. Each superior felt responsible to promote religious vocations, ever under the precautions required by the underground situation. (In fact, the public, those who did not know they were religious, looked on the sisters as “pious teachers” who were charitably teaching poor children.)

At any rate, the vocation seemed contagious, as the rapid growth shows, despite the ravages of death.

1817-1826

At the beginning of this period, the brothers already had fine schools. Even if the Congregation as such stayed unknown to the State, the situation of the Church was one of freedom, and the community began to come forth as a “Religious Institute.” Although the Papal Bull of approbation was not promulgated by the Archbishop of Paris, as we previously saw, the other bishops in whose dioceses the Congregation had houses did recognize it, at least in practice, and dimissorials were also granted most readily in other dioceses. This amelioration of the situation brought about an increase in novices and professed.

In 1816, the Founder had authorized the superiors of Mende and Cahors to receive novices for profession. The recruiters continued the same, and the great majority of vocations came from the boarding students, even though they were not, strictly speaking, apostolic schools (minor seminaries).

As for the sisters, they set up boarding schools at almost all their houses. By rule, the novitiate was made in Paris, under Aymer’s direction. Here, too, we do not have much information about the methods followed, outside of those already pointed in the preceding periods.

1826 - 1840

Recruiting ran into very serious difficulties during this period, especially for the brothers. The first obstacle was the closing of the schools, as a result of the ordinances of 1828, which practically destroyed at one stroke the whole system. The second quickly

followed. It was not only the invasion and pillaging of the house at Picpus in February 1831, but also the social climate of aggressive anti-clericalism which intimidated everybody.

We have not been able to make a more thorough study about the work of recruitment by the community and its methods. We would wish to know more precisely how many novices were admitted each year, and what proportion was professed. We only succeeded in doing so for the years which go from the last months of 1816 to id of 1819, that is, approximately three years. During this there were received into the novitiate 148 young men, of 15 (43.9%) were accepted for profession and 83 (56%) were not.

This period is certainly too short to draw many conclusions, least long enough to dispel any doubt that there might have very indulgence in admission to profession.

4. Where the Membership Came From

The archives give us information about origins of the members of the Congregation. Although the significance of this data is more difficult to evaluate outside of France, we think it can not be omitted. Whoever wishes to understand more in depth this ship, will have to make an effort to study what is characteristic of the people of each region which contributed to form it.

Nor should there be forgotten the presence of non-French members, beginning with the third period studied (1817-1825); they very early gave the Congregation an international dimension. Especially among the brothers, this presence had a certain importance, since an Irishman, Father Felix Cummins, as we have seen, was Prior General between 1824 and 1828, and thus the highest authority after the Founder.

In fact, it was Ireland which brought the most religious to the community, after France: six brothers and 8 sisters professed between 1817 and 1825; 7 brothers and 13 sisters in the following period. Germany, too, gave two sisters in the third period and one in the fourth. Belgium gave two sisters between 1817 and 1825, Greece one brother in the last period, Holland three sisters in the third, England 4 sisters in the last period, Italy three in the last, Poland one in the last, Portugal, Russia and Switzerland, one each in the third period.⁸¹³

In order to give a synthesis of where the professed of the early community in France came from, we have drawn up a chart in which we have indicated in alphabetical order the civil departments which gave ten or more members to the Congregation, pointing out

⁸¹³ It must be noted that the mere fact of having been born in a country is not sufficient proof of being of that nationality, especially in the period subsequent to the Revolution, which saw so many French citizens spread all over Europe.

the period of their entrance, taking as point of reference the date of their profession. We also include on P. 319 a map which helps to locate the said departments in France, and in relation to the houses of the Congregation, whose year of foundation will be indicated. Those departments we have left out in order not to overcomplicate the chart represent hardly 10% of the total, and thus are not of great significance.

DEPARTMENTS OF FRANCE

which have given 10 or more religious to the Sacred Hearts Community
between 1800 and 1840

	1800-1801		1802-1816		1817-1825		1826-1839		Totales	
	Brs	Srs	Brs	Srs	Brs	Srs	Brs	Srs	Brs	Srs
Ardèche	-	-	5	13	9	35	8	79	22	79
Aube	-	-	-	-	2	9	1	5	3	14
Aveyron	-	-	2	11	12	58	19	83	33	152
Cantel	-	-	1	-	2	14	2	20	5	34
Corrèze	-	-	-	-	3	1	2	6	5	7
Dordogne	-	-	-	3	2	21	5	17	7	41
Gard	-	-	-	1	1	15	1	12	2	28
Ile de Vilaine	-	-	1	1	2	19	14	83	17	103
Indre et Loire	1	-	1	2	1	8	3	4	6	14
Loire	-	-	-	1	5	11	9	29	14	41
Loire (Haute)	-	-	4	2	-	7	-	7	4	16
Lot	-	-	2	23	20	68	21	114	43	205
Lozère	-	-	5	26	30	72	16	67	51	165
Maine et Loire	1	-	3	3	2	3	1	4	7	10
Mayenne	-	-	2	34	14	53	14	35	30	122
Orne	-	-	8	13	8	34	3	58	19	105
Paris (Ville)	-	-	1	10	3	18	-	20	4	48
Puy de Dôme	-	-	-	1	4	1	4	8	8	10
Rhône	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	12	1	15
Sarthe	-	-	1	10	4	31	5	25	10	66
Seine et Oise	-	-	-	3	1	3	3	-	4	6
Sèvres	-	1	-	4	-	10	1	3	1	18
Tarn et Garonne	-	-	1	-	4	4	-	1	5	5
Vienne	1	7	3	21	2	16	5	17	11	61

We give in a footnote the 56 departments which gave the Congregation less than ten religious, for a total of 176 vocations.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹⁴ (b= brother; s = sister) Ain: 3s; Aisne: 5s; Alpes Maritimes: 1b, 1s; Allier: 1b, 6s; Ardennes: 2s; Ariège: 1b; Calvados: 3b, 2s; Charente: 2b, 4s; Charente Maritime: 2s; Cher: 2s; Cote d'Or: 5s; Cote du Nord: 2b, 1s; Creuse: 3s; Drome: 1b, 4s; Eure: 4s; Eure et Loire: 4b, 4s; Garonne Haute: 2s; Gironde: 2s; Guadeloupe: 2s; Isere: 8s; Herault: 1b; Jura: 3s; Landes: 1s; Loire et Cher: 1b; Loire Atlantique: 5s; Loiret: 2s; Lot et Garonne: 2b, 7s; Maine:

As can be seen, of the 24 departments which gave more than ten religious, only seven gave more than 100, and Lot, which represented the high point with 248, reached barely 8% of the total. Thus it may be said that the community did not tend to identify itself with any region in particular.



**Map of France identifying the Civil Departments
which gave Personnel to the Congregation through 1840.**

(Illustration by Sister Maria Milagros Arbaizar, ss.cc.)

1s; Manche: 1b, 3s; Marne: 3s; Haute Marne: 1s; Meuse: 1s; Morbihan: 3b, 2s; Moselle: 3s; Nièvre: 1s; Nord: 1s; Oise: 1b, 6s; Pas de Calais: 2s; Pyrenees-Atlantiques: 1b, 2s; Pyrenees Orientales: 1b; Bas-Rhin: 4s; Haut-Rhin: 1s; Haute Saone: 2s; Saone et Loire: 2s; Savoie: 1b, 2s; Seine: 1s; Seine Maritime: 1b, 7s; Seine et Marne: 4s; Seine et Oise: 4b, 6s; Somme: 2s; Tarn: 2b, 1s; Var: 1s; Vaucluse: 1s; Vendee: 3s; Vosges: 2s; Yonne: 1b, 4s; Yvelines: 2s. From other countries: Belgium: 2s; England: 4s; Germany: 3s; Greece: 1b; Holland: 3s; Ireland: 14b, 21s; Italy: 3s; Poland: 1s; Portugal: 1s; Russia: 1s; Switzerland: 1s; No indication of origin: 19b, 61s.

5. Geographical Distribution

The membership of the community, at the end of the period being studied, was distributed in 22 houses in France, not counting the missionaries in the Pacific, in Smyrna, and on the North Atlantic coast of the United States.

We cannot, at least for the moment, make a minute study of the changes of personnel in so many houses, because we have not found documents of the period containing such information. We only know that the brothers as well as the sisters were ever on the move, which is amazing considering the difficulties of travel in those days. The result is that the occupants of the houses were constantly changing. They averaged 51 for the sisters, 10 for the brothers.

Without going into more detail, it is of interest to trace on the map the course of the geographic diffusion of the community.

It will be enough to sketch this rapidly, always following the four periods we are treating.⁸¹⁵

First Period

During this time (1797-1801), everything took place in the city of *Poitiers*, Vienne, at the *Grand'Maison*, rue des Hautes-Treilles, and in the house across the street, where the brothers lived beginning in May of this last year.

Second Period

It opens with the transfer of both Generalates to *Mende*, Lozère, in July 1802. The next year, 1803, a new house is opened in *Cahors*, the capital of Lot. In 1804, a house is founded in *Paris*, and both Generalates are transferred to the capital. The same year *Laval* is opened, and in 1805 *Pontlieue (Le Mans)*. In 1806, the Congregation takes charge of the Major Seminary of *Sées*, and somewhat later a house of the sisters is opened in the same city. Due to the situation of extreme tension in the Church, with the imprisonment of the Pope in Savoy, there is thereafter a slowing down in the establishment of houses, and nothing new is established until 1815, when *Sarlat* is founded in Dordogne.

Third Period

The first establishment fully pertaining to the period of the Restoration is that of *Rennes*, in 1818. Shortly afterwards, *Tours* is established on October 24, 1819. This was

⁸¹⁵ We will give the main data on each house in the alphabetical index.

the date on which the first Fathers arrived to take over the Major and Minor Seminaries, and when the sisters began the adoration. The residence of *Troyes* is from the end of 1820: the brothers arrived at Saint-Martin des Champs November 11, and the sisters at la rue du Vert Gallant December 13. A little less than a year later, in August of 1821, the house of *Montagne* in Orne, the second in the diocese of Sees, is opened. In June 1824, there is opened the residence of *Vincennes*, as a boarding school of the sisters, on the outskirts of Paris.

Fourth Period

October 6, 1826 the house of *Sainte Maur* opened in the diocese of Tours. The next house, on February 1, 1828, was *Alençon*, the third of the Congregation in the diocese of Sees; this house would have as a student the mother of Sainte Therese of the Child Jesus. March 4, 1829 there were opened the houses of *Rouen* and *Yvetot*, in the diocese of Rouen, while the Founder travelled to Rome accompanying Cardinal de Croy to the Conclave which elected Pius VIII. These were the last founded by Mother Aymer, for she had an attack of apoplexy at the end of that year and could no longer leave her bed.

The founding of *Châteaudun* was on November 16, 1834, a few days before Mother Aymer's death on the 23rd. June 3, 1835, adoration was started in *Coussay-les-Bois*. It was, as is understandable, a foundation dear to Father Coudrin, who in order to carry it out, had bought the ruins of the church where he was baptized. With his patrimony he had obtained a piece of land which included the old family house of his parents, which was converted into a chaplaincy for the sisters. The brothers, directed by Athanase Rouchouze, had erected two compounds, one on the ruins of the church, of which only the chancel remained; it was transformed into the chapel of the community.

October 30 of the same year, Sister Françoise de Viart, the new Mother General, opened a new house in *Saint Servan*, in the diocese of Rennes. The last foundation while the Founder was alive was that of *La Verpilliere*, in the diocese of Grenoble, just a few kilometers from Lyon. It was opened in June 1836. The last establishment of this period was *Chartres* in 1837.

Expansion of the Congregation outside of France had begun with the sending of missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands in 1826 and the landing in Honolulu of the first missionaries July 12, 1827.

On September 27, 1833, the two missionaries sent to the diocese of Boston arrived at Point Pleasant on the Peninsula of Maine. May 13, 1834, Father Liassu landed in

Valparaíso where he stayed, although there had not been any plan to establish a house in Chile. The following August, Fathers Caret and Laval landed in Gambier, which was the first solid establishment in the islands of Oceania. November 15, 1834, Bishop Bonamie, after having spent almost a whole year in Aleppo, settled in Smyrna.

One of the consequences of this geographical expansion, even within France, was the difficulty of communication, due to distance and the limited means of contact available in this period. Today we find it difficult to imagine how hard it was then to foster communion in the early community. The following data will help us appreciate this.⁸¹⁶

The house farthest away from the capital, and so from the Generalate, was that of Mende, which, travelling via Montargis-Cleimont, was 608 kilometers away. (A kilometer is 5/8 of one mile). Cahors, via Orleans-Chateauroux, was 571 kms. from Paris. In addition to the question of distance, there was the problem of connections to places located off the main routes of stagecoach travel, as, for instance, Sarlat. To travel there, it first took 8 days to reach Souillac, and from there, one had to seek other means of travel to cover the 36 kms. which separated it from Sarlat. Even the shortest of trips, for instance to Sees, took 28 to 30 hours. To go to Poitiers, 332 kms., took five days by way of the Paris-Bordeaux highway.

As far as mail was concerned, the time between posting a letter and its arrival at its destination was even somewhat longer. From Paris to Cahors, for instance, took 12 to 15 days; from Poitiers to Mende, 14 or 15 days.⁸¹⁷

In outline, then, these are the conditions which geographical expansion imposed on the community.

6. Family Relationships Among the Members

On studying the membership of the community of the Sacred Hearts in its early years, an aspect worthy of consideration is that of the frequent presence of family relationships. Although we were unable to make a systematic and strict study and so cannot present definitive findings on this aspect, we can still assert that family relationships did have a significant influence and a positive one.

As to their relative importance, especially in the sisters' sector, the first place is held by Father Coudrin's family. He received the vows of five nieces and two persons of his

816 Some references as to the duration of journeys: Paris-Poitiers: GB, 24; BP, 343. Paris-Cahors: FV, 154. Paris-Sarlat: BM, 502. Paris-LeMans: BM, 225. Paris-Sees: BM, 370, 569, 574, 591. Paris-Rouen: ID 19 (ASP). Tours-Cahors: BM, 715. Cahors-Toulouse Perpignan: FV, 171.

817 References to the speed of mail service: Mende-Cahors: BM, 154. Poitiers-Mende: BM, 106. Paris-Cahors: BM, 441 (12-15 days).

generation, one of them a widow.⁸¹⁸

Perhaps the family which from the earliest years must be most noted for its contribution to the Congregation is that of Father Regis Rouchouze. He had no brothers in the community, but he did see two pairs of nephews professed. The first were Jerome, the first Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Oceania, and his brother, Athanase, a lay brother, who was the architect of many houses. The second pair were younger, Father Euthyme, third Superior General (1853-1869), and Marcellin, his secretary and a martyr of the Commune (May 26, 1871).

Another family which gave three brothers to the Congregation was the Maigret family, from St. Pierre de Maille, in Vienne. The first was Hilarion, professor of theology at Picpus, then Desire, future Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Oceania, and finally Bernardin, who stayed in France.

The Jaussens, of Rocles in Ardèche, were also brothers: Joachim, the oldest, was a choir brother, while Bernard and Victor were priests and held positions of responsibility.

The Pienoirs were three lay brothers from Mayenne: Sebastian, Fraimbault and Raymond.

In addition, there were no fewer than twelve pairs of brothers in the male branch, without going into the maze of cousins and more distant relatives.

As to the sisters, we were not able to make a study of family relations, but we are sure that there were frequent instances of blood sisters entering the community, and perhaps even more so than in the case of the brothers.

There are also a number of instances where brothers of the Congregation had sisters in the feminine branch. We know of Father Philibert Vidon who saw his mother make her profession.

7. **Sickness, Medicine, Death**

Even a cursory glance shows the large role played by death in the picture we can put together of the personnel during this early period of less than 40 years. Of the 2,055 professed, 547 religious of both branches, 26.6%, had already died by 1840. This seems enormous, excessive.

It is interesting that the highest number and percentage of deaths occurred among the choir sisters: 32%. The figure for lay sisters was 23.67%, for lay brothers 13%, and for

⁸¹⁸ Cf. Father Médard Jacques. *Lettres et Ecrits du T.R.P. Marie-Joseph Coudrin, Correspondance avec sa famille*, Sources Historiques SS.CC. Rome 1976.

priests 11.58%. As a matter of fact, the choir sisters bore the heaviest burden of austerities, such as perpetual abstinence from meat and constant fasting. The lay brothers and lay sisters, because of their hard labors, were readily dispensed and so better nourished. The same thing happened with the priests who, whether in the schools or on the missions, were always inundated with work.

We cannot present here a more detailed analysis, which would bring out the age when profession was made by each religious and the age at death. We think, however, that generally, the death rate of the community was not much greater than that common at the time.

We must not forget how recent are the advances made in science and hygiene. Pasteur was born in 1822, and did not enter normal school until 1843. Koch only discovered the tubercular bacillus in 1876. Semmelweis did not invent sterilization until 1844. In other words, everything begins after our history ended; the period with which we are concerned belongs, in this respect, almost to the Middle Ages.

In our Founders' correspondence and in that of their first disciples, there is constant mention of sickness and death, of medicines to be taken by the sick. Actually, there were plenty of doctors available but the methods they used are quite amusing to us.⁸¹⁹

It seems that the most common illness, especially among the sisters, was pulmonary tuberculosis. This is easily understood since in those days there was no concept of contagion, and the most elementary precautions were not taken. When one of the sisters began to cough and throw up blood, she was given donkey's milk and poultices on her arms to suck out the "bad humors."

Bloodletting and leeches were as common in that time as aspirin is today, and as a tonic, a fluid extracted from a cow's lung was administered. Testimony of this mentality is given by the prescriptions given at that time. In 1809, Sister Françoise de Viart wrote very seriously from Laval:

A short while ago I saw in the *Gazette* that an infallible cure for epileptics is to have them lie down under a cow crib, so they can breathe in the cow's breath. The writer says that many have been cured after having done this a few times. It is not a difficult remedy...⁸²⁰



819 Cf. BM, 224, 305, 308, 310, 373, 491, 559, 624, 644, 653, 655, 910, 1003, 1061, 1133.

820 FV, 88.

Chapter II

BUILDING UP OF THE COMMUNITY

Every human community is, as it were, a living organism, which cannot survive without constant effort to maintain and develop itself. Once this is forgotten, perhaps due to an illusion concerning the soundness of institutional structures originally developed to nourish life, paralysis unconsciously sets in, and a rapid route toward death is taken. Institutions are no substitute for the dynamic of life; either they are at its service or they are hollow shells, empty, sterile, with no meaning.

What is thus true of every human group is much more so of the Body of Christ, the Church, and of any community, which forms a living part of it. This is so because maintaining cohesion in faith is much more difficult than maintaining it with regard to satisfying the great natural needs. When to the effort to maintain faith is added that of communion in the “radical” evangelical life, in chastity, poverty and obedience, this demand for constant upbuilding becomes more pressing. We are speaking of the “religious life”.

This is to say that a new religious society requires for its foundation an especially vigorous eagerness which gets things started; we would like to know what it was in the community we are treating. In order to understand it, let us consider the century in which it was born.

The XVIII century had been a century of refined elegance, of formality, of the salon, the century of mundane pretension in the relations of a decadent society.

Western urbanity has Christian roots, to be sure, but when it loses touch with its primary source of inspiration, it becomes a grotesque caricature of true charity. This is what happened with all those ceremonies of the epoch of Louis XV, court ceremonies, emptied of evangelical love and filled with deceit and hypocrisy.

The Revolution was an earthquake, which overturned the edifice of this world in crisis, an edifice which had already been crumbling. In the midst of its ruins, and before the winds of time had blown away the dust of the disaster, the community of Father Coudrin was born, tiny and fragile as a plant, but fresh and alive.

It is surprising to discover in it so diverse a membership, as we have just seen. This would seem more apt to create conflicts than to construct a new community. Perhaps the very havoc wrought by violent social change led people to seek another kind of human encounter, and disposed them to have recourse to the Gospel without any worldly mitigations. The climate of persecution, which drew together people of all social classes at the same risk to their lives because of their faith and loyalty to the Church, no doubt helped a great deal in breaking down social barriers. The fact is that in the bosom of the community the perspectives of the faith held first place in their common life, tending to cast a veil over all that divided them. A family was born, not as a mere concession to circumstances, but as the very substance of the community.

In the present chapter we shall examine this attitude. Further on we will see the institutions which sprang from it. Here it seems we should stop a while to discover the spirit in which they were wrought. There is no doubt that for the early religious the refining of this spiritual attitude was much more important than the institutions, and they were ever conscious of its extreme fragility.

Briefly, they felt religious life was much more dependent on the world of grace than founded on human labor. This brings us to the theme of the faith of the community, to which we will dedicate the entire last part of this book. Part IV. For the moment, let us treat of the communitarian attitudes, the fruit of a communion in faith, which contributed most to give life to the community itself.

1. Consciousness of Unity

Consciousness is, by definition, an interior phenomenon, and to us it may seem something vague and inconsistent, which avoids all external control. But consciousness can manifest itself, express itself, not only in words, but also in gestures, attitudes, and actions. When diverse persons feel themselves expressed by the same words and other manifestations, it may be said that the consciousness which has been molded in them, has become a common patrimony. In this sense we speak of the consciousness of unity of the community we are studying.

When we considered the composition of the community, we enumerated the parts which formed it. First there are the two branches, of brothers and of sisters, which are the "principal parts." Next come the "classes," which have a parallel structure within the two branches. So, of the whole ensemble, and especially of both branches, it may be said that they have a living sense of unity.

We do not mean by this that there was in the community anything like promiscuity. Brothers and sisters always kept themselves at a prudent common-sense distance from each other. They carefully avoided situations which would be questionable and improper for those who aspired to be faithful to their religious vocation, with genuine seriousness.

This did not hinder their having a clear and active consciousness of unity, which is constantly reflected in the documents, and above all in the facts.

History

We think of the history, the happenings of the community of brothers and sisters, and with far greater reason, of the “classes found in each branch, as but one single reality. Starting out from La Motte d’Usseau, one sole design of God united them in one single destiny and in one identical mission within the Church, in whose bosom they felt they formed one sole religious family, which was “the Work of God.” The Founder himself expresses this very clearly in February 1802, writing to Bishop de Chabot:

Though you are most kind and it is very thoughtful of you to concern yourself about our affairs, which are also yours, we have a thousand and one proofs of what you spoke as Bishop when you said it was the Work of God you were taking an interest in.⁸²¹

To Fr. Vidal, his procurator in Rome, he says in August 1816:

My heart will ever know how to appreciate your zeal for a work you have so far believed to be that of God.⁸²²

In the Circular Letter of April 14, 1817:

Our Institute... began at a time when the blood of God’s servants flowed over the scaffolds, and we already are 23 years old. We had need of the prodigies of the divine bounty to sustain us in the midst of tempests...He led us by the hand...To such great and numerous benefits the Lord has just added another not less precious... the Apostolic See has deigned to approve and confirm our Institute...⁸²³

In October 1820, he writes Father Desjardins:

I am in charge of a work which I have good reason to believe is the work of God, since he has sustained it to this day.⁸²⁴

The other members of the Congregation who have left documentation testify to the same thing. This is true especially of the Founders and of the chroniclers, Gabriel de la Barre and Hilarion Lucas.⁸²⁵

⁸²¹ CS no. 10-264.

⁸²² *Ibid.* 265.

⁸²³ ANN., 1960, p. 176.

⁸²⁴ CS 10, p. 266.

⁸²⁵ BM, 21, 33, 38. GB, Mem. I; Mem. II, 113, 136, 224, 248, 269. HL, Mem. 173, 193, 223, 224, 226, 228, 275, 305, 338, etc.

Complementarity

Starting out from the vision of La Motte, both branches of the Congregation seem to us as complements in the endeavor to assure the accomplishment of the purpose of “bringing the Gospel everywhere” and the same may be said of the various “classes” in each one. /In the petition sent to the Pope at the end of 1800, signed by both founders, this is made explicit:

The whole –society of women...society of men adorers– forms two bodies under one and the same superior, in which each according to the measure of talent granted, whether in seclusion, silence and penance, or in the concerns of apostolic life, renders to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary the duties of sacrifice, love, reparation and total devotion which up to now have been the basis of this establishment of which a brief description has just been given.⁸²⁶

In the petition to the Vicars-Capitular of Poitiers in May 1801:

Besides these obligations –those of the Rule of St. Benedict practiced by the Trappists– each individual of this society has in addition particular duties to fulfil, governed by obedience, which form part of the end which we have proposed for ourselves. Some are destined to go out into the fields, giving missions, instructing the people, and propagating devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Others are employed in the education of children, whom we seek to educate to be priests or zealots, according to their vocation and talents, or to make of them good Christians living in the world. Others, finally, like new Moses, are destined to raise their hands to heaven to obtain the Lord’s blessing on the labors of their brothers and sisters and to make reparation for the outrages which the Heart of Jesus has received, does receive, and, sad to say, will receive at the hands of bad Christians.⁸²⁷

Communication

The constant communication of news about the life of the various communities, and especially of intentions to be remembered during adoration, kept up awareness that the activity of the Congregation was a matter of common responsibility.

Proper Law

There is no more eloquent manifestation of the consciousness the community had of its unity than the drawing up of its “Proper Law,” that is the Constitutions it composed itself, and the Decree and the Bull by which the Holy See approved them in 1817 and

⁸²⁶ ANN., 1963, p. 183.

⁸²⁷ ANN., 1963, p. 184.

1825, particularly important because they are of the period when the Founders governed the Congregation.

Later on, in Chapter V, we will study this legislation in detail.

The Ceremonial

The *Ceremonial*, of which we will treat in Chapter IV, further documents the consciousness of unity in the community. Not only are the resolutions and vows identical for all the classes and both branches of the Congregation, but the whole ceremonial is parallel with the exception of the blessing of the veil of the sisters.

Daily Life

Daily life, in which all these testimonies of unity intermingle, constitutes, as a whole, the best proof of the consciousness of unity which animated the community created by the Founders.

We cannot go into details, which in fact we have already seen throughout the whole development of the history presented in Part I. Let us only recall the community of goods, the common celebration of feasts, not only in Picpus but also in the distant houses, and a continual exchange of services which knew not the distinction between “mine” and “thine.”

2. The Evangelical Ideal of Family Fellowship

If the community actually succeeded in gaining a strong sense of unity, it was not through a mere stroke of luck. The Founders’ repeated preaching, with steadfast insistence, from which sprang a common faith in the evangelical value of fellowship, seems to be its real explanation. It is indisputable that the circumstances of persecution and an underground existence contributed from the beginning to very solidly forge this attitude.

Return to the Sources

We have already noted how, when the Church is persecuted, it recalls its origins, refreshes its memory of the age of the martyrs, and there begins to blow a breeze coming from the early days and bringing with it signs of youth. The return to sources is brought about spontaneously in great historical shocks when many values, which were thought immovable, begin to reel and fall, and life feels urged to seek anew its hidden roots.

This tendency is shown in many aspects of the life of the community. It is manifested in particulars such as the choice of religious names taken from the epoch of the Fathers of the Desert, the invocation of the first founders of religious life as saint protectors of the new Congregation, and even the inspiration of St. Benedict's *Rule for Monks*, as we shall see, which has major significance. But where this impulse reaches its maximum force is at the point of family fellowship.⁸²⁸

Although the *Réponse a mon Frère* (Reply to my Brother), by Sister Gabriel de la Barre (which is included in the Appendix of texts at the end of this book) is not yet, strictly speaking, a text of the community, since it antedates it, it is certainly a testimony of the spirit which animated one of its most representative members. It was written in 1795, possibly even before Miss Aymer, the future Foundress, had been admitted into the Society of the Sacred Heart (L'Immensité), at a period when its author was, without knowing it, being prepared to enter as one of the first religious of Fr. Coudrin.⁸²⁹

In this little fragment, one can feel blowing this breeze from the sources of Christianity. Sister Gabriel feels she is living among persons who "know how to imitate Aquila and Priscilla" in their zeal, and even that the company of "those who confess Jesus Christ" seems to give birth in her to the desire for martyrdom. In this atmosphere she writes:

The Society of the Heart of Jesus represents in some way the perfect harmony and happy union of the saints in Paradise...The saints of every age, of every estate, only know and love each other in God and for God. Such should be the charity which unites the associates with each other. The diversity of age, of social condition, of talents in all the members of the Society represents, it seems to me, this marvellous diversity which embellishes all the works of the Creator and whose harmony in the dwelling of the blessed will produce such a delightful blend.

It is interesting to observe how, in bringing alive again the spirit of the early Church, she comes to discover the richness of diversity, to the point of marveling at it as a seal on the works of the Creator, which she sees appearing in the "Immensité."

The enthusiasm of this 24-year old youth is but an echo and fruit of the teachings and guidance of her spiritual master and confessor, Pierre Coudrin, who was only three years older. Like the "just man" of the book of Wisdom, "he came of age in a few years," subjected as he was to the intense experience of the Revolution, an experience lived in strictest fidelity to the Gospel.

⁸²⁸ Names of early religious: Isidore (of Egypt); Hilarion (solitary of Palestine); Anthony (first hermit); etc.

⁸²⁹ *Réponse à mon Frère*, by GB, PAC, 1146.

The Founder's Message

The young priest remained rooted throughout his life in the image of the early Christian community which the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul have preserved for us. On feeling himself called by God to create a new religious community, he would want it to be faithful to this image.

When one reads the whole corpus of his letters, one receives the impression that his most constant and insistent concern was to stress the urgency of mutual love and of unity. We shall try to find textual evidence of this, and make the synthesis never attempted by the Founder himself, of what is so diffuse in the sources, hopefully without overdoing it. We think we will discover a vigorous spiritual intuition, in no way bookish. He very closely follows biblical sources, on which he meditated and was nourished from youth to old age.

We note no less than 500 citations from letters belonging to all periods of his life, in which in some way or other he stresses the urgency of fellowship. There is one early group in which he quotes or alludes more or less directly to Acts 4:32, from the Vulgate: "Now the multitude of the believers were of one heart and one soul."⁸³⁰ He writes Sister Gabriel about the Congregation and the house of Poitiers in 1804 (BP, 210): "May there be but one heart and one soul in my poor family." Much later he recalls the same thing to Bishop Bonamie, who is leaving for the Mideast, adding: "It is the only means for being happy in Babylon and for going to heaven"⁸³¹ In the same sense, toward the end of his days, he stresses it to his niece Eudoxie, superior of the house of Coussay-les-Bois, recommending to her: "Be joyful and amiable among yourselves. Do not let the spirit of the world enter your home."⁸³²

On two occasions he seems to allude more to Jn 17:21: "That all may be one." Having recently left Poitiers, he writes Father Isidore, who remained in charge of the community of that city: "I am quite afraid that there may be some who may want to take advantage of our absence, but you know very well that none of us is perfect, always acting from best intentions, and that we all must be 'one'".⁸³³ In December of the same year: "I have no other joy than what you can have; for if you suffer, I am not at ease, and our hearts are so closely knit it seems they are but one. So, then, be all of you *ONE* in the charity of the good Master who unites us."⁸³⁴

830 Cf. also BP, 929, 1163, 1325, 1513, 1955, 2050.

831 BP, 1829.

832 BP, 2038.

833 BP, 47.

834 BP, 82.

Father Coudrin knows that attaining unity in a community such as his is before all else due to God's grace, and therefore he begins asking for it in prayer. But it is also a fruit of a vigilant human correspondence with that gift and so, as if he were following the directives of the Apostle to Timothy, he is "urgent in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2).

It is a wonder that comes about, according to him, "in the Heart of the divine Master," as we shall have occasion to see later in treating of the "devotion to the Heart of Jesus."⁸³⁵

In a second series of texts which have less direct and precise reference to a biblical text, he stresses the importance of "charity" for bringing about the unity of the community.⁸³⁶

In 1823 he writes to a superior: "The Spirit of the Good God, who is all charity, must dwell in us in order to save us."⁸³⁷

In the first months after leaving Poitiers, while traveling about Ardèche, he takes advantage of a moment of repose, and writes the Poitiers community: "May union and charity unite you all. May the vision of the good the Lord must work through you, make you overcome everything the evil spirit would wish to do in order to discourage you. Love each other very much..."⁸³⁸ It is to be noted that he sees charity and union not only as a norm for religious and Christian life together, but also as necessary for apostolic fruitfulness.

In his circular letter of September 20, 1824, reflecting on the examination of conscience of the Chapter, he complains that in many there is "more zeal for learning which puffs up than for charity which builds up."⁸³⁹ He never tires of insisting on the obligation of mutual love, supporting one another "with the charity that casts out fear."⁸⁴⁰

In a third series, he uses above all the words "amor" or "dilectio" or points out practices of fraternal love.⁸⁴¹

835 Cf. BP, 82, 293, 307, 745, 814, 836, 897, 1513, 1895, 2067, 2143, 2202.

836 Cf. BP, 16, 30, 39, 41, 42, 43, 57, 78, 115, 130, 159, 186, 192, 198, 229, 235, 236, 243, 258, 263, 286, 288, 317, 335, 372, 380, 387, 395, 410, 419, 469, 476, 522, 533b, 537b, 539b, 562, 605, 642, 653, 660, 681, 687, 715, 738, 739, 762, 773, 780, 789b, 791, 813, 846, 849, 869, 892, 897, 940, 981, 988, 991, 999, 1005, 1019, 1068, 1093, 1101, 1108, 1106, 1133, 1152, 1167, 1170, 1175, 1197, 1210, 1219, 1244, 1249, 1256, 1260, 1309, 1338, 1369, 1386, 1392, 1416, 1430, 1469, 1481, 1495, 1522, 1535, 1575, 1625, 1626, 1638, 1652, 1664, 1692, 1714, 1728, 1809, 1928, 1956, 1984, 2017, 2035, 2036, 2054, 2058, 2089, 2146, 2167, 2180, 2199, 2202, 2245, 2246, 2287, 2296, 2315, 2322.

837 BP, 869.

838 BP, 36.

839 BP, 981.

840 BP, 1309.

841 Cf. BP, 45, 78, 79, 113, 118, 127, 138, 154, 170, 232, 254, 277, 288, 294, 296, 297, 336, 343, 344, 345, 347, 349, 351, 362, 376, 385, 411, 412, 474, 479, 526, 533, 533b, 545, 554, 687, 706b, 708, 722, 724, 751, 797, 892, 897, 918, 1036, 1104, 1109, 1148, 1529, 1531, 1547, 1801, 1877, 2042.

To Father Caesar, who ran into difficulties in Cahors, he writes in 1826: “Love each other very much, and I myself will be happy in your happiness.”⁸⁴² He writes him again in 1828: “What can I decide, my dear friend, about what you are to do in regard to the relatives of this good brother Bernard (Jaussen, superior of Sarlat)? Mme. Françoise (de Viart, superior of Cahors) and you will judge, in your charitable wisdom, what is proper to do. This good Father Bernard would have need of a brother who would help his sisters...so help them, I beg you. For truly we are brothers and sisters and each other’s keepers.”⁸⁴³

He sends a final postscript in a letter to the first missionaries who leave for Oceania: “Love each other very much. Put up with the little problems arising unavoidably from the diversity of personalities. Have but one heart and one soul.”⁸⁴⁴

He reminds those who are leaving for the Mideast with Bishop Bonamie: “Do not forget the family. Love each other very much. Never let the sun set on your little or great differences. This will daily be the subject of the prayers of your most sincere and faithful friend.”⁸⁴⁵

On three different occasions there is reference to the legend mentioned by St. Jerome in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians which is read in the lessons of the Breviary on the feast of St. John, December 27. According to the story, St. John the Evangelist, when he was very old, lived in Ephesus, and was so weakened by his years, that he could not give long talks. He just kept on saying; “Little children, love one another.” His listeners became so bored that they asked him: “Why do you keep on telling us the same thing?” He replied with a maxim worthy of St. John: “Because this is the Lord’s commandment, and if you do only this, it is enough.”⁸⁴⁶

As a final series, there are the texts in which the Founder speaks of peace, which he relates to charity, union and mutual love, a gift of God which must reign in all communities. It appears very often at the close of his letters and in postscripts, as the expression of a supreme desire. They are expressions with a Pauline flavor, which bring us back to the horizons of the early Church, and confirm what we said at the beginning of this chapter.⁸⁴⁷

842 BP, 1099.

843 BP, 1416.

844 BP, 1163.

845 BP, 1832.

846 BP, 897, 170, 1877.

847 Cf. BP, 11, 20, 41, 42, 46, 65, 74, 80, 94b, 99, 100, 111, 112, 113, 127, 131, 134, 149, 154, 160, 163, 164, 168, 169, 170, 175, 198, 201, 210, 213, 215, 229, 235, 238, 246, 250, 253, 255, 258, 264, 284, 288, 297, 304, 312b, 316, 318, 319, 320, 326, 333, 334, 336, 341, 346, 352, 362, 363, 364, 376, 408, 419, 424, 445, 463, 503, 512, 524, 540, 561, 572b, 574, 590, 625, 634, 641, 652, 657, 659, 661, 664, 669, 678, 681, 728, 736, 738, 751, 791, 802b, 820, 838, 843, 867, 891, 892, 894, 898, 901, 906b, 909, 913, 914, 917, 935, 954, 964, 965, 980, 1002, 1006, 1012, 1014, 1030, 1040, 1044, 1047, 1048, 1079, 1093, 1094, 1097, 1099, 1100, 1104, 1106, 1115, 1120, 1237, 1247,

In 1821, he says to Father Xavier Balmelle: “Love each other very much and God will give you His holy peace.”⁸⁴⁸ He confides to Father Regis Rouchouze, superior of Mende: “There hardly passes a night when I do not picture myself with all of you in all the houses, asking that the divine Heart of our good Master guard and bless each and every one of you and grant you “his grace and his peace. *“Filioli, diligite alterutrum. Et si solum fiat, sufficit* – Little children, love one another. And if you do no more than this, it is enough.”⁸⁴⁹

These formulas of greeting are varied but are always centered on peace: “*Pax Christi* – The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” “*Sit pax in cordibus vestris* – May there be peace in your hearts,” or “*Gratia et Pax* – Grace and peace,” and still more often: “May grace and peace be ever with you all.” At other times, less frequently, he writes: “*Pax et concordia* – Peace and Concord,” or “Good health and peace,” or “Peace to you all *in osculo sancto* (with a holy kiss).” At the end he adds: “*Salutant vos, qui mecum sunt fratres* – The brothers who are with me greet you.”⁸⁵⁰

The Words of Mother Aymer

Throughout her life Mother Aymer followed the same line as Father Coudrin, and frequently insisted in her letters on the mutual love which must reign in the communities.⁸⁵¹

From 1799 we have a brief note which shows how she thinks about this. She writes it amid the tensions which marked the cohabitation of the newborn community with the Society of the Heart of Jesus, in the midst of which it had arisen:

I would like to have said good evening to you, my dear sister, but I could not... my poor heart is too sad. It knows and will know how to love you no matter what happens. It endlessly desires that the bonds which unite it to yours be tightened

1161, 1199, 1210, 1217, 1218, 1221, 1229, 1253, 1278, 1280, 1290, 1296, 1297, 1309, 1316, 1346, 1351, 1362, 1367, 1371, 1385, 1423, 1424, 1444, 1453, 1466, 1467, 1468, 1679, 1477, 1486, 1489, 1495, 1498, 1507, 1519, 1531, 1534, 1552, 1575, 1593, 1601, 1604, 1629, 1634, 1638, 1652, 1653, 1658, 1669, 1670, 1683, 1693, 1702, 1712, 1741b, 1745, 1248, 1278, 1280, 1298, 1299, 1328, 1332, 1549, 1713, 1651, 1757, 1767, 1774, 1082, 1812, 1823, 1849, 1850, 1855, 1858, 1861, 1862, 2029, 2032, 2036, 2048, 2078, 2080, 2085, 2094, 2113, 2116, 2125, 2180, 2182, 2202, 2263b, 2304, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2314, 2330, 2331, 2348, 2353.

848 BP, 683.

849 BP, 897.

850 “*Pax Christi*”: BP, 655, 725, 757, 787, 003, 888, 944, 1310, 1395, 1488, 1889, 2050. “*La paix de N.S.J.C.*”: BP, 43, 311, 315, 328, 403, 523b, 533, 625b, 892, 954, 1006, 1042, 1351, 1417, 1424, 1469, 1660, 1669, 1299, 1894, 2039, 2252. “*Sit pax in cordibus vestris*”: BP, 869. “*Gratia et pax*”: BP, 292, 1002, 1161, 1858, 1884, 1886, 1937, 2052. “*Que la grace et la paix soient avec vous tous*”: BP, 328, 523, 533, 625b, 711, 1052, 1104, 1120, 1152, 1228, 1284, 1317, 1365, 1538, 1558, 1559, 1672, 1697, 1299, 1756, 1968, 1982, 2007, 2188, 2350, 2356. “*Pax et concordia*”: BP, 540, 913, 1278, 1575, 1328. “*Salut et paix*”: BP, 20, 42, 74, 238, 308, 319, 1012, 1218, 1253, 1453, 1467, 1693, 1861, 1862, 1930, 1942, 1945, 1987, 1998, 2009, 2010, 2029, 2032, 2048, 2094. “*Paix à vous in osculo sancto*” etc.: BP, 1208.

851 We did not have time to make as detailed a study of the Foundress’ texts.

more and more, and that you carry out the will of God who wants you to be all his.
V.C.J.S. Henriette.⁸⁵²

Sister Gabriel, writing twenty years later, and referring to these early years, says of Mother Aymer:

Her favorite maxim was that the good one does comforts the evil one suffers, that the best way to belong to God was to belong wholly to one's neighbor, and this is what she constantly did.⁸⁵³

More than giving norms, the Foundress gives an example of family fellowship, and it may be said this is the prevailing tone of what she writes to others. December 6, 1802, she writes Father Isidore David:

I beg you to say a thousand things in my name to all who are around you (the community of brothers and sisters). All our friends (sisters) are well, the "Incomparable One" (Father Coudrin), too. All think of you, we speak of you often as well of our poor "old woman" (Sister Gabriel) whom I tenderly embrace...⁸⁵⁴

January 23, 1818 she writes Father Philibert Vidon, who is going through a difficult time:

So try to calm your distasteful feelings and attach yourself even more strongly to this divine Heart of Jesus who is and will ever be our strength, our support. Pray to Him for me who have such great need of it. Reflect for a while how we are all in this together and that it is perhaps in connection with your prayers and your virtues that God wants to grant special graces to the Society of which you are a member. I hope you will tell me you think as I do. In God I will be glad for you and for me.⁸⁵⁵

To Sister Antoinette de Beaussais, superior of Le Mans:

Goodbye, my dear friend, I have not much time. There is never a moment when I do not wish you peace, courage, good health, joy, fervor and long-suffering. All our good sisters cherish you and embrace you with all their hearts...⁸⁵⁶

November 4, 1826, she writes to the recently established community of Sainte Maure:

I am delighted about the peace and unity which reigns among them (the sisters); their zeal for the good of the work makes me hope that God will shower his blessings on this house. Goodbye, my good sisters, be ever united in the divine Heart of Jesus and believe in the tender affection of your old mother...⁸⁵⁷

852 BM, 7.

853 PAC, 5212, no. 69.

854 BM, 90.

855 BM, 607.

856 BM, 609.

857 BM, 1316.

October 4, 1829, shortly before becoming paralyzed, she writes one of her last letters to the superior of the same house:

My dear friends, let us all make of ourselves but one heart and one soul to serve the Good God. Let us be his and everything will become easy for us... May peace, charity and union reign among you. ⁸⁵⁸

The “Sense” of the Community

We shall give a brief account of how the community accepted the message of the Founders, since we do not have space enough to make a full study of it. So we shall only give some examples.

In November 1804 Father Albert Breyse writes from Laval to Father Isidore David, who is in Poitiers:

Could the bonds which unite us allow us any longer to be like strangers to each other? Is it not already bad enough for me that you are the only one among us all ...whom I do not know? Must I have to wait any longer to express what I feel in my heart? No, I would not be able to do so any longer, my desire is so pressing, the circumstances seem to demand it... I love them (all the brothers of Poitiers) without ever having seen them. ⁸⁵⁹

In 1806, Father Abraham Armand writes from Sees to the Founder:

In spite of the troubles our brothers have to undergo in teaching (at the Seminary), they are content. We all love each other with the most tender love. When someone is troubled, the others console him, and then the Good God consoles us all. ⁸⁶⁰

March 15, 1826, shortly after his official appointment as missionary for the Hawaiian Islands, the same Father Abraham writes Father Raphael Bonamie, who had remained in the missions of Troyes:

I cannot, in good conscience, my dear brother, let the Good Father return to Troyes without my writing to you. According to the “rules of the game,” when one has friends in the missions of Bar-sur-Aube, Bar-sur-Seine, etc., etc., one ought to write to them from time to time, and this above all when one does not expect to see them again for some days! Obeying this rubric, I tell you I care for you, you especially, and all the others, too. Do I have to name them? Well, then, here they are: I love them all with all my heart – Cyril, Francis Borgia, Paphnutius, Theodore, Fermin, Eugene, Leufroy, ha! I forgot my own countryman, Apolinaris. I know all of you are having hard times, but be consoled, you are not the only ones! Think of what those who have to go 7,000 leagues without moving a foot will have to suffer. ⁸⁶¹

858 BM, 1425.

859 CS 10, 556.

860 CS 10, 557.

861 PAC, 2928.

Particularly eloquent, if we take into consideration the circumstances, is the excerpt that follows. It is taken from Father Alexis Bachelot's diary and addressed to the Founder, to inform him about the voyage from Bourdeaux to Honolulu in 1826-1827:

We did not forget dear Rochette's candle. We keep a part of it for where we are going (the islands) as well as some bread from Picpus and wine the family gave us. We feel a certain satisfaction upon thinking that the matter of the first sacrifice we will offer to take possession in the name of the Lord of a land where from now on he wishes to be honored, will not come from the hands of strangers. It will have been contributed by the family to which this blest mission was entrusted. It may perhaps be thought we are meticulous. What would you think if I told you how far we go to preserve what comes to us from the family, such as the little souvenirs given us on leaving! We do not regard as trifling anything that can bring back memories which console the poor heart and fortify it. At seven or eight thousand leagues from the family, we feel the need of coming closer and being together, and how precious is everything that can contribute to it! Let those who would find something human, something incompatible with the integrity of sacrifice, let them be convinced that this takes nothing away from it, but on the contrary confirms and sustains it... We calculate the hours and the moments and we follow the family in all its exercises. We are present when it rises in the morning, we go along with it to the refectory, we take part in its recreation, we see it in adoration, we pray along with it, and therein is above all what gives joy to the heart. February 2 we were convinced that the Sacred Heart was going to surround us with a greater number of children; that more than one victim was going to consummate the great sacrifice (profession), and that among them, some might be already destined by Providence for the great work of mercy it has deigned to entrust to us. Our spirit was at rest seeing the Father surrounded by his numerous family, speaking to everyone and speaking on behalf of all his children. The poor voyagers, who at the moment saw only the sky and the ocean, were consoled by the thought of their not being forgotten...⁸⁶²

Having now arrived in Honolulu, September 22, 1827, Father Abraham reports on the attitude of the mission community: "What pleases me, my Good Father, and what I tell you with pleasure, is that all six of us are truly *cor unum et anima una*."⁸⁶³

Among the texts in the Appendix, we have included a conference by Father Alexandre Sorieui on "Fraternal Correction," which we think is a good additional testimony to the disciples' acceptance of the Founders' message on family fellowship.

3. Relations between the Branches of the Congregation

It can be said that the brothers and sisters were born together, even though, as we saw in Part I, it was the sisters who first formed a lasting association. From the very

⁸⁶² PAC, 3148.

⁸⁶³ PAC, 2933.

beginning relations between the two parts of the community were very frequent, indeed daily; they were quite down-to-earth and without any trace of covering-up. Father Coudrin was spiritual director and confessor of all the sisters, including Mother Aymer, and in the early days he was also spiritual director for all the brothers. Both groups lived in the same- house, buffeted by the wind of persecution.

The family fellowship which came into being between the branches in these conditions was nevertheless not, as we have had occasion to note, an indiscriminate intermingling. Brothers and sisters kept a prudent distance between themselves; even Father Coudrin generally did not speak with the sisters except in the forum of the sacrament of Penance; yet he did speak regularly, and with each one without exception.

The cooking and all the household duties were taken care of by the sisters, although the brothers ate separately.

Father Coudrin had no personal income, and the stipends he received from his Mass intentions and ministry were all that came to him. Among the sisters there were some who had considerable wealth, although during the upheaval of the revolution the flow of income was irregular. At least, the minimum required was not lacking, and the burden of maintaining the brothers was not enormous. There were few of them, and they all lived an extraordinarily frugal existence. Besides, as a matter of fact, no one thought about money, nor did anyone make estimates about the budget: they lived from day to day.

As of one year before the Founders' departure to Mende, in 1801, the brothers had a separate residence in Poitiers across the street. The sisters were still in charge of the household services, and the brothers crossed the street for their meals.

With the transfer of the Generalate to Mende in 1802 and the rapid multiplication of houses which in 1806 already numbered seven, things necessarily developed in various places under the direction of the people with responsibility there. Still, even before the Constitutions were drawn up, they followed the line laid down in Poitiers from the beginning.

It would be arduous to go through all of these instances, especially since the documentation is not very uniform. We prefer, consequently, to bring together what is found in the legislation adopted by the Chapter of 1819, and completed by that of 1824, which we find in the Constitutions approved the following year, 1825,

This subject is treated in: 1) Chapter III of the Constitutions of the Brothers, entitled: *Rapports des deux Congrégations des Pères et des Sœurs* (Mutual Relations between the two Congregations of Brothers and Sisters) and 2) Chapter II of the Constitutions of the

Sisters, under the title: *De l'autorité du Supérieur Général et des Supérieurs locaux sur les maisons des Sœurs* (On the Authority of the Superior General and of Local Superiors over the houses of the Sisters). We shall attempt to give a synthesis of their provisions.

a) Chapter III of the Constitutions of the Brothers

The Constitutions of the brothers' treat this matter on the level of the General Chapters, and in them can be noted the care taken to prevent the Brothers' Chapter from interfering with that of the Sisters. They established that it belongs to the Superior General and his Council to approve the decisions of the Sisters' General Chapter. The Brothers' Chapter may not pass any regulation for the sisters, but will communicate to their Chapter all the regulations which might be of interest to them, and invite them to do likewise.

Furthermore, there is recognized the right of the sisters to draw up regulations differing from those of the brothers, always with the approval of the Superior General "of the whole Congregation" and his Council.

After September 1, 1829, the General Chapter of the brothers retained the right to transfer surplus funds of the brothers' houses to the corresponding houses of the sisters (III,2). The sisters made a like decision in Chapter II of their Constitutions.

The legislation of the brothers keeps completely silent about all the remaining mutual relations between the two branches.

b) Chapter II of the Constitutions of the Sisters

In this chapter there are two series of provisions: one on the relations of the Superior General of the entire Congregation to the branch of the sisters (articles 1-14); and another on the relations of the local Brother Superior to the corresponding community of the sisters (articles 15-21).

The Superior General

The Father General receives the vow of obedience which the Mother General is to make to him within eight days from her election or arrival at the Generalate. He must also be informed annually, and in writing, by the Mother General about everything concerning her administration, both spiritual and temporal (articles 1-2).

She must have the Superior General's consent before founding new houses of the Congregation (article 3).

The Superior General must annually send Visitors to each house of the sisters. These Visitors have a purely informative function, and cannot impose any regulation without the intervention of the Mother General and her Council (articles 5, 6, 9).

Each sister has the right to hand over to the Visitor during the visitation a sealed letter directed to Father General (article 7). Local Superiors of the sisters can write up to three times a year to the Father General, without asking permission of the Mother General (article 8).

The Father General can remove a local Sister Superior found to be at fault during two years, if the Mother General does not justify her conduct (article 11).

Every year, the Superior General makes the visitation of the Sisters' Generalate, accompanied by a priest bound like him to secrecy (article 12).

The decisions of the General Chapter of the sisters must be approved by the Father General and his Council (article 14).

The Local Superior

As to the local Brother Superior of each house of the sisters, the Sister Superior must ask him permission for the following: to make or ask for loans (article 17); to leave the house if there be need, so long as there is not cloister (article 19); to give away 20 francs or something worth that amount (article 20); to be dispensed personally from the obligation to observe any rule (article 16); in addition to these cases, she must consult him: for receiving a novice (article 18), and on any important matter of her government (article 21).

4. The Trial of Defections and of Conflicts

No human society can be constructed without bumping at every turn into human nature, with its problems, limitations and frailties. One cannot attempt to bring about "Church" on the cell level, without meeting all the resistances and contradictions which have always afflicted Christ and his followers, from the moment that the Savior was born in Bethlehem, and from the day when the first community came out of the Cenacle.

But, among all the trials and tribulations, there are some which are more readily understood. They are those which are due to people who have not received the gift of faith, who have not discovered universal fellowship, and who have not received the message of the love of God.

It is something else to encounter resistance and obstacles within the Church, or worse, in the interior of the community itself. We would like to keep evil outside of us, and it is particularly humiliating and sad to find out it is indeed within us.

The community also had this experience, which came about in two main forms: defections of the professed, and internal conflicts.

Defections

A reading of the section on the Membership of the Congregation, which we have given above, reveals that, keeping in mind the number of professions, and deducting the dead, the number of professed who left the Congregation is not very high among the sisters in any of the periods studied. On the other hand, among the brothers, especially of the first period, the number is rather high, if we consider the percentages.

Statistics are never a complete picture of the real life of the society to which they refer, and a more detailed explanation of the facts they surface can only be given by way of a careful investigation which is beyond our limits. We give here only some elements which seem to us of major import for elucidating defections.

During the first recruiting campaign, of which we spoke above, some withdrawals occurred which grieved the Founder very much, and which at that time were called "apostasies." Today we would be less severe, and would be much more careful in condemning them.

Under the circumstances of the application of the Concordat of 1802 in Napoleonic France, there is no doubt there were attenuating reasons, not to mention the inexperience of the Founder himself who started his first recruiting campaign when he was 34 years old.⁸⁶⁴

Dominic Bastide was the fifth professed brother of the Congregation. He took his vows in 1802, a few months after the Founder's arrival in Mende, and the same year he had already been ordained priest. This makes us think he was one of the seminarians of St. Symphorien, who was already well advanced in his studies. In the next year occur the professions of Father Landri Monassier, Ambrose Belledent and Privat Coustillac (the 17th in the list of the professed). The four of them left the Congregation during 1804, which must have been a severe blow for the whole community and especially for the Founder, who was most directly responsible for having admitted them.

Two of them, Ambrose and Privat, wrote a letter to Father Coudrin which he received October 15-16. The reason they gave was their health, and they asked for a certificate of

⁸⁶⁴ In other words, after the diocesan approval.

good behavior in order to be incardinated in the diocese of St. Flour (Cantal) whose bishop showed himself very benevolent.⁸⁶⁵

The Founder answered them in a single letter on October 17. It shows all his sorrow and shock at their ease in giving up their vows. We do not have any documentation on the reflection of the community which certainly must have taken place, if not at that time, at least at the end of the period.⁸⁶⁶

In 1808, a student withdrew, and in 1811 a choir brother. In 1813, two priests left: Timothy Mocquet, an ex-Trappist who did not adapt himself to the community, and a young priest, Roman Guerry, won over by the clergy of Poitiers who offered him tempting ministries. They did so because at this time in the diocese the community was not regarded as having much of a future. It was thought that the Emperor's policy would soon affect adversely this defenseless group. In 1814 another choir brother left. In this overall period, three lay brothers left.⁸⁶⁷

Altogether this represents a loss of 23% of the priests, not counting deaths, in a space of 14 years. It is a considerable number and for that very reason marks a fact which certainly wounded the community deeply and was of much concern to those in charge.

Although there is never an adequate general explanation in a matter which is so conditioned by the personal history of each one, there is no doubt that certain factors may be indicated which in large measure are responsible for this phenomenon of infidelity.

The first seems to be the precipitation with which these first vocations were received into the Congregation, and later presented for ordination. The French Church's urgent need for priests at that time mitigates the responsibility of Bishop de Chabbt, who doubtless approved the norm of procedure and ordained these first priests. Furthermore, they were not disloyal to their priesthood and to their vow of chastity, but to their religious profession.

The Founder's inexperience doubtless is more responsible. Everything points to the conclusion that he learned from the experience, for in the next period only 43% of the novices were professed, as we have already seen.

Another factor which certainly influenced these defections is the institutional instability of a clandestine community. Such a community had no publicly acknowledged status even with the Church of France. The priests of the Congregation passed as "clergy of the diocese of Mende" until 1805, and after that of Sees. Since their formal statute as

⁸⁶⁵ HL, Mem. 106.

⁸⁶⁶ BP, 208, cf. 207, 209, 210.

⁸⁶⁷ GB, Mem. II, 217-220.

religious did not appear, they were regarded as more free to request incardination in some other diocese. In fact, we know that at least half of the priests who left the community had been offered posts in various dioceses.

A final factor, which seems to have had some effect, is the hard life led in the community, a way of life not yet sufficiently adapted to the tasks of the apostolate. They continued sleeping on planks, fasting, and eating relatively little. This explains why two youths left with the excuse “they had to take care of their health.”

In the following periods, and once the Congregation was approved by Rome, the bishops and the clergy and the faithful recognized the community as a religious institution, with a valid status –*coram facie Ecclesiae*– and its members more respected. The rigors of the way of life during the early years were notably tempered, and as we said, greater precaution was exercised in admission to profession.

The result may be appreciated in the same overall picture: withdrawals are reduced to 5.7% in nine years, in the period 1817-1825; and to 6.7% in 14 years in the last period, 1826-1839.

Conflicts

We point out the conflicts we have found in the documents, in order not to give the impression of covering them up and exposing only the positive aspects of the development of the community. The truth is, however, that we did not find many of any importance.

We note some below and present them in broad outlines, because we do not have room to make an exhaustive study of them. They seem useful for better knowing the character of Father Coudrin’s community. However, we do not want to over-stress their significance, but simply illustrate their existence and nature.

We found two main ones which are relatively well documented: 1) that of Father Raphael Bonamie with Mother Aymer, in 1828-1829; 2) that of Father Caesar Carre with Mother Françoise de Viart, in 1832 at Cahors.

These conflicts have some common factors which it seems useful to point out. Not only were they between the superior of the brothers and the superior of the sisters, but they occurred in a relatively late period – after thirty years of the life of the community, coinciding with the application of the Constitutions of 1825. Furthermore, they represent a kind of “clash of generations.” There are more than 15 years’ difference in age between the opposing parties, and both brother superiors were professed in 1816, thus they had no experience of the underground period and were much less affected by the Reign of Terror. Both are, therefore, representatives of a “new generation.”

Conflict between Father Bonamie and Mother Aymer

The two houses at Picpus had been established in 1804-1805 in the same spirit in which the previous communities had been founded in Poitiers, Mende and Cahors. During the 15 years both Founders were present, everything had run along smoothly.

In 1829 Mother Aymer complained that her 114 nuns and 80 novices, added to the boarding school, day school, etc. had her head spinning. This is understandable, because in addition she had to take care of the brothers' house, with its seminary, boarding school, day school and novitiate. Everyone living there had to be fed, properly clothed, and their clothing laundered. The administration of the houses was not separated, and all money was handed over to Mother Aymer.

From the end of 1820, the Founder was no longer in residence, and although he came periodically, first from Troyes, and later from Rouen, the persons with whom the Foundress had to deal on a daily basis were all young, professed after 1815, except for the Econome, Father Philip Fezendier, who was now 48 and had been professed since 1804.

By 1828, both houses had grown and together numbered more than 700 persons. The system of administration continued the same as in the days when there were less than 50, and Mother Aymer was tired and prematurely aged. On her desk there was a mass of jumbled papers, and frequently letters received from other houses were mislaid.⁸⁶⁸

After the Chapter of 1824, at which the members, it seems, were bold enough to bring this matter up with the Founder, a new General Council was set up. Father Felix Cummins, an Irishman, then 33 years old and very devoted to Mother Aymer, was made Prior and acting superior of the house whenever the Founder was away. He was certainly the ideal choice to work well with her.⁸⁶⁹

As time passed, Father Felix, who showed extraordinary ability in dealing with the Archbishopial Curia of Paris, with civil authorities, and with merchants, and was very successful in making arrangements for the departure of missionaries, began to sense some dissension within the community.

The tasks and the discipline of the community itself were satisfactory for everybody. But there were details about the relations between the two communities, including certain services, which in the eyes of many, especially the youngest, left much to be desired. To resolve these points of friction Mother Aymer had to be induced to change some of her customs. They had been ideal when both communities were small, but now that

⁸⁶⁸ BM, 790 R, 795 R, 796 R, 797..

⁸⁶⁹ BM, 1007, 1230, 1823; BP, 1459, 1460, 1461, 1462; PAC, 3228.

they were so very large, they were causing many grievances. The Foundress was wholly unaware of all this, which made the situation much more difficult to deal with. Father Felix, unconsciously a victim of this situation, was not the one suited to solve it.

The Founder was convinced of the urgency of changing the Prior of Picpus. On September 24, 1828, Father Raphael Bonamie, then 30 years old, and superior of the mission house of Troyes, became Prior. He was an exceptionally gifted religious, and had administrative abilities which enabled him to discern in a short while certain details which fed the discontent, and were quite possibly its whole source.⁸⁷⁰

These details were basically four: 1) The letters, which arrived at a common porter's station, were brought to Mother Aymer; she separated those addressed to her community, and sent to the brothers those addressed to them. The task at the beginning was simple and did not take long, but as time passed, it became hard and some sisters had to work with her. They took it upon themselves to make commentaries which were not always pleasant, and there were even letters which were lost. Father Bonamie wanted to avoid such inconveniences, and so he put a mailbox at the porter's lodge for the brothers.

2) Mother Aymer was accustomed to personally serve the breakfast of the priests who served as chaplain of the sisters' house, spending some time in a friendly visit with them and giving them newspapers to read. Evenings, the same priests –confessors and chaplains of the sisters, which at the beginning meant almost the whole brothers' community, but by this time had become a small group– came after supper to a kind of social gathering, very simple and family style, during which they spoke of everything and of nothing, exchanged news, etc., until the time came to retire. The permanent absence of these same priests was noticed in the brothers' community, and Father Raphael wanted to stop it. He had the Founder intervene for this purpose.

3) The sisters ran the tailor shop and made all the clothing for the brothers' house. Financially it was a great help, but it was thought that it was better to have an independent service, run by the brothers.

4) Finally, the sisters cooked the brothers' meals, and for a long time the brothers wanted to serve their own meals, which also seemed reasonable to Father Bonamie.

In summary, as is obvious, the new Prior's position seems to us today very legitimate. However, it was not well received by the Foundress and produced a certain painful feeling in the sisters' community. To be sure, the tendency to dramatize these trifles did not help to bring about a solution or peace.

⁸⁷⁰ We follow a note of Father Martin Calmet, written and signed by him, at the margin of the VBP of HL (+92/24).

Father Raphael was young and very sure of himself, with a great respect for Mother Aymer but also very much aware of his responsibility. His personality was one which kept at a distance, asserted his autonomy, and seemed to shun all personal attentions. It is understandable that this would not be congenial to those who wanted things to stay as they were.

Father Bonamie wrote to the Founder with some hardness (which he later repented), asking for his intervention. But Father Coudrin preferred for the moment to maintain the status quo; the Prior yielded.

The following year Mother Aymer became paralyzed, and this postponed changes which would have upset her, and the reformer was sent as professor of theology to Tours in 1831.

Hilarion Lucas wrote later that this crisis was the beginning of the introduction of a supposed “new” spirit in the Congregation. This seems so much the more curious inasmuch as he was one who at that time supported the Prior. At least there does not appear in the documents any trace of a change in the spirit of the Congregation. Hilarion’s words seem adequately explained in the light of his own personal crisis, but this is a matter for an investigation yet to be made.

Conflict between Father Caesar Carré and Mother Françoise de Viart

About this conflict, which took place in 1832, we have abundant information. It is found in Sister Françoise’s letters to Father Coudrin, with whom she kept a very deep friendship from her youth and some very spontaneous and cordial communications. But the documentation is evidently one-sided. The only letter of Father Caesar that we have is one partially quoted by Sister Françoise herself.⁸⁷¹

At bottom, the frictions, like the incident in Paris, may well be reduced to the contacts of the priests of Cahors with communications from Mother de Viart, which Father Caesar wanted to cut off. The tension was less public, but perhaps more rankling. The whole thing ended when Father Coudrin called Father Caesar, to Pans and appointed in his place Father Bonaventure Mayorel in July 1833.⁸⁷²



⁸⁷¹ BM, 1254. FV, 207; 208; 209; 210; 212; 215; 216; 217; 221; 225; 226; 230; 231; 232; 232 b; 236.

⁸⁷² BP, 1792, 1793, 1794, 1795.

Chapter III

PRINCIPAL PRACTICES

The commitment to live the Gospel, to build a community, which will strive to embody it by following the radical road of the religious life, makes of such a community a laboratory of life.

This life “in common,” which is proper to the coenobitic life and distinguishes it from the eremitical, has always presupposed “external practices” carried out in a communal way. These practices, intended to nourish and develop the faith life of religious and their all-embracing commitment, give witness to communion in faith and in being convinced of the validity of such a commitment. At the same time they involve giving example, which supports and accompanies others along their difficult path.

From ancient times, these practices have been set forth in religious laws, rules or constitutions, and have become norms of living for the communities which drew them up. They have come to be called “regular practices” or “observances.”

Today, the least that may be said is that they are looked on with some misgiving. This is understandable, because we have recently come out of a period in which their importance was exaggerated, if not made absolute, making them the standard and measure of religious life. The pendulum of history tends today to minimize them. This is the other extreme.

The realization that religious commitment is an undertaking both concrete and carefully crafted enables us better to appreciate the worth of regular practices, even if it be relative by definition. It depends on their ability to contribute to the attainment of the great purpose, and of doing it in a community way, in the circumstances of real life. They are to be regarded, then, as “means,” as “instruments” of evangelical life, and in this perspective they are to be evaluated.

The nature and frequency of “observances” has always varied in the course of time, and in all the variety of communities, which have arisen in the Church since the first centuries. We are interested to know which ones were chosen by the community we are studying.

It is to be recalled in this regard that, beginning with the multiplication of houses which started with the transfer of the Generalate to Mende in 1802, there was initiated a long period in which in order to conceal the unity of the Congregation, different regimens were followed in the various residences. Hilarion, in his report to the Holy See, May 24, 1816, remarks:

Forced for more than twenty years to keep an astute and perfidious police (of Fouche) from knowing about our Institute and above all about the connections between our various establishments, we were obliged to adopt a variety of practices in order to do our good work. Our various residences could not be organized in the same way. Though all had the same obligations and were subject to the same superiors, their practices varied according to circumstances. If I may, I shall make a comparison. We were like a fleet of ships sailing on a stormy sea, ever in danger of being wrecked. The ships had the same destination but had to take different courses when scattered by the storm; they were in more or less imminent danger.⁸⁷³

Later on, after being approved by Rome, an effort was made to make the communities uniform. The effort was not very great nor was it effective until the Constitutions were published. This brings us to the first months of 1826.

Before treating of particular observances, it is interesting to know the norm Father Coudrin expressed in correspondence with Father Hilarion during the negotiations for approval of the Congregation: the number of obligatory pious exercises is not to be multiplied. In December 1814 he writes:

Could we not be satisfied with our Little Offices and Breviaries? The adoration at night and in the daytime should take the place of all else. In a time such as ours and in France where terror is everywhere, where nothing turns out right, where the smallest gathering is suspect, weigh all this, my friend, and see whether the toil of teaching, the missions, and all that is involved in the adoration cannot compensate for many vocal prayers, which are very long and not understood by half of the Society.⁸⁷⁴

The following February 15, he returns to the same subject:

We have a novitiate here, chapters are held rather regularly, we are, all together, in the seven houses, 54 brothers including the novices. We are surrounded by total indifference to religion... Judge whether we should attract attention with habits, etc. I have the Big Office of the Sacred Heart of Mary. So, for the whole year, I would only want the two Big Offices of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary for our sisters. The other prayers, adoration, etc., teaching of the young,

⁸⁷³ ANN., 1963, p. 217.

⁸⁷⁴ BP, 479. It seems that the "vocal prayers, which are very long and not understood by half the Society" are those of the Office sung in choir, which were beyond the capacity of the lay brothers.

should be more than enough. The times will not put up with anything that seems useless, and experience proves that no one should be overburdened with vocal prayers.⁸⁷⁵

We will now go on to summarize the principal “regular observances” of the community. They doubtless contributed toward giving form and character to its common life, and consequently formed part of the effort “to build the community,” of which we have already spoken. We simply want to “reveal” the historical life of the early religious. We do not intend to propose these practices as being necessarily worthwhile for today from the mere fact of having been so in the times of the Founder.

In every workshop in which a craft is flourishing, the tools are well taken care of. It is also well that those which have been worn out by use, or which circumstances have required to be replaced, should not be unknown to the artisans. Even though they are surely out of date, they still have something to say to those who now apply their own skill to the same craft. In this spirit we have collected the information found in this chapter and the next.

1. Perpetual Adoration (1795)

In Part IV we shall treat more extensively of the spirit and meaning of the adoration. For now we must point out the place it had among the “observances” of the early community, since certainly it was the first chronologically to appear in the bosom of the new Congregation.

Mother Aymer, recalling the first moments, says in a letter to Father Coudrin in January 1803:

When (Father Soyer) left me, I was stricken by what was happening, but I was not converted. It is to you alone I owe this first blessing. When you established adoration at Moulin a Vent Street and gave me an hour, without suspecting it, you sealed my destiny...⁸⁷⁶

Putting aside biographical insights, this text gives us a number of important facts about the origin of adoration, hardly six years after the events: 1) adoration was organized by Father Coudrin’s initiative, and it was he who assigned shifts, at least the first time,” 2) this happened at the house of Moulin a Vent Street, that is, before March 1797, when the seat of the Society of the Sacred Heart moved to Saint Peter’s Square (Cathedral); 3) this cannot have happened before March, 1795, when Miss Aymer was

875 BP, 483.

876 BM, 98.

received into the Society; 4) adoration originated in the Society of the Sacred Heart, known as “l’Immensité.”⁸⁷⁷

At the beginning all the members of “l’Immensité” took responsibility for assuring there would be adorers at all times. The resident members took turns at night, and in the second half of 1796 there was formed with them the group known as the “Solitaires”, the first nucleus of the Congregation. “L’Immensité” itself always remained a pious association. The originality of the Solitaires lay in their making of the adoration, as it were, a conveyor belt leading them to the religious life. The community, whose first dream, at La Motte, had risen from adoration of the Eucharist, was born and built always around the Eucharist.

When in the first months of 1801, the new Congregation was separated from the Society of the Sacred Heart, the Institute, recently approved by the diocese, took on itself responsibility for assuring the presence of an adorer throughout the day and night, and there were no interruptions.

From this time on, every foundation of the sisters began with a Mass at which the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. There followed adoration, which, once begun, was never interrupted, neither day nor night.

The first regulations for adoration were officially formulated quite late, but they took up a tradition, which at the time was more than a quarter of a century old. The regimen is found in Chapter IX of the sisters’ Constitutions approved in 1826:

- 1) Perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is one of the principal duties of our Congregation, or one of the principal practices to which it is its object to consecrate itself.
- 2) In all the sisters’ houses having 18 persons belonging to the Congregation, there will be, in the church or oratory, at all hours of the day and night, a sister assigned to make reparation, by perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, for the outrages committed by humanity against the divine Majesty.

877 Suzanne Geoffrey, in memoirs dictated when she was very old, attributes to herself the initiative for the adoration:

One day, when it had been reported that there would be a very thorough search made of houses. It came to me in the presence of Our Lord that, if I set at His feet two adorers, nothing would happen to us. In those days, I was quite quick to make up my mind without deliberation or counsel. No sooner thought than done. So I placed at each side of the altar a little chair. I sat down on one of them, and had one of our sisters sit on the other. This was the beginning of the perpetual adoration, which is still practiced in the Order of Picpus. When Father Coudrin saw this, he asked what it was. I told him what I had thought, adding we were ready to stop, if he so judged. He gave his full approval, and we continued. The ladies from outside participated during the day, and we took responsibility for the night.

This testimony, much later than that of Mother Aymer, does not seem incompatible with hers. To bring them into agreement, it is enough to suppose that between the first beginnings in the moment of danger and the permanent organization, there passed a certain time, and that it was Father Coudrin who was responsible for the definitive organization.

- 3) Sister données can be engaged in perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the same way as professed sisters or novices.
- 4) The sisters will make, each day, one hour of adoration, in form of prayer; lay sisters are obliged to make a half hour's adoration only.
- 5) This hour of adoration will be divided into half hours, at which tunes it will be made at the place in the choir designated for the adorer. At that time, the half hour will always be made kneeling, except at night, when the entire hour may be made at one time without division, and without being required to remain kneeling.
- 6) When a sister comes to relieve the one who is making adoration, they will say together an *Ave Maria* for the one who is going to make the adoration.
- 7) During the half hour of adoration, the sisters will try, through the ardor of their prayers, to appease God's wrath, to satisfy his justice, for all crimes committed. They will remember that this is the purpose of perpetual adoration. This is not the time for reading, saying their Office, or making any other prayer of obligation or of devotion, which would not contribute, directly to this end.

So there is question here of an important "observance," which affects not only the community collectively, but also each member personally. Here is an "observance" which is different from prayer and incompatible with other obligations.

In the brothers' branch, the observance of adoration was always very different, as may be seen in the corresponding articles of its Constitutions. Articles 1 and 2 of Chapter IX are the same as the sisters' but the third, which is the last, says:

Perpetual adoration, day and night, will take place in all the brothers' houses, which have 36 brothers, counting, professed, novices and données.

Consequently, it is question of an observance, which only obliges communities of 36 or more religious, and only indirectly obliges each member of said community, but does not affect brothers as individuals.

This is the letter of the law. In fact, each religious tried to make adoration insofar as he could. The Founder frequently made his half hour, even though it was very late at night.

The houses never had large numbers of religious, always less than 36. As a result they did not have the problem of organizing adoration, as did the sisters. The sole exception was Picpus, where adoration was established in 1819, as Hilarion tells us:

From the founding of our Institute, the brothers of the Sacred Hearts had never been able to have among themselves perpetual adoration day and night. Their occupations, along with their small number, had deprived them of this blessing. It was right that the principal house give the example. February 2, 1819, the brothers,

after having attended the profession made by eight of our sisters, went back to their own chapel. Our Very Reverend Father gave a very touching exhortation on reparation for the outrages done to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the adoration began around half past eleven at night. It was not interrupted until February 16, 1831, when the brothers' residence was sacked and most of them dispersed.⁸⁷⁸

We have no information about whether special methods were drawn up for making adoration. No doubt they used the manuals and prayer books, which had been so numerous since the XVIII century, copies of which are still found in the older houses.

2. Silence

Silence, which gave the name of "Solitaires" to the early sisters, was, along with adoration, a practice of the early times, prior to formulation of the intention to found the Congregation (1797).

It might readily be supposed that its adoption was based on the famous Trappist Rule of which we shall speak later. Actually/ however, this was not so, and the opposite would appear to be much closer to the truth: It was the practice of silence, which brought about in the small community of "Solitaires" a particular sympathy for La Trappe. Even if this is not the only explanation of this attraction, it certainly influenced it.

It is of interest to recall how the Founders discovered "silence," since often in the history of the Church, and especially of religious life, great achievements flow from a great silence, just as certain rivers flow from some great lake.

Six months' confinement in the grain loft of La Motte d'Usseau (1792) was very far from being boring for young Pierre Coudrin. They meant for him the discovery of the riches of the spiritual world in a depth hitherto unknown: "I was never bored for a single moment," he says in 1801, telling his first religious of the experience. From then on he had the custom of spending a long time in the silence of prayer, even during his most arduous labors of clandestine ministry under the Reign of Terror and the persecution.⁸⁷⁹

As for Mother Aymer, from the time the harsh experience of imprisonment awakened her from the superficiality of the salons, and opened her eyes to the world of the spirit, silence was one of her characteristics. Indeed her silence was one of the characteristics which most contributed to attracting about her the young girls among the members of "l'Immensité" who had a genuine religious vocation.⁸⁸⁰

878 HL, Mem. 300.

879 HL, Qq.R.I, 60; Qq.R.II, p. 8.

880 GB, Mem. 7.

These strong experiences, all before discovery of the Rule of St. Benedict, are a good part of the explanation for a deep-seated attraction to the rule of the holy patriarch, whom the Founder does not hesitate to call “Our Father.”⁸⁸¹

The Constitutions of 1825 provide for the brothers, in Chapter IX:

6. The brothers will keep grand silence from evening prayer until after morning prayer, during all meals, and in the dormitory. Breaking grand silence is a serious fault.
7. Silence is furthermore prescribed throughout the house outside of the times of recreation, which are scheduled in each house according to the localities and the needs of persons.

The parallel Constitutions of the sisters have a similar provision in Chapter IX:

17. The sisters will keep grand silence from the evening *Salve* until after the first community Mass, during readings, a half hour after the morning reading, as well as after the evening reading. They will likewise keep silence during all meals. There will be, during Advent and Lent, an additional half hour of grand silence in the morning, and in the evening as well. At no time will it be permissible to speak in the dormitory.

This legislation is the fruit of long experience and of an attempt to translate monastic practices in terms of apostolic life. This began in Advent of 1798, when the first test was made of the Trappist practices, as we shall see later on. This was the first contact made by the community with the Benedictine Rule and its doctrine of “silences.”

This is not the place to make a study of silence in the Rule of St. Benedict, but we can try to make a summary, in broad lines, of its teaching, in order to appreciate to what extent it may be appropriate for us.

Silence is called for in various chapters of the Rule of St. Benedict, but without doubt the main text is Chapter VI, *De Taciturnitate*. In it, silence appears as motivated by ascetical objectives: “in order not to sin with the tongue,” but it is also seen as founded in a deeper and more general spiritual disposition of the religious, which is to keep oneself in the attitude of a disciple: “to be silent and listen is proper to the disciple.”

In the outline of the Rule dictated by Mother Aymer to Bernard de Villemort in 1800, the entire Chapter X is devoted to *Silence*. Its first paragraphs explain the reason for it being adopted by the community, and contain a brief account of a meditation of St. Benedict:

Chapter X, On Silence. The holy King-Prophet tells us he “refrained from speaking even of good things” (Ps. 39); to show us how silence is profitable for a soul which

⁸⁸¹ BP, 533, ANN., 1960, p. 179.

wants to unite itself intimately with God. For it is only in habitual recollection that one learns to impose on his passions a silence needed for hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit tells us: “Where words are many, sin is not wanting” (Prov. X). The love of silence is, then, inseparable from the religious soul, but as it happens that circumstances may oblige us to break it, here is the rule to be followed...⁸⁸²

The rule that follows distinguishes three types of silence: *habitual*, which may be broken out of necessity or by the superior’s order; *regular*, linked to regular places such as the refectory and dormitory; and *grand*, determined by time. The limits and characteristics are not always clear, and to clarify them it would be necessary to have recourse to the Trappist rules of Valsainte, whence it seems this terminology was inspired.

Much later, together with the Constitutions was published the circular letter in which the Founder presented them. In it he recommends the reading of the Rule of St. Benedict. One of the chapters he particularly calls to the attention of the brothers and sisters is Chapter VI, *De Taciturnitate*, from which he also quotes some words.

The Founder, who prepared his preaching in the reading of Scripture and in the silence of prayer, knew by experience that silence is an important moment in the apostolic life and that “to hand on to others what has been contemplated,” it is necessary first to set aside in one’s life space for contemplation in order to grow as a disciple and listen personally to the Word. There is a great difference between what comes from contemplation/ and what is the fruit of intellectual effort serviced by a library. It is the difference between an authentic apostle and a simple propagandist. The most humble faithful are aware of this.⁸⁸³

3. The Regulation of Common Life (1797)

Life in common requires a minimum agreement on the hours at which various community activities are to take place beginning with the most elemental, from meals up to gatherings for prayer and the Eucharist.

The Society of the Sacred Heart (“l’Immensité”), whose members lived in their individual houses, had no daily observances in common. One of the things, which marked the difference between the body of its members and the group of “Solitaires”, was precisely that the latter adopted a Regimen of Common Life.

⁸⁸² Manuscripts of ASP.

⁸⁸³ The description of the apostolate *as contemplata aliis tradere*, is from St. Thomas: IIa. IIae, Q 188, a.6.

In Appendix III, we give the complete text of a *Regimen* written by Father Coudrin, of which we have already spoken; it seems to have been the first rule of the “Solitaires”, drawn up perhaps on the occasion of their transfer to the house on Hautes-Treilles Street, thus in 1797.

As is seen from its final words, the intention was to arrange activities in such a way that there would be assured a basic balance: “Total: 7 hours of sleep, 7 hours of prayer, 8 hours of work, 2 hours for meals.”

In this Rule, times assigned for adoration are not mentioned. The reason seems to be that it depended on the organization of the “Immensité”, but this does not mean that the “Solitaires” took no part in it.

Despite the minute detail of this program of life, some space was left for a personal life. There are moments when there is foreseen remaining in the cell during the day.

Later, beginning in January 1799, with the introduction of the *Practices of la Trappe*, there come the common dormitory, perpetual abstinence from meat, as we shall see further on, and a life spent largely between the Chapel and the community room, without any opportunity given for the individual’s personal life.

After 1802, with the increased number of houses, a diversity of regimen developed, although the main exercises were similar: daily Mass, the Office, at least the Small Offices of the Sacred Hearts, Prayer, Spiritual Reading.

The information on this period is very incomplete, at least insofar as we were able to gather it; so we are unable to make general statements until the regulations of the Chapter of 1819, which were included in the Constitutions of 1825, and which even before this date were applied by the local houses.

Regulation of Daily Life in the Constitutions of 1825

On this point, there stands out a clear difference between the provisions of the brothers’ and sisters’ Chapters.

The brothers’ Chapter leaves great freedom for the organization of daily observance. Apart from fixing the hour to sing the *Salve* at 8:00 PM, it allows the communities to adapt themselves to circumstances. Only in the case of the formation of a hypothetical community of “choir brothers” does it set the hours for Matins at 5:30 AM, Terce and Sext at 9:00 AM, and None and Vespers at 3:00 PM.

The sisters’ Chapter, on the other hand, although it does not go into all the details of the day, and does not formally present a “regimen,” in practice lays down a rather rigid schedule. It starts out by setting the hour of rising at 5:00 AM (XIII, 22) and retiring at

9-00 PM. Dinner is at 11:00 AM and supper at 6:30 PM (XIII, 1). The *Salve* will be sung at 8:00 PM, as with the brothers (IX, 10).

4. Trappist Practices (1799)

Sister Gabriel de la Barre relates in her *Mémoires*:

We began to hear in our city of the austere and edifying life led at Valsainte by the Trappists who had left France during the Revolution. Some details of their practices came to the notice of our Mother. It seemed to her that so perfect a life could only be pleasing to God, and would lead us to the goal, which we wanted to reach. Our Reverend Father, with admiration, adopted her views. From then on she began by herself to try out this rule. A simple plank was her bed, and she ate only once a day.

Having proved by her own experience that this kind of life was not at all impractical, she undertook to have it approved by the priests of the Society (i.e., of the Sacred Heart, alias *l'Immensité*). Father Perrin was quite inclined to accept it; the others were opposed, as what happened later showed. God, however, by a marvelous effect of His Providence on us, bound their will. They consented, all but one who stayed neutral.

Our Reverend Mother then assembled the community, and explained in detail the Rule she wanted to have, adopted, asking for the consent of each one of us. All gave it, some out of a desire to do penance, others from the well-founded conviction that all that our Mother proposed, came from God and led to God. Still others, those attached to Miss Geoffrey, wanted to see first whether it would be suitable for them, intending besides to completely abandon it when it no longer suited them...

Our Reverend Mother's intention in adopting several points of the Trappist Rule was not at all, as has generally been thought, for us to be swallowed up in that Order. Likewise, she picked out only what could be in conformity with God's designs on us: silence, the great fasts, woolen clothing, sleeping on a simple plank, night vigils eating only black bread, water, milk, fruits and vegetables, chapters of faults. Her usual prudence led her to have us undertake various things only little by little, one at a time. Since she herself always did more than she prescribed for others, nothing seemed too hard, and our house finally took on a religious consistency. It was on the first day of 1799 that we began with the great fasts as the first practice of the new rule, which we had just adopted.⁸⁸⁴

Through this experiment occurred the community's encounter with the Rule of St. Benedict, which the Trappist regulations mean to apply; of this we shall speak later. For the moment, we are interested in the observances, which thereby entered into the history

⁸⁸⁴ ANN., 1962, p. 191.

of the community, first in the sisters' branch, later in the brothers', as practiced in the course of this year 1799.

What is most important in this experiment with an austerity which to many seemed exaggerated, and not only in Poitiers, but also in Mende, is that it had the virtue of branding very strongly on the community the will to live a religious life, and imprinting it as a decision bereft of all mediocrity.

Subsequent apostolic experience saw to it that there was a gradual moderation of what in these first impulses was excessive for persons engaged in the work of teaching or preaching.

The ravages of death opened the Founders' eyes. They were ever more frequently authorizing exceptions, until there was enacted the legislation of 1819-1825. This legislation was, of course, not to be labeled lax, but it is much more moderate, and in its entirety is what has come down to our times, as we will now see.

5. Spiritual Reading and Prayer

Reading Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and spiritual writers has always been basic nourishment for the commitment to live the Gospel, above all, to live it following the path of religious life. Such reading has from the beginning been closely related with the life of prayer, with the cultivation of a dialogue with God and Jesus Christ.

Already St. Cyprian wrote to Donatus: "Now be assiduous in prayer, pray a reading. First you speak to God, then God speaks to you."⁸⁸⁵ Down through the centuries, the spiritual tradition of the Church has cultivated both moments of its encounter with God and with his Christ. Father Coudrin enrolls himself in this tradition from his very first steps of which we have a record.

The "Regulations" of 1797

In addition to the Divine Office and other vocal prayers, and moments devoted to prayer, the Rule reserves for "reading and reflection" a full hour, alternating quarter hours of reading with like periods of silence.

In this simple provision, there is a suggestion of method, though a very discreet one, for in the field of ascetics the Founder never wants to impose methods. But the fact that there is alternation of "reflection" and reading shows us quite clearly that there is no question of reading intended to satisfy intellectual curiosity. Rather there is stressed the

⁸⁸⁵ St. Cyprian, *Ad Donatum*, 15.

urgency of growing in friendship with Jesus Christ, knowing him better, listening to his Word and becoming more acquainted with those who have gone before us on the same path and can help us by their experience and knowledge of the things of God.

Of course we would like to know what books were read at that time. We do not have explicit information, except for the "Imitation of Christ". According to the Rule it is to be read in private each night before retiring, along with the Gospel of the next day. Of course, during the hour of "spiritual reading" other material not mentioned in the Rule was read, and we do know that the literature available at this time was not sparse. It is very likely that in those years which followed the suppression of religious orders and congregations, many pious works from the multitude of monasteries and convents there had been in France circulated privately among devout persons, besides what was able to remain in bookshops.

At the end of the XVIII century, literature on the Sacred Heart was quite abundant. Among these books, the works of the ex-Jesuit Baudrand were popular, as well as the "classics" of Father Croisset and Father Galliffet.

As we have noted, there was in the early community a great interest in the Fathers of the Desert and all that concerns the origins of the religious life. This will be evident later in the choice of the holy Patrons and of the feasts of saints found in the calendar of the community, as well as in the religious names taken by the first disciples of the Founders. There were strong reasons for this, which may be attributed not only to the effects of the circumstances of persecution, but also undoubtedly to the influence of what was read.

In the XVII and XVIII centuries the monks of St. Maur (Benedictine Congregation of France), had published, among other works, excellent collections of the writings of the Fathers. On the level of popular reading, there were editions such as that of Arnaud d'Andilly in which were found the lives of the Fathers of the Desert (1688). There were also French editions of Cassian's Collations and the *Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtue* of Alfonso Rodriguez, already available in French for many years, was widely diffused. It was filled with material on the Fathers and on the best treatises on spiritual life of all times.

In summary, it may be said that the repertoire was rich, not even counting innumerable lives of saints of varying worth, among which stand out that of Sister Margaret Mary, by Bishop Languet; of St. Francis de Sales; of St. Jane Frances de Chantal; and of St. Vincent de Paul.

One cannot leave out the works of St. Francis de Sales, especially admired by the

Founder, above all for his *Introduction to the Devout Life* and *Treatise on the Love of God*.⁸⁸⁶

Encounter with La Trappe, 1825

Ever since the community came in contact with La Trappe and its regimen, it came into contact with the Rule of St. Benedict. We know how this rule considers reading (“*Lectio Divina*”) one of the fundamental occupations of religious, and that in the last chapter he refers his monks to the reading of Scripture, the Fathers, and the first monastic works known in the west: the works of Cassian and the Rule of St. Basil.

Thus it is most likely that the observance established in the Regulations of 1797 came to be confirmed, because we find it canonized in the Constitutions of 1825 which direct:

Ch. IX, 8. Every morning there will be a reading, in common, for a half hour, and likewise in the evening (Sisters’ Constitutions).

In those of the brothers:

Ch. IX, 8. Every day, except those scheduled for the Chapter of Faults, there will be spiritual reading in common, at a convenient hour.

This legislation remained in force until the second half of the present century. Prayer now seems more separated from reading. For the sisters, it becomes confused with adoration of which we have already spoken. For the brothers, there is a simple provision: “Ch. IX, 4. Each brother will make a half hour of prayer a day.” The Constitutions of 1840 will increase this obligation to an hour.⁸⁸⁷

6. Reading of Holy Scripture

In recent times we have overcome the anti-Protestant reaction aroused in the Church by the crisis of the Reformation. It may be said that in our generation we have witnessed the opening up for the faithful of direct access to the Scriptures. In the Founders’ days this was unthinkable. So it seems to us surprising that Father Coudrin took upon himself around 1809 or 1810 the task of establishing a chair of Hebrew at the Picpus Seminary in order to open up to his priests’ access to the original text of the Bible.⁸⁸⁸

We know that Father Coudrin read Scripture a great deal, and in his writings, besides frequent allusions, we find many quotations, of which three quarters are from the New

⁸⁸⁶ There are still in the library of the Generalate in Rome some examples of these old editions.

⁸⁸⁷ Constitutions of 1840, art. 306.

⁸⁸⁸ In July 1811, Father Coudrin writes to Father Launay that his nephew, Alexis Bachelot, has graduated from the College of Picpus, capable of teaching the basics of Hebrew, cf. BP, 427 HL, Mem. ANN., 1963, p. 196.

Testament, almost a third from St. Paul. Hilarion tells us that on his journey to Rome in 1825, he read almost the entire New Testament.⁸⁸⁹ At any rate, he did not want to impose on his disciples the formal obligation to read Scripture. However a year after his death, at the General Chapter of 1838, the delegates approved article 161, which reflects the Founder's spirit on this point and which has done so much good in almost a century of the life of the community: "All priests of the Congregation are strongly urged to devote every day at least a half hour to the study of Holy Scripture, when their occupations allow them to do so."

Today we would extend this recommendation to every religious. It might seem to us repugnant to confine it to priests but we must not forget that we stand in the first half of the XIX century. We cannot help but marvel that one of the last newly professed who was able to see the Founder, Father Euthime Rouchouze, when he was Master of Novices, devoted a remarkable portion of his spiritual conferences to explaining the Psalms. The Founder's love for Scripture passed on very profoundly to the priests of his community.

7. Chapter of Faults

The Chapter of Faults, as practiced in the early community, was first observed in the period of the adoption of Trappist customs, and doubtless came from the Rules of Valsainte, as we saw in the quote from Sister Gabriel de la Barre. The manner in which it was performed is known to us from no other contemporaneous document than the note in which Mother Aymer describes the ceremony:

The Chapter is always to begin with the *Veni Sancte*, a Vive (Long live the Sacred Heart of Jesus!), a prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one to the Heart of Mary, the prayer to St. Joseph, the *Domine non secundum*. That having been said, the superior knocks. All rise and remain standing, then the superior sits down and raps again. Then a deep bow is made to him, and those who have no fault to confess also sit down. If the superior has something to say, he knocks a third time, and all sit down. Then if there are any general observations to make for the good of the Order, some new practices to propose, the arrival of other members, common prayers to be said for certain matters, finally some exhortations for greater regularity, this is the appropriate time for taking them up. No one is to be allowed to make observations, proposals, complaints, unless called on. If the superior asks the advice of any of the brothers, this brother is to kneel at his place and state simply what he thinks. Then he sits down again. Others, if called on, do the same. When the superior does not want to say anything further, he calls on one of those who have indicated their wish to confess their fault, saying: "Brother So and So, your fault." The one so called must immediately go to the middle of

⁸⁸⁹ HL, VBP, 238.

the room, kneel down, confess his fault, and wait in that position for what the superior may say, for his penance, and for the statements of his brothers. He will only get up when the superior gives him the signal. When the superior wishes no more faults or accusations, he knocks. He and the others kneel down and say the *Sub Tuum*. Then the superior gets up and gives his blessing to all the brothers. He kneels again and all together say the *Salve*, a prayer to the Sacred Heart, the *Ave* of St. Joseph, Psalm 132 *Ecce quam bonum* and the prayer for the deceased.⁸⁹⁰

In this note there is no reference to a vision, which could be found at the origin of the institution, and we have no reason to suppose there was one because Mother Aymer is so very open on this matter, and always says explicitly what comes from a supernatural communication. Consequently, we can regard it as the adaptation of a Trappist practice.

One should note the breadth of the purpose of the Chapter, which is not limited to public confession of faults. It applies Chapter III of the Rule of St. Benedict, emphasizing notably the weight of the superior's authority.

One feature, which was to be removed in subsequent legislation, is the initiative for the confession, which is here attributed to the brothers and not to the superior, as the Constitutions of 1825 would determine.

The last element of this exercise is the "accusations," which are not found in the Benedictine Rule, but come into monastic life early, tending to institutionalize fraternal correction. This acceptance of the possibility of being corrected by one's brother is a symptom of a real tendency to "communitarian" perfection. It is, however, a difficult practice, and supposes a high degree of brotherhood. There is no doubt it existed in the early times of the history of the Congregation, when the communities were small, and the persons chosen through an option almost heroic. Later on, it seems it began to reveal some of its difficulties.

Constitutions of 1825

The regulation contained in Ch. XI of the brothers as well as the sisters is similar, but not identical. That of the brothers makes a greater distinction of "classes." It prohibits lay brothers from making "accusations against the choir brothers, a provision which is not found in the sisters" Constitutions. Furthermore, the brothers' Constitutions leave the initiative of confession to the superior, while the sisters' keep the tenor of Mother Aymer's memo.

On the other hand, this regulation is indirectly testimony of an experience of which no other traces remain. The Chapter of Faults was shielded by the strict secrecy about

890 BM, 50.

everything that occurred during it, so that there is never found any information about it in the documents.

The Constitutions record the type of faults about which to accuse oneself: external faults against the Rule during the current week.

For the accusations, which the brothers “can and ought” to make, it is recalled that they must be inspired by charity, and no personal reflections are to be added, only reminding the brother of something he had forgotten, and always during the current week. One, who has been accused by another, cannot accuse him at the same chapter, nor may more than three brothers accuse the same person.

The last article provides:

14. Absolute silence on all said and happening at the Chapter of Faults is of obligation for all the brothers present.

Chapters were held twice a week.

Constitutions of 1840

The Constitutions of 1840 introduce some variations in the Chapter of Faults, to which they devote articles 277-292. First of all, they reduce its frequency to once a week. Next they abolish the public accusations, and provide for them to be made privately to the superior who, without revealing who is the brother informant, is to make use of this knowledge prudently.

They established an order of “classes” for the “confessions”: first the priests alone, then the novices and choir brothers, and last of all the lay brothers.

It is forbidden to try to justify one’s behavior, but the superior is given leave to grant it on his own initiative.

This legislation of 1840 is that which has come down to our times.

8. Houses and Food

The food and lodging of members of the community were from the beginning very austere. They wanted to follow the example of the earliest religious and everybody felt stimulated to do so. This was due not only to the decision to maintain firmly their wish to lead a serious religious life, but also to the urgency of expiating all the atrocities of the Revolution of which they had been witnesses, and above all the profanations of worship and of the Eucharist.

Particularly after the discovery of the Trappist tradition, practices were taking form

and being converted into the law of the new Congregation. Those of the sisters, as we said, especially of the choir sisters, were characterized by a special severity.

The fact alone of having a common dormitory, being required to take turns for adoration every night, is indeed a very hard observance.

The brothers ordinarily had their own room. Some of them slept on wooden boards held up by saw horses, without sheets, and with very few skimpy blankets, so they felt the cold very much during the winter and slept very poorly.

As time went on, worn out by their work –teaching in the case of the sisters, and preaching and teaching for the brothers– they realized that exceptions should be made, almost always at the initiative of superiors, concerned for the health of the religious. So in 1825 there came this legislation.

The Constitutions of the Brothers

Ch. XIII, 1. All the brothers will sleep on straw mattresses, except in case of illness. They will also have a pillow of straw. 2. All the brothers will use woolen sheets in the houses of the Congregation... 8. The occupations of the brothers cause great fatigue, so that every kind of food, with or without meat, is permissible, so long as, for the practice of poverty and mortification, their meals be in keeping with what the country produces and they take care to avoid every sort of excess, whether in quantity or quality. 9. As a rule, the brothers are not to have meals other than breakfast, dinner and supper. Superiors, however, will allow a collation or fourth meal for young brothers, or those who are fatigued, or work particularly hard, whether teaching or at other tasks. 10. The brothers, in the house, will not eat outside the refectory without permission.

The Constitutions of the Sisters

Ch. XIII, 2. The sisters in good health shall abstain from meat, provided they are 21 years old.

It is immediately established that superiors may always dispense from this rule the sisters they think so require. Following the same criterion as the brothers, many details are given about food and its preparation. The sisters may drink wine, cider, or beer, if such is the local custom. The bread will be coarse and baked at home.

8. For dinner the sisters will have soup and two other courses; for supper, two courses only, of which one, as a rule, will be soup; for breakfast, bread or soup.

Just as the brothers, the sisters may never eat outside the refectory without permission; neither may they deprive themselves of food without permission of the superior.

Article 17 provides that the sisters must sleep in a common dormitory, in which the beds will be separated by a curtain. Between the beds, there will be a small, unlocked chest in which the nun can put what she has to use. They will sleep on a straw mattress, not quilted, and on a straw pillow.

9. The Habit of the Congregation

During the period of the Revolution properly so called, it is obvious that they could not even consider wearing a religious habit in public, on account of all the circumstances we have mentioned many times. Yet, just as there were dreams of restoring religious life, it was naturally envisioned “in habit,” as this was part of the traditional image of the religious. It was quite another thing to think up what kind of a habit was to be chosen, so this problem was put off till more opportune times. In the “Regulations” of 1796 there is no hint of a habit, which furthermore was not necessary. We have to wait until the ceremony of August 25 of that year to find the first outline of a habit. This was when the *Solitaires* wore a woolen tunic under their street clothes, which thereby was secret and not seen.

Of what did this habit consist? It probably was what is described in a draft rule of life attributed to Sister Gabriel de la Barre, which we still have in her handwriting:

Art. 37. The cloth of the garment to be worn will be woolen, the same for everyone, and most in keeping with poverty. Linen clothing will not be worn. Shirts, stockings, sheets will be woolen. On retiring there will be worn brown undergarments. On ceremonial days there will be worn a white dress evenly cut with a long train. The ordinary dress will be in the same style but brown. They will wear the red scapular with an embroidered Sacred Heart. The cincture will be of cord with a small wooden cross attached. They will wear a plain bonnet of lawn cloth and plain footwear of canvas or leather. The veil of black taffeta is to be worn only in church, as well as the mantle, which will be red for the two adorers and the one officiating, and black for the others.⁸⁹¹

If this description, which is certainly prior to 1799, reflects an agreement by the community, it is quite possible that the habit worn under the street clothes was the brown tunic.

Christmas, 1799 was the day when the habit was worn for the first time in public, if the interior of a clandestine chapel of the group of *Solitaires* can be called public. This time there was worn a white tunic, which they kept on wearing afterwards.

As for the brothers, we know that on Christmas night, 1800, when Mass was over.

891 ASP.

Father Coudrin blessed a white mantle: “Our Reverend Father then blessed the white mantle which the Zealots wear as a sign of devotion to Mary. It had been modeled on what she herself had shown to our Reverend Mother. From then on he began to wear it in public.”⁸⁹²

The use of the white mantle did not last long, according to Hilarion: “They were obliged to stop wearing it in May 1803, because they feared the looks of the police.”⁸⁹³

As for the sisters, Sister Gabriel de la Barre presents us a picture of the situation at the beginning of the historical epoch called the Restoration, around August 1814.⁸⁹⁴

There was not yet an absolutely uniform costume for each house. It depended on the more or less favorable attitude of the inhabitants of the locality toward religious institutions. Everywhere the sisters dressed in white wool, except for Sees, where they wore muslin. The bonnet differed at almost every residence, but in Paris they still did not dare to wear white ones. Nothing distinguished the sisters from women of the world who dressed simply and modestly. On the feast of St. Louis in 1814, the Good Mother decided to have the sisters wear a white muslin robe and, for headdress, a similar cloak with a hood. From then on the house took on somewhat the appearance of a religious institution.⁸⁹⁵

The Constitutions of 1819-1825

The description of the sisters’ habit, as we knew it up to the Chapter of 1964 was designed in 1819, and included in the Constitutions of 1825:

Ch. XIII, 13. The dress of the professed sisters will be a white woolen robe, a white woolen veil, a white cincture, a white scapular, on which in red wool there will be embroidered the image of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary. The bonnet will be of white percale and muslin, a long white woolen mantle, for the choir sisters, and a long scarlet woolen mantle, for the times when the sisters, whether choir or lay, make the hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. 14. The tassels on the cincture of the Superior General will be of scarlet wool. The scapular will be embroidered in silk, gold and silver. 15. The dress of the novices will be like that of the professed sisters, except they will have neither scapular, cincture nor mantle, and their veil will be of white muslin, small and attached to the front of the bonnet.

The brothers, not yet being allowed to wear a religious habit in public, set in the Constitutions a simple proposal, leaving its enforcement to better times:

⁸⁹² GB, Mem. 75.

⁸⁹³ HL, Mem. 77.

⁸⁹⁴ Regarding the habit of the Poitiers sisters in 1812, of interest is what the Prefect of Vienne says in his “confidential” report sent to the Counselor of State of Napoleon, dated February 8 of that year:

One reason why the ladies of this society have come to be called ‘Trappists’ is that they have adopted (they say for their convenience and for reasons of economy) a costume, which is like the one of that ancient religious body. They wear white woolen robes, but styled almost like those of elderly women of the world, and have a bonnet, which is a kind of nightcap of thick even white lawn cloth.

⁸⁹⁵ GB, Mem. II, 226.

Ch. XIII, 5. It is an established principle that all professed brothers –choir, missionaries or professors– will wear white cassocks, white mantles, white cinctures, white shoes, the scapular of the Sacred Hearts, the ecclesiastical hat. At adoration they will wear red mantles. This garb will be worn when circumstances permit. When the white habit comes to be worn, there will be determined what kind of a habit the lay brothers will wear.

This orientation was not easily achieved, nor without an exceptional solemnity, as may be seen in the acts of the Chapter session, September 25, 1819:

(103) After having adopted the six previous articles, the General Chapter dealt with the important question of the religious habit. Almost all the members of the Chapter had long before this been prepared on this point, about which they had reflected very seriously. The deliberations lasted more than two hours. Everything pro and con was weighed most scrupulously. A large number of the members of the Chapter took an active part in the discussion. Some were heard several times. Once the discussion was closed, it was not voted on before there was a fresh recourse to prayer. All the members of the Chapter knelt. Again the *Veni Creator* was recited, a prayer made to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, another to the Most Blessed Virgin and to St. Joseph. Very Reverend Father Superior General warned the brothers that each one should interiorly renew the vows of his profession, and vote as he would were he on his deathbed. There was a period of silent reflection. Then, while the members of the Chapter were still kneeling, the tellers collected the votes, ever taking care to keep them secret. When the votes were counted in the presence of all the members, the result was that the General Chapter voted unanimously to adopt the article, which follows.⁸⁹⁶ (The article already cited follows.)

When the opportunity presented itself on the departure of the first missionaries in 1826, a white habit was improvised, which Father Bachelot and his companions put on September 14 of that year. It seems it was in the same style as the clerical cassock with its roman collar, the only addition being a scapular. This habit was worn by all the missionaries of the Pacific until, due to the difficulty of keeping it clean, and at the request of the missionaries themselves. Bishop Bonamie decided to go back to the clerical cassock in 1843 or 1845.

As for the actual wearing of the red mantle for adoration, remember that it was used for the first time in Troyes. The Founder himself put it over the shoulders of the sister adorers at a solemn ceremony, which took place January 6, 1821.⁸⁹⁷



⁸⁹⁶ ANN., 1964 p. 136.

⁸⁹⁷ The brothers used the Red Mantle for the first time for adoration on September 24, 1824, as Hilarion says in his *Mémoires*, no. 556.

Chapter IV

COMMUNITY LITURGY

In reality, the liturgy of the community is a “practice,” but we wanted to have a special chapter in which to bring together the information we have found concerning its practices of a liturgical nature, because the forms chosen or created contribute without doubt toward revealing its spirit.

For the daily community Mass, doubtless the missals proper to each diocese were used, and about them we know very little. The proper Masses of which we will speak later, came into use relatively late, at least in their common form, except for the feasts of the Sacred Heart and the Heart of Mary. It was necessary to await the Roman approbation in order to establish a stable Congregation “Proper” in all the houses of France.

As for the Office, the Roman Breviary was not adopted until the General Chapter of 1819, and its decisions were not promulgated until 1826. Before that date, the diocesan breviary, which differed according to locality and local traditions, was used.

Here we shall treat of the *Ceremonial* adopted for the reception of novices, profession, renewal of vows, and chapter of faults. We shall also outline the proper feasts and offices, with some added details which enable us to complete as much as possible the general picture of what might be called the “rites of the community.”

1. The Ceremonial

The first complete *Ceremonial* of the Congregation was presented to the Holy See in June 1825 by Father Coudrin, during his visit to Rome. The document in which he presents it was signed October 20, 1824. It was one of the fruits of the General Chapter that year. The Founder himself illustrates for us the method followed and the purpose proposed:⁸⁹⁸

We have preferred to choose those prayers by which devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most Sweet Heart of Mary may be better fostered. We have also appropriated, from among the prayers and blessings adopted long ago by

898 The *Ceremonial* was printed in one volume with the Constitutions, at Imprimerie de Ve. André, Imprimeur-Libraire de l'Evêché of Troyes, in 1826. With a few small necessary changes, it is reproduced in the volume of the Sisters' Constitutions, printed by the same publisher.

other Congregations, those which seemed most suitable for the end of our Society. We have added only those which indicate that we are especially and perpetually consecrated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most Holy Heart of Mary.

Our main objective has been to promote the piety of the brothers and sisters of our Congregation.

We wanted our novices, from the very ceremony of reception, to realize what zeal should direct their minds, what charity inflame their hearts, what fervor enkindle their prayers, what submissiveness accompany their actions.

We also wanted to remind our professed to be, throughout their lives, fervent in psalmody, persevering in adoration, and in reparation for the wrongs committed against the divine Majesty, compassionate with the afflictions of the Heart of Jesus and the sorrows of the Heart of Mary. Thus, recalling to mind the prayers used for the blessing of their habits, each time they put them on they will renew themselves in the spirit of their vocation.⁸⁹⁹

The *Ceremonial* was approved by a decree of September 27, 1825. It was implemented, it seems, along with the Constitutions, for it was promulgated together with them, in the circular letter of February 11, 1826.

It is to be noted that the formulary is identical for the brothers and sisters, with the sole exception of the blessing of the veil, which is mentioned in both the reception and profession of the sisters.⁹⁰⁰

2. The Ordo of the Congregation

Along with the *Ceremonial*, the Founder presented to the Holy See an ordo listing the feasts and proper offices of the Congregation. The petition bears the date September 29, 1824, and was brought to Rome on the journey in 1825, together with the Constitutions. The approbation is dated July 5, 1825 and has a calendar of offices which, apart from slight alterations, coincides with the list in the petition. It was published the same months as the Constitutions, at the beginning of 1826.⁹⁰¹

It is opportune to note here that this ordo is not to be read from a narrow perspective, “our little chapel” as it were, as if in it the whole liturgical life of the community were contained, centering it in what differs from the universal Church. If that were the case, we could not help but think there was a process of shrinkage, since a good part of the feasts in the proper was adopted later on - especially under Leo XIII - by the Church of

899 ANN., 1963, p. 278.

900 We give in Appendix XII, A, some of the more important texts of the *Ceremonial*.

901 Published by the same press of Troyes, in the same year (1826), in a small book of 204 pages (41/4 x 71/2 inches), just as the Constitutions.

Rome. It would be inevitable to feel that the “chapel” becomes smaller as time goes by, and finally there remain in it only St. Pachomius and St. Caprasius.

As a matter of fact, the function of the ordo is quite different. It consists in helping us live the liturgical year in harmony with our own charism, as we would say today, but situating ourselves always in the nave of the Church. Historically, the major moments of the liturgical life of Father Coudrin’s community were the Easter and Christmas cycles, and especially the preparations for these two great feasts: Advent and Lent.

Having said this, we certainly cannot attribute to the Founder or his community the liturgical mentality of our days. Father Coudrin had a spirit formed at the end of the French XVIII century. His Christocentrism is strongly accented and at the same time he has a vibrant sense of the communion of saints. He felt himself in the Church as in a great family, in which the saints of heaven are like elder brothers and sisters who previously occupied our places in the Church Militant, and now devote themselves to us, watching over us from above. He wanted his children, following the most constant tradition of the Roman Church, to be able to invoke them and become accustomed to live, as it were, in their company.

At any rate, the liturgical feasts have a close relation to the life of prayer and piety, and especially to the faith vision concerning the vocation of the community itself, as can be appreciated in Father Coudrin’s *Petition* which we have already quoted.

There is no Congregation which does not have its own ordo, be it in connection with the title it bears, the patrons it venerates, the protectors it honors, or, finally, the various circumstances under which it received the greatest signs of divine favor... In each of our houses we endeavor to make reparation... We chose, therefore, many offices which would stimulate us more to attain this end.⁹⁰²

3. Small Offices of the Sacred Hearts

The Small Offices of the Sacred Hearts ceased to be used by the Congregation, at least in the brothers’ branch, after the General Chapter of 1964. Their use in community prayers goes far back, most likely to the years before 1800.

In the Constitutions of 1825, Ch. IX, art. 14, there is this provision: “All the brothers who know how to read will say every day the Small Offices of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.” This was the verbatim decision of the Chapter of 1819, in the session of September 30.⁹⁰³

⁹⁰² ANN., 1963, p. 272. We give in Appendix XII, B and C, the *Ordo and the Mass of the Sacred Heart Gaudeamus*, which most likely was used in the times of the Founders.

⁹⁰³ ANN., 1964, p. 142.

The Founder sent to Rome a memorandum, dated February 25, 1820, asking for approval of these offices. October 20, 1824, right after the General Chapter, Father Coudrin signed another memorandum, insisting on the matter. He himself presented it the next year to the Holy See. The motives he gives for making his religious say them daily are undoubtedly the same as those which move him to ask for their approval from the highest authority of the Church, and can be summed up in one: to enable us to recall daily our consecration to the Sacred Hearts.

As for the sisters, article 14 of Ch. IX of the Constitutions of 1825 says: "The choir sisters will recite the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin and then the Small Offices of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary."

The General Chapter of 1819 did no more than translate into a norm a custom which had been observed faithfully, at least by the sisters, who added the Small Offices to the choral recitation, whether of the Diocesan Breviary, or the Little Office of the Virgin which was adopted in 1819. Among the brothers, at least Father Coudrin recited them daily and had them bound in each of the four books of his breviary.⁹⁰⁴

In the memorandum of 1824, the Founder says: "Many of the faithful recite these Offices. We especially, from the very cradle of our Congregation, have recited these same Small Offices every day with great fruit. Our devotion has grown through reciting them."⁹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, at the General Chapter of 1838, all those who were obliged to say the Breviary and the lay brothers who knew how to read were dispensed from their daily recitation. They were retained only for the professed choir brothers who did not have major orders. "Art. 312. With the exception of lay brothers, all members of the Congregation who are not in Holy Orders will say every day the Small Offices of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary."

This is the norm which had been in force up to our days.

Due to the importance the Founder gives them, it seems to us necessary to recall them, but we do not have adequate space to give their text, which is in any case still available, thanks to the many editions produced by the Congregation since 1826.

Each hour is composed in almost the same form:

- The introductory versicles of the office, preceded by "V. Heart of Jesus, burning with love for us, R. Inflame our hearts with love for you."

⁹⁰⁴ The first edition for the use of the Congregation is contemporary with the Constitutions published by the same press, in the same format and year (1826). It is followed by an edition without date, but before 1855, then a third edition printed in Paris (1855), a fourth (Valparaíso, 1869), a fifth (Rouen, 1898), a sixth and seventh (Braine-le-Comte, 1911 and 1937).

⁹⁰⁵ ANN., 1963, p. 277.

- A hymn of two stanzas and a doxology, except at Matins, Lauds and Vespers of the Heart of Mary, in which there are three stanzas and doxology.
- An antiphon followed by a versicle, composed of biblical texts, applied to the Heart of Jesus or to the Love of God.
- A prayer.

There are no psalms, so that the recitation of each hour does not come to two minutes, and the whole office does not take 15 minutes a day.

Who was the author of these Offices? At the end of the XVIII century, before the Revolution, many pious books were published containing Offices similar to those used in the Congregation. Our text is the one which appears in an anonymous manual, printed under the title *La Devotion au S. Coeur de N.S.J.C.*, by the publishing house of Jacques Josse's widow, in Paris, 1755.

To identify the author is not easy, for in this period many had no scruples about altering an original text without permission of the author. Sometimes it was done because it was thought it would improve the literary or spiritual aspect.

So to spare the reader tiresome details, we will just give the broad conclusions reached after a thorough investigation. Briefly, it can be said that the Small Office of the Sacred Heart is by Father Gette, S.J., of Lyon, professed in 1686. He entered the Jesuits in the lifetime of St. Margaret Mary, in the patrimony of Paray, and she personally undertook to propagate this Office. As for the Office of the Heart of Mary, it is by St. John Eudes, except for Lauds, which is the work of an unknown author. Both Offices were written in Latin, and the translations have not always been well done.⁹⁰⁶

4. The Singing of the *Salve Regina*

The 1825 Constitutions of the Brothers direct in Ch. IX, art 9: The *Salve Regina* will be sung every evening, at eight o'clock, in all the houses of the Congregation. In the morning, it will be sung or recited after the community Mass." With but a slight variation, substantially the same is provided for the Sisters, as found in the corresponding Chapter IX, arts. 10-11 of their Constitutions.

The singing of the antiphon of the Virgin belongs by its very nature to the Office. However, in the case of the *Salve*, traditional in the Congregation, it does not coincide with

⁹⁰⁶ We have consulted: 1) a small article *Sur les Origines et l'Histoire de nos Petits Offices*, by Scholastic Brother Hin Reichenbach, ss.cc., Valkenberg, 1954; 2) an unpublished article: *Les Petits Offices des SS. CC. de J. et de M.*, by Father. Ignacio Baños, Rome, Aug. 1958; 3) *Historique du texte des Petits Offices*, notes by Sr. Marie Magdeleine Rougier, Paris, 1961.

it exactly. This is so because it brings together the whole community of each house, and does not only concern those who are obliged to say the Office, choir sisters or brothers, as would be the case if there were question of some part of the Office. Therefore we want to dedicate to it a small separate paragraph in our section on the liturgy of the community.

First of all, it is clear that there are two moments when the *Salve* is recited: in the morning, after Mass; and in the evening, after Compline, at a definite time, not only for the brothers but also for the sisters: 8:00 PM. The more important and solemn time is rightly that of the evening, which having a fixed time for everyone, creates a sense in the whole community of having an appointment with the Blessed Virgin.

It is an institution which we find already described in the sketch of a rule written by Bernard de Villemort, at Mother Aymer's dictation, in spring of 1800:

After the Adoration (of the Cross, to the singing of the *Vexilla Regis*), every day of the year except during Holy Week, the *Salve Regina* will be sung solemnly, and all members of each monastery will be present except the sick. Each one will stand with a candle in hand. The *Salve* will be sung after Compline and will be followed by the versicle *Verbum Tuum* with its responses, and the prayer *Omnipotens Sempiternus Deus*. Next there will be sung the antiphon *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, the versicle *Ora Pro Nobis Sancta Dei Genitrix* with its response, and the prayer *Gratiam Tuam Quaesumus*. But this last antiphon will be sung kneeling and without a candle. Both antiphons are intended to place the community anew each day under the protection of the Most Holy Virgin.⁹⁰⁷

It is enough to read these lines to see reflected in them the Trappist tradition, the influence of which is undeniable. Yet it seems it would be an error to think that all the attachment of the community to the *Salve* derived from its contact with La Trappe, dating from the end of 1798. In fact, in a set of rules written in the hand of Sister Gabriel de la Barre, certainly prior to this influence, the *Salve* already appears, although not vested in the solemnity given by the lighted candles. Included among the practices of "l'Immensité", stated in regulations which must be, at the very latest, from 1795, we find a *Salve*, which each member must say at 11 AM.

It is not improbable that the text itself of the most beautiful Marian antiphon had a special resonance for those who were seeking to live their faith in the aggressively hostile context of the Reign of Terror, and that this is ultimately the secret of the community's predilection for the *Salve*.



907 ASP.

Chapter V

LEGISLATION OF THE COMMUNITY

From very early times the community felt the need to draft a “law,” for from the beginning it dreamed of a Religious Order, with houses in various places and numerous apostolic responsibilities. For consistency and stability, there was need of the instrument of the law, that is, to write a “Rule.”

Perhaps the first outline was what is called “The Good Father’s Rules.” It consists of a sheet of paper, folded in half to form four letter-size pages, with writing on a little more than three of them. A short introduction gives an overall view of the mind of the Founder. Then there is described the daily order to be followed. It is in Father Coudrin’s handwriting, and there is no reason to think he is not its author. On the contrary, it seems very much in harmony with his approach to things. It is not likely to be later than 1796-1797.⁹⁰⁸

Next we have an unfinished effort of Sister Gabriel de la Barre, which apparently never came to light and had no influence on the composition of the Constitutions drawn up later on. This is unfortunate, because it contains many original and keen observations, especially a sense of equality and of poverty which deserve not to be forgotten. As a document, it is only a testimony of the thought of Sister Gabriel. When she saw other formulas appear, it is likely she carefully hid this interesting work, perhaps out of the modesty so characteristic of her. It must date from before 1799, because the brothers’ branch is not mentioned. The Superior General must be chosen each year by a two-thirds majority vote of the whole community, and she may govern for no more than three years. With the coming of Mother Aymer to the forefront, after 1798 this no longer seems compatible, so it is possible that this work is of that year at the latest.⁹⁰⁹

The year 1798, as we mentioned in its proper place, was Father Perrin’s year. He, too, wrote a project of Rules somewhat oratorical and grandiloquent. He had been a Montfort

908 BP, 2197.

909 This “Set of Rules,” the original of which has been identified recently in the Archives of our Sisters at Rome, is not found in the catalogue of Father Cools.

Father, and his experience of common life was of benefit to the community, especially because outside of the Founder, he was the first who took notice of the presence of a new religious community. He took many steps favourable to it, especially advising Mother Aymer to take on authority.⁹¹⁰

All these codes testify to a very early exploratory process in the community, which gradually was becoming convinced that it could not launch itself by writing up a Rule or Constitutions.

Later on, in 1804, Bishop Reilly of Poitiers seems to have called upon Sister Gabriel to present the Constitutions of the Congregation. The letter in which the Superior of Poitiers informed the Foundress of this has been lost. We have only a letter from Mother Aymer who replied on February 13: “Keep on putting off your bishop as long as you can. If he forces your hand, tell him we have to write them up. Be firm and show him only, as he puts it, a scrap of paper and the volumes of the Rule of St. Benedict...”⁹¹¹

Years later (1820-1823), Sister Gabriel, recalling this event, writes:

He absolutely wanted the Constitutions and Rules of the Congregation presented to him. The Revolution had so wearied even the best minds, that it was believed that the Constitutions of a religious Congregation are drawn up by the stroke of the pen from its very birth. We were still in the cradle, and were being asked for what is but the fruit of long experience; something God alone can do, little by little, according to the circumstances over which he alone is the Master. We replied that we had no Constitutions. This confirmed the bishop, or rather his council, in the opinion that we were nothing.⁹¹²

This observation makes very clear the criterion with which the community approached the problems of the Constitutions. For it, they were not an inspired and charismatic text, which, once composed, conditions life as, we might say, a “definitive” expression of God’s will. For this community, whose Founders did not sense in themselves this charism, the law must be the fruit of experience, patiently and humbly worked out.

1. Rule of St. Benedict

In the *Petition* the sisters directed to the Vicars Capitular of Poitiers, which was approved June 17, 1800 and signed by all the members beginning with Mother Aymer, they say: “Our principal external practices are taken from the Rule of St. Benedict...”⁹¹³

In the *Petition* directed to the Pope in 1800, signed by both Founders, at the end of

910 Rules of Father Perrin: PAC, 1148.

911 BM, 153.

912 PAC, 5213, 102.

913 ANN., 1963, p. 175.

1800: “As grafts on the trunk of the glorious St. Benedict, practicing the austerity of his life, softened by the Holy Love of the Divine Hearts of Jesus and Mary...”⁹¹⁴

Finally, in the *Petition* the brothers directed to the Vicars Capitular of Poitiers, which was approved May 20, 1801: “... A number of priests and laymen forming a society under the name of Zealots of the Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, practicing in part the Rule of St. Benedict, with particular constitutions...”⁹¹⁵

There is no doubt, then, that the new Congregation invokes as a foundation the Rule of St. Benedict. Since the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) which prohibited the proliferation of new religious congregations, laying down as a condition for every foundation the adoption of one of the rules already approved, all invoke one of the four recognized rules: St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, or St. Francis.⁹¹⁶

What we are interested to know is how the Founders arrived at the Rule of St. Benedict, and the significance they gave to it. Was it a mere formality? If this were the case, it seems they should have had recourse to the Rule of St. Augustine, which is shorter and more neutral, and so allows greater liberty in constructing a new rule. The Jesuits, for instance, invoked the Rule of St. Augustine.

The Benedictine Rule was very well known in Poitiers in the Founders’ time. It seems that, counting both “blacks” and “Bernardines,” there were less than twenty Benedictines in the city. (These are, respectively, what we today call Benedictines and Cistercians - not Trappists (TR).) But there were at least two, if not three, monasteries of women who followed the Rule of the Holy Patriarch. Furthermore, after the revolutionary torment passed, it must not have been difficult to find in the religious orders of Poitiers copies of the Rule, as well as people who had either heard something about it or actually seen it lived.

Two members of the de la Garelie family, who were original members of the *Solitaires*, had lived in the monastery of Sainte Croix until the Revolution, at least as boarders. But neither is this needed to explain the contact of the first community with the Rule for Monks.

Actually, it seems that the contact would have come about in the least expected way, that is, by means of persons coming from Switzerland (cf. P. 352, *Trappist Practices*). A volume entitled *Some Points*, treating of the practices of the Trappists of Valsainte, Switzerland, is what most probably came into the hands of the Foundress. It was a

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 182.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 184.

⁹¹⁶ IV Lateran Council (1215), Ch. 9.X.3 ,36.

small printed pamphlet which the monastery was distributing at that time in France; a typewritten copy is in our archives. At any rate, all the above-mentioned practices are found in it.

Now the Rule followed by La Trappe is that of St. Benedict. So, when approval was sought, the Rule of St. Benedict was invoked. In fact, the very practices which are designated in the chronicles as “practices of La Trappe of Valsainte,” are attributed in the first petition cited to the Rule of St. Benedict.

Thus, it would be their attraction to the practices of La Trappe that led the first community to the Rule of St. Benedict, not out of the necessity to comply with a formality, but rather as the expression of a vital and profound attachment.

Furthermore, the Foundress herself, and very likely Sister Françoise de Viart and Sister Gabriel de la Barre, had been students of the Benedictines of Sainte Croix, and their life was appealing and familiar to them. Now, through the popular reputation of Valsainte, they discovered a pathway of spiritual generosity and Christian perfection in the *Regula Monachorum*.

As far as Father Coudrin is concerned, it seems he must have read and meditated at length on it, starting out with what Sister Gabriel calls “admiration.” Then and there, among the notes he was taking between 1800-1801 on the charismatic messages received by Mother Aymer, we find the title of the future Constitutions of the Congregation: “Order of Zealots (*Zélateurs et Zélatrices*) of the Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary and of Perpetual Adoration of the Heart of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, following the Rule of St. Benedict as explained in the following Constitutions.”⁹¹⁷

In these notes, Father Coudrin wrote down what he himself had requested of Mother Aymer, and at times there follows immediately the answer received. In regard to the Rule of St. Benedict we find:

Let the Blessed Virgin choose the main articles she wants of the Rule of St. Benedict. We will not have the Breviary of St. Benedict...⁹¹⁸

Many years later, in 1814, when the negotiations with the Holy See for the approbation of the Congregation are under way, taking advantage of the presence in Rome of the secretary, Hilarion Lucas, the Founders send a *Petition* briefly expounding the spirit and objectives of the new community. In the fourth paragraph we find:

This Congregation is consecrated to the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary,

917 BP, 2322.

918 BP, 2319.

rejoices in the patronage of St. Joseph, and accepts the Rule of St. Benedict with its own particular constitutions.⁹¹⁹

The Founder speaks of St. Benedict as “Our Father,” and it is not surprising that in the letter addressed to the members of the Congregation on February 11, 1826, promulgating the Constitutions approved by the Holy See August 26, 1825, and which accompanies the first publication of the same, more than 40% of the letter is devoted to the Rule of St. Benedict.

In spite of the fate of the libraries from the period of the Founders, especially that of Picpus, which was practically annihilated, several copies of different editions of the Rule of St. Benedict dating to before the Revolution have come down to us. They are a testimony to the fact that it was read, following the exhortations of the Founder.

It may be surprising that Father Coudrin insisted so much on having recourse to the source, the Rule of St. Benedict, since we know so well how he held that his Congregation was not of monks.

Actually the difficulty seems to come rather from the viewpoint with which we read it, a viewpoint conditioned by the medieval development of the monastic life. Thus we often forget that the *Regula Monachorum* is a document of the patristic age, from the sixth century, and was written for small communities of 12 or 15 members which grew up around Subiaco. The Abbot mentioned in Chapter II did not as yet wear the mitre, nor was he seated on a high dais with several steps at the meetings of the small community for which the Rule was written. The “Abbas,” of course, expected the veneration accorded to the spiritual fathers of the *Vitae Patrum*, but he was far from being one who lived somewhat apart from the community. Its modest dimensions assured, again as customary in the sixth century, greater fraternity than that possible in monasteries like Cassino in the Middle Ages, or Cluny with its 2,000 monks.

Another prejudice with which the *Rule for Monks* is sometimes read –or perhaps it results from not reading it– is that the determining factor of monastic life is the “choral Office.” Modern commentators deny this and indeed it suffices to realize that the Holy Patriarch brought about in the matter of the choral Office a reform sensational for his times. It consisted in reducing it to one seventh of what was usually sung up to then. In fact, at that time, all 150 psalms were recited daily. St. Benedict distributed them throughout the seven days of the week, in order to make space in the monks’ life for a day’s work. So it is not surprising that he devotes twelve chapters of the Rule to explain the new order of the psalms.

919 ANN., 1963, p. 190.

As for austerity, the Rule is proverbial for its moderation. The Prologue confirms this: “So we are going to establish a school of divine service, in the instituting of which we do not intend anything harsh, anything arduous...” This is so true that modern experts have come to assert that St. Benedict did not impose on his monks more than what was demanded in his time of Christians living in the world.⁹²⁰

This can help us overcome the prejudices that may prevent our understanding Father Coudrin’s assertion that the Rule of St. Benedict is the “foundation of our own.” The Founder, in fact, read the “Regula Monachorum” with the already-formulated intention of founding an apostolic community. Thus he excluded the “Choir” as an essential observance, except for the “Choir Brothers,” which meant the acceptance of a “contemplative” body, one which, as we have seen, did not in fact thrive.

If Father Coudrin read the Rule of St. Benedict in order to make use of it for constructing a non-monastic community, then our concern is to try and reconstitute the perspective in which he read it.

To do this, the first thing that must be remembered is that at this moment –especially in 1798-1799, when the community faced up to the problem of the practices of La Trappe, which it received with admiration– the major Orders had disappeared from France, and no one had the slightest idea when they might be restored.

In their enthusiasm to bring about something new, the Founders were particularly impressed by the examples of Christian and religious life which came from the first centuries of the history of the Church. Like plants sprouting in sand, they develop long, deep roots reaching out for distant streams; or again, possessing a few deep “puddles” of moisture, the first generation of the community was seized with a thirst for what today we would call the “sources.” This ambition to be rooted in the sources must have been nourished –at least indirectly, for we have no testimonies of a direct influence– by the works of the Fathers of the Church published in this period, and also by more contemporary pious works such as those of Father Rodriguez, in which the Fathers, especially the Fathers of the Desert, hold so important a place, and bring us back to such sources as Cassian.

The very names taken by the early religious testify that their imagination lived very much in contact with the early centuries: Isidore (of Egypt); Hilarion, hermit of Palestine and Cyprus; Polycarp; Paul (First Hermit); Anthony (of Egypt); Hippolitus; Pacomius; Arsene; plus the names Bernard, Dominic, Regis, etc.

920 D. Morin, quoted by Dom Cutberth Butler, in his *Monachisme Benedictin*, Gigord, Paris, 1924, p.27.

In this context of a return to the roots, Father Coudrin discovered in the Rule of St. Benedict a useful instrument for reading the Gospel from the perspective of religious life, one in which the regular life is shown as flowing from Scripture. To prove the point it is enough to read the first of the chapters which he recommends especially –not exclusively, for he wants the whole Rule read– which is Chapter IV on the *Instruments of Good works*, seeking to see the biblical roots.

Let us demonstrate this with the first ten verses:

Chapter IV. What are the instruments of good works. 1) First of all, to love the Lord God with the whole heart, whole soul and whole strength. 2. Then, to love one's neighbor as oneself. (Cf. Mk 12:28-31 and parallels: Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28 with the source: Dt 6:5). 3. Then, not to kill. 4. Not to commit adultery. 5. Not to steal. 6. Not to covet. 7. Not to bear false witness. (Cf. Mt 19:18; Lk 18:20; Rom. 13:9; Ex. 20:12-17). 8. To honor all people (Cf. I Pet 2:17). 9. Not to do to another what you do not want done to you. (Cf. Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31; Rom. 13: 8-10; Tob 4:15). 10. To deny oneself to follow Christ. (Cf. Mt 16:24 and parallels: Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23-27, 10:38-39, 14:27).

Father Coudrin, who so loved to read the Scriptures and wanted his children to read them too, must have read these pages with great spiritual satisfaction. It is easy to imagine him feeling that there was no better font where his new community might drink of the religious spirit.

Thus we understand why he was content to give us such dry and disciplinary constitutions, with so little spiritual substance and so exclusively canonical. They were a simple guarantee that by reading St. Benedict we would not succumb to the temptation of making ourselves monks. Yet the evangelical substance for the religious life had to be found in the *Regula Monachorum*.⁹²¹

Furthermore, this reference to St. Benedict appears in the text of the first project of the Constitutions drawn up by Mother Aymer and Bernard de Villemort, in spring of 1800: "The main external practices will be taken from the contents of the Rule of St. Benedict."

The Constitutions included in the Bull, approved in 1817, do not contain any explicit reference to the Benedictine Rule.

We have explained that they were never published, so that the omission was not noticed. At any rate, it was corrected in the editing of the Preliminary Chapter of the Constitutions of 1825, which say in art. 8: "The foundation of our Rule is the Rule of St. Benedict."⁹²²

921 We say: "He gave us constitutions" but we know that he did not personally write them. He did not feel he had the charism to do so.

922 PAC, 1113.

The Chapter of 1838 reiterated this: “The basis of the Rule of the Congregation is the Rule of St. Benedict.”⁹²³

2. Constitutions of 1817

Speaking of Hilarion’s journey to Rome in 1814, and of the negotiations conducted for the approbation of the Holy See, Sister Gabriel de la Barre notes in her unpublished *Mémoires*:

(To obtain the approbation of Rome...) it was necessary to draw up Constitutions. Up to that time we only had “practices.” There were a few rough drafts. The Good Father and the Good Mother waited for experience to mature them. Solely concerned with following the path laid down by Providence, they were always afraid to go faster than the grace which impelled them...⁹²⁴

These “drafts” of which our reporter speaks were essentially two: 1) one composed by Mother Aymer and Bernard de Villemort, the text of which, written by Bernard, is found in the archives of our sisters and is not found in the collection of Mother Aymer’s writings, perhaps because it is not in her handwriting; and 2) one called *General Rule*, in 13 articles, which is found among the Foundress’ writings - no. 51 - and which, according to Hilarion, she composed in 1801: “A great part of the legislation of the General Chapter of 1819 is drawn from what Mother Henriette had written in 1801.”⁹²⁵

We know, however, of three others, which it seems were unknown to Hilarion: 1) One is found in the diocesan archives of Poitiers, written by Sister Gabriel, possibly constituting a resume of the “practices” of which she speaks, presented in the early days, and which Bishop Bailly referred to as a “scrap of paper.” A copy is preserved among the Founder’s writings.⁹²⁶ 2) The one we have already mentioned, written by Sister Gabriel de la Barre, perhaps before 1799, which does not seem to have had any influence on the Constitutions. 3) A “General Rule” in 113 articles, written by Sister Gabriel, which was edited more precisely in short articles, and seems to have had an influence on the Constitutions of 1819-1824. It is kept in the Archives of the Generalate of the sisters.⁹²⁷

There has also been preserved a series of “memos” (The French word used is “billet.” I have translated it by the modern equivalent “memo,” though “note” is also traditionally used (TR).) Mother Aymer addressed to Father Coudrin between 1800 and

923 PAC, 1126.

924 PAC, 5213, 242.

925 HL, Mem. 312.

926 BP, 2241.

927 This document “Rules” is not the same as the above-mentioned General Rule of Mother Aymer, which is much shorter. The acknowledged original is in the handwriting of Gabriel de la Barre; its articles are brief, and it is not unlikely that she is the author, and sent it to Mother Aymer as a contribution. The document is in the Archives of the Sisters.

the first months of 1802. These notes contain many elements later incorporated as part of the Constitutions, as we shall see, and they seem to have had a much greater influence on them than the drafts of “regulations,” as we shall also see.

No matter, none of these documents were available to Hilarion when, in the second half of December 1815, he decided to send a draft to the Founder to be corrected and approved, as we saw in Part I.

Hilarion drew up the draft with no other sources than his familiarity with the Founders, their thinking, and the history of the community of which he had been a member since 1799. He immediately sent it to the Founder who introduced changes of some importance, and signing it on March 28, 1816, sent it off to Rome on April 19; Hilarion presented it to Cardinal Scotti. May 7, the Cardinal requested a Latin translation, which the secretary handed him on May 24. This was the first solid basis in the negotiations for approbation.

Father Anthony Hulselmans has made a minute and detailed study of the composition of the text which was approved, and to his work we refer, hoping that some day it will be published. The text included in the Bull *Pastor Aeternus* is available in the *Annales*, where it was published in 1961, pp. 161ff. The value of Father Anthony’s work endures with the passage of time, thanks to the excellent documentation from the private Vatican Archives and to the method employed, and allows us to follow closely the history of the text.

The examination of the Constitutions was commended by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to five Cardinals: Scotti (Postulator), Mattei, Dugnani, Morozzo (made Cardinal March 8, 1816), and one whose name has been lost. The matter was studied at the “plenary” of August 23 of the same year. Thence came a decree, approved August 30 by the Pope, which directed that the Constitutions be communicated to the Vicar Capitular of Paris, Father D’Astros. In fact, at the end of September, the Vicar received the charge to examine the October 25, 1814 Petition of the Congregation and the Constitutions of 1816.

Father D’Astros had no problems with the Petition, and wrote his recommendation immediately below that of Bishop de Chabot. He made a few observations about the Constitutions which he sent to Father Coudrin September 28, and on the 29th he dispatched the Petition.

September 30, Hilarion replied to the Vicar, proposing seventeen corrections: fifteen in the Constitutions, and two in the Statutes. October 1, Father D’Astros declared himself

satisfied, signed it in this sense, and then the Founders signed adding their agreement, on the same date.

On this basis, Hilarion wrote a new text, incorporating the corrections, and dating it October 22, 1816, sent it to Rome with all previous documents. As a matter of fact, it was not used.

Once Father D'Astros' report had been received, Cardinal Scotti got things moving, and asked the secretary of the Sacred Congregation to circulate the documents among the cardinals.

The reports of the five cardinals, apart from that of the cardinal whose name is not known, were favorable. They made many observations, most along the lines of editorial touching up, but some of considerable importance which touched on the contents. The cardinal who was not in favor thought approbation should be postponed until the Constitutions were in a more finished form; in the meantime the community should be thanked and encouraged to continue its progress. The other four favored approval, with their proposed modifications, and mandating the General Chapters of 1819 and 1824 to complete the text of the Constitutions.

December 20 the Plenary Assembly of the Sacred Congregation was held. It decided to approve, on condition that the Constitutions be corrected according to the observations made by the Commission of Cardinals. This resolution was approved by the Pope January 10, 1817.

Now a definitive text had to be written, incorporating the observations made by the Commission of Cardinals. February 12, the secretary was able to send it to Cardinal Scotti, the Postulator, who approved it, so that the Founder received a copy on March 12.

After having examined the modifications made, Father Anthony writes:

After taking note of these modifications, we can take up the question: who should be considered the *author* of the first Rule approved for our Institute? From all that has been said, it follows that: the author of the definitive text was the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, represented by its episcopal secretary who drew it up, utilizing the draft presented by the Founders and the corrections offered by the Cardinals, and his Eminence Cardinal Scotti approved and confirmed it.

Of this draft the Founders were only the *authors* in a broad sense. It was Father Hilarion who had drawn it up. The Founders had only corrected and signed it.

This is not to say that they did not have a very great influence on the project. On the contrary, we may be sure that Father Hilarion, on composing his draft of the

Rule, always followed the mind of the Founders and the practice which had been established under their direction. We can also be sure that the Founders, when they corrected and signed Hilarion's draft, did so in exercise of their authority. But despite this preponderant influence, it would not be accurate to say that the first Rule approved was the personal work of the Founders.⁹²⁸

Principal Points:

The most striking change was the title of the Congregation. Instead of "Constitutions of the Zealots and Zelatrices of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, Perpetual Adorers of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar," there was given the title which has come down to this day, "Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, and of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar."

Next there is, without any special title, an introduction on the spirit of the community. This, with some retouches, is the source of what is known as the "Preliminary Chapter," and in it the Cardinals made only one slight change in the last article.

Then begin the *Constitutions* properly so called, in which, under the heading "Concerning the General Government of the Congregation," there are 58 articles of varying length, divided into 4 chapters:

- I. *On the Superior General of the Congregation and the Superior General of the Sisters and their Councils.*
- II. *On the General Chapter of the Whole Congregation.*
- III. *Mutual Relations between the Two Congregations of Brothers and Sisters.*
- IV. *On Local Brothers and Sisters Superior.*

Immediately afterwards, under the title *Statutes of the Congregation*, come 49 articles, divided into 5 chapters:

- I. *On the Different Persons who make up the Congregation.*
- II. *On Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, on the Public Office and Other Pious Exercises.*
- III. *On the Vows and on the Novitiate.*
- IV. *Questions Referred to the General Chapter.*
- V. *On the Exterior Association.*

We shall attempt to give a brief summary of the contents, following the order of the chapters:

- I. The Superior General is to name (in a sealed document) a Vicar General, who may replace him in case of death and govern the community while a new

⁹²⁸ Arch.*-41 (09), I, p. 91.

Superior General is being chosen.

- There is a list of replacements in turn for the Vicar.
- The method for the election, in which the professed of the Generalate and local superiors vote, is prescribed.
- There is to be a Council, composed of the Prior, the Master of Novices, the two senior by profession, and three named by the Superior General (actually “all” named by him). This applies also to the Superior General of the Sisters. The Superior General is to consult the Council in all that concerns the governing of the Congregation, but is obliged to follow its opinion only if it has six opposing votes.

II. The Chapter is to be held every 5 years. It is composed of the Superior General, his Council, and all local Superiors. The Superior General may call other religious, provided they do not exceed a third of the *de jure* members. The Superior General prescribes prayers to be said during the Chapter. All religious may write letters to the Chapter.

- Local Superiors bring to the Chapter: 1. a report on the administration of their house since the last Chapter; 2. financial reports for the same period; 3. remarks on the works for which the community is responsible.
- The Chapter has ultimate authority to make decisions on everything that concerns the good of the Congregation. Exception: it cannot appoint superiors, which is the prerogative of the Superior General and Council, but it can “depose.”
- It can transfer the Generalate, which can be located only in Rome or in France, and that of the Sisters must be in the same city as the Brothers.
- The Chapter requires 4/5 of the votes to override the Superior General. To go against the joint opinion of the Superior General and the Mother General, the Chapter needs 7/8 of the votes.
- Before departing, the Chapter must prepare six copies of its decisions.

III. Each year, the Mother General presents a report to the Superior General.

- She cannot found houses without his consent.
- Beginning with September 1829, funds may not be transferred from the Brothers to the Sisters, and vice-versa.
- Each year the Superior General is to send a “Visitor” to the Sisters’ houses.
- The visitation will last no more than 5 days. He interviews each sister at

the parlor grille and sends his confidential notes of these meetings to the Superior General.

- Each sister may give him a sealed letter for the Superior General, the only occasion when she may write without the permission of the local Superior, and of the Mother General. Local Sisters Superior may write the Superior General three times a year without permission of the Mother General.
- Visitors may not prescribe anything during the visitation.
- When a house is so distant that it takes more than two months to get an answer from the General, the Visitor may make provisional decisions.
- If the reports of the Visitors for two successive years find grave fault with the same superior, and if the Mother General does not justify her, the Superior General has the right and obligation to remove said local superior, but only the Mother General may appoint her successor.
- Each year the Superior General, assisted by a brother of his choice, goes to the Generalate of the Sisters, to question each sister. The brother who accompanies him is held to the same confidentiality as the Visitor. He cannot be the Prior General, nor the ordinary or extraordinary confessor of the community, nor have been so within the previous five years.
- It is an unalterable rule that the Superior General may make no decision in regard to the Sisters without prior consultation with the Mother General.

IV. A (brother) local Superior is appointed for three years by the Superior General, who may revoke the appointment for a just and reasonable cause. He must first, however, request the vote of the house council and later inform said council.

- The house council is composed of the Prior, the Master of Novices, the senior “brother missionary” or “brother professor,” chosen by the Superior.
- He may do nothing important without consulting the Council, ‘but is only obliged to follow its judgment when it is unanimous in its contrary opinion.
- The Procurator is obliged to give an account to the local Superior every three months.
- Each year, the local Superior sends to the Procurator General the same reports he must bring to the General Chapter.
- Each brother may write three times a year, without permission of the local Superior, to the Superior General.

- Each year the Superior General sends Visitors to the houses, just as indicated for those of the Sisters.
- Each house of the Sisters is governed by a local Superior.
- When a Superior is to be appointed all professed Sisters will choose three names. From these the Mother General will appoint one for three years.
- A local Superior cannot be deposed without having consulted the Council and secret voting by the professed sisters of the house.
- The Council of the local Superior is constituted in the same way as that of the brothers.
- Other rules are like those of the brothers.

Statutes

- I. The Congregation is made up of: missionaries, professors, choir brothers, lay brothers, and donnés.
 - The missionaries and professors belong to the same class, and one brother can carry out both functions.
 - The choir brothers are dedicated to recitation of the divine office and to Perpetual Adoration.
 - The lay brothers are dedicated to manual labor.
 - All of these belong to the Congregation by profession of vows.
 - The donnés live in the Congregation's houses, but without vows. They are subject to the local Superior in all that has to do with the good order of the house.
 - All that has been said applies to the choir sisters, the lay sisters, and their données.

- II. Perpetual Adoration is one of the principal duties of the Congregation, which consecrates itself thereto as an end.
 - In all houses where there is a sufficient number of brothers or sisters, there must be a brother or sister before the Most Blessed Sacrament "to make reparation...for the outrages committed by men against the divine Majesty."
 - Given the apostolic occupations of the brothers, it will always be necessary to require of the sisters twice as much to establish Perpetual Adoration.
 - The donnés may be employed in Perpetual Adoration.

- Until the General Chapter, brothers and sisters are not obliged to the choral office.
- The brothers with Holy Orders will say the office of the breviary, the sisters the Little Office of the Virgin.
- Brothers and sisters who do not know how to read will say five decades of the Rosary.
- There will be two Chapters of Faults each week. The one for the novices will always follow that of the professed.
- At the Chapter, the brothers will accuse themselves to the Superior, or the one in his place, of external faults against the Rule, and will accept the penance he gives them. The brothers present can mention faults which the one accusing himself has forgotten. Interior faults are not matter for the Chapter.
- The same rules apply for the houses of sisters.
- The brothers and sisters are obliged to go to confession at least once a week. Superiors are charged with seeing that this is done.
- Brothers who are not priests and sisters will receive Communion every Sunday and Friday, on holydays of obligation, on the feasts of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, of St. Joseph, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Pachomius, St. Dominic, St. Bernard, St. Francis Xavier, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, all the double feasts of the Lord and of the Virgin.
- The brothers who wish to receive more frequently, or who were prevented from so doing on the days indicated, must ask permission of their confessor and of the Superior. Communion is to be given to the sick weekly. Priests will not neglect daily Mass, unless they are prevented by a reasonable cause in the judgment of the confessor. The Superior may, for serious reasons, forbid them to celebrate Mass.

III. The brothers and the sisters make simple perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

- The members of the community must keep an angelic purity of body and mind.
- The vow of obedience obliges them to do what the Superior commands, and not to do what he forbids.

- The vow of poverty obliges them not to dispose of their goods without the consent of Superiors.
- They can keep property, but cannot administer their goods, nor alienate them without the express permission of the superiors.
- The Superior General for the brothers, and the Mother General for the sisters, determine in what houses novices may be admitted for profession. In order that this privilege be granted, it is necessary that the regular discipline be kept in said house. The momentary absence of one or two professed does not prevent the reception of profession in a house.
- The novitiate lasts a year and a half, but the Superior General or the Mother General can give a six months dispensation.
- Novices may be received in all houses, but those which cannot profess them should send them to the Generalate before completing six months, or to another house which can profess them.
- The Superior General, or the Mother General for the sisters, can summon to the respective Generalate the novices they judge opportune, but they will have to spend at least three months at the Generalate before profession.
- When the time comes for admitting a novice to profession, the Superior proposes it at the (house) Chapter, leaves three days for “consulting the lights of the Holy Spirit,” asks the brothers whether they have any observations to make, and then the admission is subjected to a secret vote, giving each brother a white ballot and a black one. The vote of the Superior alone is not secret and counts as two votes.
- The novice, if rejected, is to be sent out of the house within 15 days.
- However, the Superior, with permission of his Council, may let him stay up to six months, and present him again.
- A novice who is rejected at a house other than the Generalate, may be admitted at the Generalate, but, in this case he must make a year’s novitiate there, and the Superior General may not dispense him from this.
- Professed who are only traveling through, or who have been at the house two months or less, do not vote on acceptance.
- Within eight days, local Superiors must inform the Superior General of the admission of a novice, of professions, or of a rejection, giving all the personal facts on the candidates, along with their own observations.

- There is to be kept at the houses a register with names and basic data on the novices, and their date of entrance. It will be signed by the Superior and councillors.
- Another register will be kept for the recording of professions.
- A copy of these registers will be sent annually to the Generalate.

(Chapter IV is discussed below).

- V. Concerning the Exterior Association: Superiors of all houses may receive the faithful to a communion of prayers, if they seek to live a more Christian life.
- The men received will hold meetings at the brothers' houses; the women, at the sisters'.

All this legislation was admittedly inadequate and explicitly points out the main gaps which are to be filled in by the General Chapters, already convoked for September 1 of 1819 and 1824, and which should be in session at the most until October 15.

Points deferred to these Chapters:

- Decision on the length of the Superior General's term of office: for life or a definite period of time. Cf. Const. 1.
- Manner of deliberation by the Chapter. Cf. Const. 25.
- Number of brothers and sisters required to establish Perpetual Adoration at a particular house. Cf. Stat. 9.
- Number of brothers or sisters necessary for recitation of public office. Cf. Stat. 13.
- Prayers for deceased brothers and sisters. Cf. Stat. 19.
- Which houses are to be chosen as novitiates. Cf. Stat. 25.
- Conditions for houses which are to be founded in pagan or heretical countries, or in missions outside of Europe. Cf. Stat. 25.

The entire Chapter IV of the Statutes consists of a full list of matters to be determined in Chapter:

- Determination of the habit. Stat. 38.
- Meals, fasts of the rule, and practices of mortification. Stat. 39.
- Necessity of supplying the sick with all needed for cure or alleviation of their ailments. Stat. 40.

- Punitive corrections for those guilty of scandalous faults. It will be decided whether incorrigibles may be expelled from the community. Stat. 41.
- Everything required for maintenance of the sisters episcopal cloister. Cf. Stat. 42-43.
- Capitular rules, submitted for approbation by the Holy See. Stat. 44.
- All unforeseen in the Constitutions, regulated by Chapters. Stat. 45.
- In connection with Chapter V, the Chapter will legislate on conditions for belonging to the Exterior Association. Cf. Stat. 49.

The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars issued a “decree,” which after an historical introduction, inserts the new Constitutions in the form just expounded, and concludes:

The Sacred Congregation of the Most Eminent and Reverend Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, which directs the affairs and consultations of the Bishops and Regulars, by means of the report of its most Eminent Postulator Scotti, having considered the report of the Vicars. Capitular of Paris, having seen what is to be seen, and having considered what must be considered, and then having maturely deliberated the matter, approves and confirms the Constitutions presented for the Congregation under the title of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, together with the inserted Statutes complying with them; however, in such wise that at each General Chapter of the aforementioned Institute there should be enacted new decrees or statutes, the same to be submitted to the judgment of the Sacred Congregation to obtain the necessary approbation and confirmation for entering into effect. The Secretary is to inform His Holiness.

Rome, December 20, 1816.

When the above was reported to our Most Holy Lord by the undersigned Secretary, at the audience of January 19, 1817, His Holiness benignly assented to all according to the vote of the Sacred Congregation.

Rome, A. Cardinal Mattei,

f. Archbishop of Beryte, Secretary⁹²⁹

Now the Congregation was approved. Why was a petition still made for a *Pontifical Bull*? Hilarion says in his *Mémoires*:

The reflections which Cardinal Maury had presented to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars concerning the scant authority accorded in France to the decrees of various curial Congregations based in Rome would help us understand

⁹²⁹ ANN., 1956-57, pp. 4-7.

that it was necessary to have a Bull to present to the Bishops of the places where we had establishments and where we would be able to establish them later.⁹³⁰

The rumor that the Pope was ill, which fortunately turned out to be false, (Hilarion again is our source) brought about a delay in presenting the petition for the Bull until the end of August. Father Coudrin then entrusted Father Vidal with requesting a Bull, which was in fact issued November 17, 1817. After an historical introduction on the Congregation, it inserts the Constitutions, and concludes:

We, therefore, in consideration of the report made to Us by our loving son, the Secretary of the Congregation (of Bishops and Regulars), concerning all that has been done up to now, and in view of how much spiritual good may be expected to be brought about for the Christian People by such a pious work, wishing to grant to the same aforesaid Congregation designated as a Confraternity, every means proper for flourishing each day more and more for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, which have need of relief after having gone through such great trials and tribulations, and desirous of suitably providing in these presents for the realization of the pious petitions of the aforesaid brothers and sisters, *motu proprio* and making use of the plenitude of Apostolic power, We approve and confirm in perpetuity, in virtue of these instruments, by Apostolic Authority, the above-mentioned Constitutions and Statutes and we communicate to them the power, the force and the efficacy of Apostolic strength: perpetual, inviolable, and unbreakable, and We supply, heal and even destroy and abolish entirely and absolutely, each and every defect, whether of law or fact, of formalities, and all other defects, even substantial, and each one in particular, which may have occurred in said Constitutions and Statutes, whether by main or by accessory title, or in any other manner whatsoever, or which might be said, thought, judged or claimed to have so occurred...

So, the community had Constitutions approved by the Supreme Authority of the Church in the most solemn manner. For the first time it had a law which was a law “of the Church,” with full canonical force.

The solemnity of the approbation, not only in the Bull, but also in the Decree, contrasts with the evident imperfection of the Constitutions. It is as if the Holy See, along with showing the gaps in a legislation incomplete under all aspects, above all was taking care to give its blessing and support to the living community, small like a newborn babe, but courageous and determined in its consecration to the service of God and of the faithful, and marked by an enthusiastic devotion to the Pope.

The community itself interpreted what happened as proof of the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin.

⁹³⁰ HL, Mem. 262.

Indeed Father Coudrin, in his notes made on Mother Aymer's charismatic communications in 1800-1802, remarks:

January 18 (1801), between 4 and 5 P.M.: The Good God asked that prayers be offered for France and said they would be answered. He was given the response: "Will our affairs then be successful?" and, "How is this so pleasing to You, seeing that there are so few who pray for it?" The Lord replied: "My Mother wants it." "But...how will a little piece of paper get all the way to Rome?" Response: "My Mother will give it weight and will make it wanted."⁹³¹

In a document of the same period, written no later than 1802, Sister Gabriel de la Barre writes:

From that time Our Lord promised her that we would be approved by the Pope, that the Blessed Virgin would make him do it. She objected to Him that we were practically nothing, and that an institution much more important, a rival of ours, had as protector the Bishop of St. Malo. Then Our Lord answered her: "My Mother's protection is worth as much as that of the Bishop of St. Malo."⁹³²

These communications are from 1800-1801, and they had in this period undertaken concrete measures, such as Mother Aymer's journey to Tours to consult with Father Raboteau, as Hilarion tells us:

It seems to have been the month of November 1800 that the Lord communicated to the Good Mother the first of the graces he was preparing for our Congregation. She had herself been thinking of making the journey to Rome to request the approbation of the Holy Apostolic See. She was advised to consult beforehand Rev. Fr. Raboteau, Administrator of the Diocese of Tours. So she went to Tours... As for her plan of going to Rome, Father Raboteau told her that it was not a propitious moment. He suggested that she send to His Holiness a brief statement of what was practiced in the emerging Congregation. She agreed and promptly returned to Poitiers...⁹³³

The community felt it had received a gift of God, a confirmation, not only of its religious discipline, of its institution, but indirectly, though clearly, of its belief that the hand of God was protecting it, and that Mary by her predilection had singled it out.

Let us recall, for greater clarity, that the foundation spoken of in Gabriel de la Barre's text is that of Father de Clorivière, whose patron since that time had been Bishop Courtois de Pressigny of St. Malo, the same person who fourteen years later would be the first ambassador of Louis XVIII to the Holy See. He, without knowing it, and perhaps in spite of himself, was the instrument of which Providence made use to begin negotiations for the approbation of the Congregation.

931 BP, 2323.

932 ANN., 1962, p. 214.

933 HL, VBM. 59.

As for the “little piece of paper” mentioned by Father Coudrin, considering the date, it seems to have been the “petition” sent to Rome at that time, by way of Father Raboteau, as Father Anthony Hulselmans records.⁹³⁴

3. General Chapter of 1819

The Constitutions approved in 1817 did not become known to the Congregation until 1819, when the Chapter members assembled at Picpus in the last days of August. Up to this date, it was difficult for them to be read by anyone other than the religious of Paris. This, as explained elsewhere, was because the Bull could not be published. In any case, *de facto* that was the situation, and few were familiar with them.

When the double Chapter met –brothers and sisters– the assembly had its program already determined in the very text of the Constitutions, as we have just seen. The program was a heavy one, and charged with great responsibility, and the parallel assemblies laboriously conducted it in 27 sessions, starting September 1.

Right at the first session the problem of the duration of the Superior General’s term of office was brought up. It was decided that it would be for life, after having established the order of precedence: Superior General, Prior, Master of Novices, Procurator, the two eldest councillors appointed by the Superior General, the rest in order of profession.

The fourth session decided that votes at the Chapter would be secret. The decisions of the brothers would simply be “communicated” to the sisters, without interference in their decisions.

The fifth session began treatment of the Constitutions, which by the 27th session had 168 articles, divided into 13 chapters:

- I. Procedure of Deliberation For the General Chapter, art. 1-20.
- II. The Superior General, art. 21-24.
- III. Relations of the Chapters of Brothers and Sisters, art. 25.
- IV. Novitiate and Profession, art. 26-51.
- V. Fulfillment of the Vow of Poverty, art. 52-64.
- VI. Local Superiors, art. 65-79.
- VII. Different Persons Forming the Congregation, art. 80-107.
- VIII. Prayers for the Living and the Dead, art. 108-119.
- IX. Chapter of Faults and Corrections, art. 120-138.
- X. Bed, Dress, and Food for the Brothers, art. 139-149.

⁹³⁴ *Op. cit.* I, 23.

XI. Infirmary, art. 150-159.

XII. Exterior Association, art. 160.

XIII. Closure of the General Chapter, art. 161-168.

A summary of the 21 pages these articles cover in the Minutes would be too long. We note what seems of most significance.

Concerning the “white habit,” it seems that the discussion left an impression of confusion, for many members of the Chapter spoke about it, and some did so many times. The debate lasted more than two hours, and the Founder, before putting to a vote the text proposed, once the discussion was closed, knelt down and said the “Veni Creator”. Then, after an exhortation that the vote be made as if one were on his death bed, it passed unanimously. This was at the 21st session on September 25.

At the session on October 1, it was decided, it seems without much discussion, to adopt the Roman Breviary throughout the Congregation.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of this legislation is the concentration of power in the Superior General’s hands.

In the Constitutions of 1817, there had been an effort in Rome to mitigate this concentration. Let us see, for instance what Father Hulselmans relates about Const. art. 49:

Cardinal Mattei and Cardinal Marozzo are of the opinion that the nomination and deposition of local Superiors ought to be done by the Superior General and his Council, and for three years. The text: “Each house of the brothers is governed by a local Superior, chosen by the Superior General of the whole Order, and recalled by the same at will,” must add “for three years.” and “with the Council.”⁹³⁵

These observations had passed into the text included in the Bull *Pastor Aeternus*, and made up the current wording of art. 49.

At the 17th session, at dawn on September 21, 1819, as the Minutes inform us, p. 33:

After a mature deliberation, by way of secret ballot, the following petition addressed to His Holiness was unanimously adopted, according to what had been decided in the thirteenth session on September 16:

Most Holy Father:

The professed brothers of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, members of the General Chapter assembled in September of this present year, according to article 20 of the Constitutions approved by the Apostolic See,

935 *Op. cit.*

humbly prostrate at Your Holiness' feet, dare to submit to You some reflections relative to article 49 of said Constitutions. This article states: "Each house of the brothers is governed by a local Superior. The Superior General appoints him for three years, with his Council, which is mentioned in the following number. The Superior General may recall him for a just and reasonable cause, about which the below-mentioned Council is to be notified. But the Superior General before so doing must seek the advice of the same Council and by secret ballot learn the views of the brothers at the house governed by this local Superior."

All the members of the General Chapter are quite convinced that it would be dangerous to the welfare of the Congregation for local Superiors to be changed or recalled very often, without any just and reasonable cause. However they think that the general good may often demand changes which would be very difficult to make, if all the conditions prescribed in this article had to be observed.

In fact, Most Holy Father, a local Superior may be changed before three years, either because the general good of the whole Society demands he be given another occupation, or because local conditions call for his replacement, or finally, on account of serious faults charged against him. Now in this threefold supposition, the observance of all that this article 49 prescribes offers the greatest difficulties, and is subject to the greatest inconveniences.

The inconveniences are expounded at length: the objection of a local community, with its limited perspective, to releasing a beloved Superior who is needed in another house; the difficulty encountered by the Superior General in meeting the needs of the life of the community when faced with so many obstacles; when the local bishop has some complaints, the Congregation will fall out of favor with him if it cannot give him satisfaction promptly; if the local Superior is accused of serious faults, the whole local community will have to be informed about them...

The petition concludes:

Struck by so many inconveniences, persuaded moreover, that in any society it is important to centralize power as much as possible, convinced that for the common good all members ought to be unreservedly at the disposition of the Head, the brothers who compose the General Chapter have furthermore made another very important consideration. This is that on leaving to the absolute disposition of the Superior General the recall or change of local Superiors, when he judges it useful, there is preserved in all Superiors the spirit of obedience and detachment, while on the other hand there is avoided the scandal, if –may God forbid– some Superior deserved to be recalled for some personal fault. Based on all these motives and on many others which it would be too long to expound, the members of the General Chapter request Your Holiness to substitute for article 49 of the above-cited Constitutions, the following provision: "Each house of the Brothers is governed by a local Superior. The Superior General appoints him for

three years; but he may recall him sooner, when in his conscience he judges that the good of the Society demands it.”

Awaiting etc. etc. (Then came the signatures.)

It can be said that this principle, that of “concentration of power, “as expressed in this “Petition,” inspires all the legislation of these chapter members; the figure of the Superior General reaches the point of being “sacralized” and becomes an absolute monarch.

It was not only that he was Superior General for life, held in all the common areas of the various houses a place no one else could occupy, and that permissions were requested of him on the knees. In practice, he appointed not only all the local Superiors, but all the councillors, except for one named by the local Superior. Consequently, it may be said that he chose all the members of the General Chapter. Next, he could suspend discussion on a subject at the Chapter, when he judged it opportune; he approved the decisions of the Sisters’ Chapter; no novice could make profession without his consent; he was given the power to alienate the patrimonial property of the brothers without consulting the Council; he could dismiss a professed, without consulting the Council, needing only the favorable opinion of two “prudent” persons. In brief, the Superior General was constituted arbiter and absolute lord of the community.

This fact is a phenomenon which appears to us today almost unbelievable. A certain autocratic tendency would undoubtedly be understandable. But the renouncing of all possible control, abandoning into the hands of one single person the whole destiny of a community, seems to us from every point of view excessive. Yet this excess must have an explanation. What is it?

a. *The influence of the environment*

Today we are accustomed to think of democracy as a form of government perfectly compatible with the faith and Christian sentiments. Pope John XXIII’s *Pacem in terris* can affirm, without alarming anyone, that “The fact that authority comes from God must not in any way lead to the conclusion that men do not have a right to choose their rulers” (n. 52).

In the period of the Restoration in France, 1814-1830, horizons were quite different from ours today, just as right after an earthquake the dust which is raised clouds the more distant view. Democratic ideas of the Revolution were not presented in such a way as to attract a Christian who was well aware of what was going on.

In the name of liberty, there was oppression; in the name of fraternity, the guillotine; in the name of equality, the denial of all rights to anyone who did not give himself over to the storm and strife of the Revolution. These were “facts” not well suited to win over to the revolutionary ideals those who had not arrived at its ultimate goals by way of a lengthy intellectual path.

Thus it was that orthodox Christians who had taken no part in the schismatic revolt nor had communion with the liberal ideas, felt quite alien to democratic attitudes, and inclined to exalt the power of authority.

There is no evidence that Bonald was read or studied in our community, but it was not necessary to read him to have his ideas, or at least sympathize with them. They were in the same world. The main thing is that he developed an ideology, which for us illustrates how a Christian and philosopher of this period in which there were so few Christian writers could think about this question of “power.” It is instructive for us to read some lines from his *Essai Analytique sur les lois naturelles de l'Ordre Social*, published in 1800, which are found in footnote 8.⁹³⁶

936 *Those human beings, organs of sovereign wills in society, and ministers of sovereign action, are properly called power, since they have the “willing” and the “doing” over society...Power exists, then, under one name or another, in every society. But I propose as a fact that even physical unity of power exists always in every society, that is, there is never more than one single man who at any time expresses a will and commands an action in society...I am not unaware that appearances and ordinary language contradict this assertion; but the testimony of the senses must be corrected...Some sophists have not recognized domestic or paternal power, and assuming that beings which are alike are equal, they have broken down marital power, and weakened, even annihilated paternal power...The physical unity of power is evident in monarchy, since the word “monarchy” means simply unity of power...The physical unity of power is a fact even in states which are popular, aristocratic or democratic; for it is in essence the government itself. The number of men who claim or exercise power can mean very much for the tranquillity of a State, but it does not change anything as to the nature of its constitution. I am embarrassed to state so simple a truth: but through all the forms which make up the legislation in a popular State, the number of its deputies and the babble of its orators, I see but one man who proposes a law and others who accept it. For if two wanted to propose it at the same time, the opportunity to speak, out of physical necessity, would have to be given to one and denied to the other. A legislative assembly is then literally and physically only a lottery of power where a chance is drawn at each deliberation. The opinion that wins and becomes law is a will which directs the action of government. He who has expressed it, then, had actually, at that moment and through that circumstance, the will and the way. He had, then, the power of the day and of the moment. Whether the vote was public or secret, whether by roll or by standing up to be counted, he has prevailed among the voters as the “King in his council.”*

(At the end of this paragraph he quotes Montesquieu: “The people are a monarch by their votes, which are their wills. This monarch has ever too much or too little action; sometimes with a hundred thousand arms, it overturns everything; sometimes with a thousand feet, it crawls like an insect.” Now Bonald continues:)

One sees the reason for the endless troubles which agitate popular States. Whenever each one can in turn be the power, it is impossible that many at the same time do not want to be the power (Op. cit. pp. 32-34).

Although this quotation already seems too lengthy, I think it is of interest to complete it with what Bonald says in the same work about authority in religious society:

The same physical unity of power exists necessarily in religious society, the society of God and man;...It is evident that all public religions, and even sects...all recognize one man as founder, legislator, reformer...this man I say, has the will and the way over other men; no matter what his name, his rank and his title, he makes the others subject to his power...Such is the being God—Man whom Christians acknowledge and revere as lawgiver and the power -of the universal or Catholic society...the being who is the bond or mediator between two beings...who can unify them in some way by divinizing man and humanizing God Himself; that is, by making human wills conformed to the divine Will; or worship, alike in some way to human action, sensible and external as it is, “made like to man and found in appearance like man”; thus man is made to know God or make reparation for the crime of denying Him. No longer does God, moved by His necessary and invincible hatred of all imperfection, destroy man. Be thus as Redeemer, Atoner, Liberator of man, preserves God for man, and man for God.

Almost at the same time as the Chapter in 1817 there appeared the work of Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, which presents the lesson the anti-revolutionists drew from the events of this time. In Book II he says:

Man, as a being at once moral and corrupt, correct as to his intellect, depraved as to his will, must necessarily be governed. Otherwise he would be at the same time sociable and unsociable, and society would be at the same time necessary and impossible... Since man is then necessarily social and necessarily governed, his will has nothing to do with the establishment of government...

Some pages further on, descending from doctrine to historical reality, he comments on what happened in France beginning with the Revolution:

A great and powerful nation has just made, right before our eyes, the greatest struggle for liberty ever undertaken in the history of the world. What did it obtain? It has been covered with ridicule and shame for ending up by setting a Corsican gendarme on the throne in place of a French king, and gaining for its people servitude, instead of obedience.⁹³⁷

In view of these two testimonies to the current thinking of the milieu in which our religious lived, their action seems less- inexplicable, and less unusual. So now we must give a glimpse of the interior of the community.

b. Internal conditions

What we relate here refers especially to the brothers' branch, which we were better able to study, and which at this time was still relatively small, as we have seen.

Father Coudrin was a statesman, it might be said a born leader, who took on the responsibility of governing naturally, unostentatiously, modestly. Yet he knew where he was going, made decisions promptly, and gave orders without harshness nor an autocratic manner. He had an extraordinarily developed sense of respect for persons, not only because he did not feel "superior" to anyone and hated being treated as "Reverend" Father, but because his faith vision led him to serve. In brief, the Founder's governing could not have been less authoritarian and those he governed could not have felt less the weight of authority.

In addition to the fact that his style of government showed no signs of tyranny, the Founder was most dearly loved by his disciples. They saw him as a kind father, filled with special concern for each one. He was for all the "man of God," the charismatic leader which Divine Providence had given the community to guide it to its destiny.

The society which is subject to the divine power will be strong and lasting; the society subject to the power of man will be feeble and changeable... (Op. cit. pp. 35-37).

937 *Op. cit.* p. 156.

So to concentrate power in his hands seemed to them quite normal, in line with all that had happened and a faithful carrying out of the designs of God. Furthermore, for them, perhaps any limitation savored of lack of confidence, and they considered that, in regard to one such as their Founder, as ingratitude, as something base.

What they seem not to have realized was that they were establishing a law for the Congregation, and that, the Founder not being eternal, some other brother would necessarily have to take his place, perhaps one without so many good qualities, in any case without the halo of "Founder." The thought must have passed through Father Coudrin's mind, but this kind of foresight did not typify his mentality. The future of the "Work of God" was not spelled out in a system of skillful human precautions, but in the fact, for him perfectly obvious, that the Congregation was truly a work of God and not his. For the future, there was God's Providence.

Be that as it may, the fact is that before the end of the year, all the documents of the Chapters of the Brothers and the Sisters were sent to Rome. January 24, 1820, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars sent them to Cardinal della Somaglia to be examined. His Eminence passed them on to a consultor, whose report is preserved in the Vatican Archives; Father Hulselmans has made a study of it.

The report was not positive. It rejects decidedly the proposed change in art. 49 of the Constitutions of 1817. It points out the danger of despotism (*saper di despotismo* - savor of despotism) presented by the complex of prerogatives granted to the Superior General.

Father Hulselmans gives us a resume:

The report was sent to Cardinal della Somaglia and he kept it until the month of September 1825. On the back of this report is written: "January 24, 1820. May his Eminence Somaglia see it, and return it." "Let it be attached." "Returned by his Eminence September 16, 1825." And the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars concerned itself no further with the matter. Probably it found that the capitular provisions did not fully correspond to the requirements of the Holy See in regard to religious Constitutions. That is what the Good Father thought: "and we received no reply," he says in the petition to the Pope of October 20, 1824, "either due to the circumstances of the times, excessively difficult, or because our Constitutions were still imperfect." He says this at greater length in his *Annotationes memoriales relativae ad Constitutiones, Regulas et Statuta* of the same date.

I think that the "difficult circumstances of the times" did not have much to do with the matter, and that the *magnum motivum* was in fact the imperfect condition of the provisions of the Chapter of 1819. It may also be that the controversy with

Father Lemercier, the pastor of St. Marguerite, about which the Good Father had informed the Holy Father, in a letter of December 1, 1820, and the one he sent to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, may have been partly responsible for the delay in dealing with the ordinances of the Chapter.⁹³⁸

4. General Chapter of 1824; Constitutions of 1825

September 1, 1824, the General Chapter convened, as prescribed by the Constitutions of 1817. At its last session, September 14, it approved the body of regulations and statutes adopted by the Chapter, totaling 45:

- Ch. I. The Superior General: art. 1-4.
- Ch. II. The General Chapter: art. 5-7.
- Ch. III. The Novitiate and the Vows: art. 8-16.
- Ch. IV. Psalmody, Practices of Piety and Other Obligations for Fulfillment of the Vows: art. 17-26.
- Ch. V. Nourishment for the Brothers: art. 27.
- Ch. VI. Prayers for the Deceased: art. 28-30.
- Ch. VII. Houses Founded in Countries of Heretics or Infidels, and the Missions: art. 31-35.
- Ch. VIII. Exterior Association: art. 36.
- Ch. IX. Closure of the General Chapter: art. 37-45.

In art. 40 there is provided:

The General Chapter of the Brothers, considering that the Constitutions and Statutes, approved by the Apostolic Bull *cum plumbo* of November 17, 1817, are incomplete, and that the said Bull refers to the General Chapters of 1819 and 1824 the resolution of a number of important questions, as can be seen from articles 1, 25 and 36 of the Constitutions and articles 9, 11, 13, 19, 23, 25, 38, 39, 40 of the Statutes; considering furthermore that according to the provisions of the above mentioned Bull, it was especially reserved to the two Chapters of 1819 and 1824 to complete the rules of the Congregation; finally, considering that it is in the best interest of all the brothers to be able to see at a glance all their obligations, by finding compiled the Constitutions, Rules and Statutes, has adopted and adopts the following provisions:

There will be brought together under the title of Constitutions, Rules and Statutes of the Brothers of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary and of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, 1. All that refers to the Brothers in the Constitutions and Statutes approved by the Bull of November 17, 1817. 2. All the Regulations of the Chapter of 1819. 3. The Regulations adopted by the present General Chapter. 52 AD-1, p. 101.

⁹³⁸ *Op. cit.* pp. 116-117.

In this same sense Father Coudrin wrote his *Adnotationes Memoriales*, signed October 20, 1824, which may be read in the *Annales* of 1963, p. 266.

It was decided, then, to codify all the legislation that approved in 1817 and that remaining to be approved, from 1819 and 1824. It seems of interest to present some observations by Father Anthony Hulselmans, who studies the matter with his usual thoroughness:

The important task of composing a new text was entrusted to Father Hilarion. The copy sent to Rome and kept in the Vatican Archives is entirely written by him. We must admire the tireless devotion and assiduity he brought to the task of perfecting the Constitutions and Statutes. However, we must remark that there was a certain liberty taken in amending here and there the text of the Constitutions and Statutes of 1817 and of the decisions of the Chapters of 1819 and 1824.

He gives six instances, of which we shall only give the first.

For instance: The second part of article 8 of the Statutes of 1817: “In each house where there will be a sufficient number of brothers or sisters, at each and every hour of the day and night there will be in the church or oratory a brother or sister to make reparation by perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar for the wrongs committed by men against the divine Majesty.” It was omitted in the Rule for Brothers (Ch. IX, art. 1).⁹³⁹

The “on hold” situation created by the “non-approval” of the Constitutions of 1819, and the failure of the Holy See to reply, made Father Coudrin realize that the matter must be dealt with by him personally. So he decided to conduct the negotiations himself in Rome, as soon as the series of missions in the diocese of Troyes was over.

As we saw before, he left, accompanied by Hilarion and Brother Severin, on May 19 of the Holy Year 1825 ‘and arrived in Rome June 8. Saturday, June 18, he had an audience with the Pope, and on Wednesday, June 22, he handed over the new Constitutions and all the documents he had brought along to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

The Prefect of the Sacred Congregation at the time was Cardinal Pacca, its Secretary was Bishop Cosmas Pedicini, and Archpriest Pietro Adinolfi was Sub-Secretary. Named Postulator was Cardinal Morozzo who was familiar with the Congregation, and had been a member of the Commission which handled the first Constitutions. He presented this most recent version to the Plenary Assembly of the Sacred Congregation on August 19.

Of course, a thorough examination of the work of codification had already taken place. This, according to Father Hulselmans, had been entrusted to a consultor; he passes on to us that man’s judgment on the famous article 49:

⁹³⁹ A. Hulselmans, *Op. cit.* pp. 120-123.

The change the brothers of the same Congregation propose on article 49 of the Constitutions is the same that the sisters have proposed on article 55. The same reasoning applies to both: if this Congregation had the privilege of having as Mother General an angel, the proposed reform could be approved. But if she must be of flesh and bone the proposed article would end up by bringing about an intolerable despotism.⁹⁴⁰

Thus the Consultor pointed out various corrections which were adopted by the Cardinal Postulator. The election of Superiors General *ad vitam* was accepted, but it was determined that they could make no decisions about important matters of government without consulting their Council; that they could not recall local Superiors before the three year term of office, without the consent of the Council; the same was to hold for changing from one class to another.

The report presented to the Plenary Assembly of August 19 justified these changes:

All these Decrees were made in order to exclude a total independence and dominion, which the respective Superiors arrogated to themselves in the aforesaid General Chapters (1819-1824), who having to remain in office for life, would have been rather arbitrary if they did not have to depend on anybody's counsel.

In view of this, it is determined that, both these Chapters being approved by the Holy See, there must be added in the formula of profession of novices that they will observe *the Constitutions, Statutes and Rules which the Holy Apostolic See approved November 17, 1817 and confirmed by a later Decree.*

The most difficult change for the Founder to accept was perhaps the one which established a different procedure for the acceptance for profession of lay brothers. Up till then, the House Chapter always met and voted on whether they should be accepted. The Holy See decided, in 1825, that the lay brothers would be received by the House Council and not by the Chapter. Father Coudrin regretted this very much: He wrote to Father Philibert Vidon January 11, 1826: "We have had the good fortune that all approved by the Holy See has reached us without incident. There are some changes, especially regarding the admission of lay brothers. I am quite upset about this, but it is the Pope who has called for this. There is nothing to be said."⁹⁴¹

Let us come back to the Decree of approbation. On August 24, Cardinal Morozzo took action on the Decree which was confirmed by the Pope on the 26 of the same month. Father Hulselmans remarks:

It is truly remarkable that the Decree only speaks of the approval of the two General Chapters of 1819 and 1824, and not of the Constitutions, Rules and Statutes in the

⁹⁴⁰ Hulselmans, *Op. cit.* p. 129.

⁹⁴¹ BP, 1096.

new wording decreed by the Chapter of 1824. This is explained by the fact that the Holy See considered these decisions as a complement and an explanation of the first Constitutions approved in 1817 in *additamentum et explanationem suarum Constitutionum*.” So it sufficed to approve what had not been as yet approved and incorporate it, so to say, in the body of the Constitutions approved so solemnly by the Bull of November 17, 1817. In this way the Holy See made it understood that it considered the *Constitutions, Rules and Statutes* presented in 1825, not as a body of new Constitutions, but as a revised and augmented edition of the Constitutions of 1817. There could be no better way to bring out the perfect continuity between the Rule of 1817 and that of 1825.⁹⁴²

The approved Constitutions, with all the amendments introduced by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, were published in Troyes, and circulated in the Congregation with a Circular Letter which serves them as a prologue, signed by Father Coudrin on February 11, 1826.

The title is: “*Constitutions Règles et Statuts des Frères et Sœurs de la Congrégation des Sacrés Cœurs de Jésus et de Marie, et de l’Adoration Perpétuelle du Très Saint Sacrement de l’Autel*». Next comes what has ever since been called the *Preliminary Chapter*, in which the introductory articles of 1817 had been completed. For greater details on this, consult the excellent work of Father Hulselmans, published in *Etudes Picpuciennes* in 1945.⁹⁴³

The principal novelty of the new codification consisted in assembling the legislation referring to the Brothers in a “Part I” of 258 articles, and that referring to the Sisters in a “Part II,” which has 258 articles more. The division by “Chapters” is almost perfectly symmetrical. We say “almost,” because there are some differences, as we will now see.

BROTHERS		SISTERS	
I.	Superior General 1-20	Superior General of the Sisters 1-20	
II.	General Chapter of the whole Congregation 1-36	Authority of the Father General and local Father Superiors over the houses of Sisters 1-21	
III.	Mutual Relations of the Two Congregations, of Brothers and Sisters art. 1-2	General Chapter 1-17	
IV.	Different Persons who Compose the Congregation 1-11	Different Persons who Compose the Congregation 1-20	
V.	Novices and Novitiate 1-42	Novices and Novitiate 1-28	

942 Hulselmans, *Op. cit.* p. 138.

943 Published in English in Fairhaven in 1961: *A Historical Account of the Preliminary Chapter of Our Rule*.

VI. Local Superiors 1-23	Local Superiors 1-18
VII. Vows and their Fulfillment 1-20	Vows and their Fulfillment 1-14
VIII. The Rule and Permissions 1-13	The Rule and Permissions 1-20
IX. Exercises of Piety 1-22	Exercises of Piety 1-21
X. Confession and Communion 1-5	Confession and Communion 1-7
XI. Chapter of Faults 1-20	Chapter of Faults 1-11
XII. Prayers for the Living and the Dead 1-15	Prayers for the Dead 1-9
XIII. Bedding, Dress and Food of the Brothers 1-11	Food, Dress, Dormitory, Lodging 1-22
XIV. Infirmary 1-10	Fasts of the Rule and Practices of Mortification 1-2
XV. Houses which Might be Established in Heretical or Pagan Countries, and Missions 1-4	Infirmary 1-12
XVI. Exterior Association 1-4 Final Chapter of Brothers)	Cloister 1-3
XVII.	Education of Youth 1-8
XVIII.	Houses which Might be Established in Heretical or Pagan Countries 1
XIX.	Exterior Association 1-4

On the last page there is the French translation of the approbation because the original text was in Latin.

In his “prologue-letter,” the Founder said:

We transmit to you today the Rules drawn up by our General Chapters, and confirmed by the Holy Roman Church, by that principal Church, the center of Catholic unity, and source of all spiritual jurisdiction.⁹⁴⁴

There is no doubt that Father Coudrin intended to send a definitive text, because this had been his aim throughout the negotiations for approval, as may be deduced from his circular letter of September 20, 1824:

Divine Providence, whose designs are ever filled with mercy, had, without doubt, permitted the Holy See to defer up to this day the approval of the regulations of the first General Chapter, in order that, at one and the same time, there could be obtained the confirmation of all our rules henceforth brought together and invariably fixed.⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴⁴ BP, 980.

⁹⁴⁵ BP, 981.

Indisputably there was progress made in the legislation, and it must be admitted that for the first time there was presented a code of laws fairly complete and well-balanced. However it cannot be denied that there were still many gaps. Perhaps we discover them with greater facility than was done in that period, yet they are very objective as Father Hulselmans clearly shows on making a short list of them: inadequate formulation of the duties of superiors; deficiency in the chapter on “Novices and the Novitiate”; almost nothing on the houses in pagan countries, etc.; so that the lack of legislating does not seem definitively ended. Father Hulselmans concludes:

So there remained something to be done by subsequent chapters. This proves of itself that the Founder did not intend that the Rule of 1825 was so complete and so perfect that in it there would never be anything to change or complete. If in his writings he stresses the perfection of the *Constitutions, Rules and Statutes*, this only meant that the Rule of the Institute, after the first efforts of 1816 and the somewhat confused additions of 1819, had reached a state of maturity which enabled it to be spoken of as a body of Rules worthy to be presented for approbation by the Holy See.⁹⁴⁶

This Rule of 1825 was presented later, during the period of polemic vehemence unchained by the schism of 1853, as the *Rule of the Founders*, and as something “sacrosanct,” dictated by God to the Good Mother, etc., etc. We cannot give here the history of this crisis, but it is certain that this point of view has not the least foundation in historical reality, as we have seen. Father Hulselmans has shown this very effectively and anyone interested in a fuller knowledge of this topic has but to read his interesting study which seems to exhaust the subject.

5. Constitutions of 1840

As we have seen in Part I, the Founder did not summon the General Chapter in 1829 or 1834. As Father Hulselmans thinks, the most probable reason was the political situation. Father Coudrin thought it was so threatening that he had bought a house in Rome, where refuge could be taken in case of persecution. The recollections of his youth made him perceive in the coming tempest something of the same sort as the Revolution. It seems natural for him to have feared to bring the members of the community to Paris in this atmosphere, when anything could happen. In fact, shortly thereafter, the July Revolution of 1830 broke out during which Picpus had to pay such a high price for the social changes, especially in the sacking of the house in February 1831 which was its prolongation.

⁹⁴⁶ *Op. cit.* pp. 152-153.

Then came the death of the Founders, Mother Aymer on November 23, 1834, and Father Coudrin on March 27, 1837.

The election of Mother Aymer's successor, presided over by the Founder in person, and as it were validated by his authority, presented difficulties to no one. On the other hand, the election of Father Coudrin's successor brought about a moment of tension which revealed diverse opinions, which was quite normal, but also made very evident the inadequacy of the Constitutions of 1825 on this point.

It was all too clear that the participation of the community at so decisive a juncture was obviously deficient. The great "elector" continued to be the deceased Superior General, and the relative majority did not give the one elected a communitarian backing which would let him feel more secure.

In spite of all this, there were no factions nor parties, and everybody, conscious that the law in force had been scrupulously applied, respected the election without any major problems.

The new Superior General lost no time and directed that the General Council get down to work preparing the next Chapter, the greatest responsibility of which was that of continuing the task of perfecting the Constitutions. The new Superior General saw this clearly and had reached his decision promptly. However, he kept knowledge of his intention from the majority of the community because this was confidential work of the Council, and the chapter members would know of it once the draft, having been patiently worked out, was presented to them at the Chapter.

In the Council, the soul of the "reform" was the restless Hilarion, who doubtless was one of those chiefly responsible for the composition of the new Constitutions, which later on, he would attack as an abuse of authority by Bishop Bonamie.

Hilarion and his partisans said later that at the Chapter the votes had been equally divided and that the self-willed Superior General had decided in favor of the "reform" by his vote. Unfortunately there is no way of verifying whether this was just another calumny, or whether it was actually so. At any rate, if it was true, it would have been a scrupulous application of the law of 1825.

Father Hulselmans, who has studied the matter with his customary thoroughness, thinks, not without reason, that the diversity of opinions was at the time due to timing—the Chapter was in session scarcely 17 months after the Founder's death—and not due to disagreement on the nature of the new version. After the Constitutions of 1825 had been in effect for 12 years, experience showed that the perfecting of the Constitutions was necessary.

At all events, no one at the time held the Constitutions of 1825 to be of immutable value. Furthermore, according to tradition, the one who had shown herself least willing to accept them, even to the point of not passing them on to the Communities, was Mother Aymer herself, from whom, according to the partisans of Hilarion, they came in a charismatic way. She called them “the Rule of Hilarion.”

September 1, 1838, the General Chapter began; it held its 35th and last session on October 12. At the second session, there was approved a provisional article, valid for the duration of the Chapter. It said:

When each of the brothers, following the order prescribed by the Rule, has explained his reasons, if he judges it opportune, each brother will have the right to have the floor, until the majority judge that the question has been sufficiently clarified.

It cannot be denied that this represents progress, not in the direction of despotism, but of democracy, of participation of the community. Prior to this, the Superior General of his own accord and ignoring others, could decide that debate was over and the discussion closed.

From this moment, there began the minute revision of the Constitutions, which were then codified. The Preliminary Chapter was preserved intact, and only article XII underwent a very minor retouch.

First Part: Constitutions: art. 1-171.

- I. Different Persons who compose the Congregation.
- II. Very Reverend Father Superior General.
- III. General Chapter.
- IV. Local Superiors.
- V. Reverend Father Visitors.

Second Part: Rules and Statutes: art. 172-447. 1.

- I. Novices and Novitiate.
- II. Vows and their Fulfillment.
- III. The Rule and Permissions.
- IV. Chapter of Faults and Corrections.
- V. Exercises of Piety, Fasts and Mortification.
- VI. Bedding, Dress and Food.
- VII. Infirmary and Care of the Sick.

- VIII. Prayers for the Living and the Dead.
- IX. Houses which might be established in Heretical or Pagan Countries, and Missions.
- X. Donnés.
- XI. Exterior Association.
- XII. Duties of Local Superiors in Relation to the Houses of the Sisters.

About this text, Father Hulselmans observes:

The principal merit of this new edition of the text of the Rule does not consist primarily in the considerably augmented number of articles which filled up a great number of gaps in the Rule of 1825, but in the precision with which the authority of the Superior General and that of the General Chapter was defined. The election of the Superior General would from then on be made by the General Chapter, and at the Chapter of election there would take part the delegates chosen by inferiors. Under the Rule of 1825 this election was almost exclusively reserved to those religious appointed by the Superior General now deceased (members of the Council, local Superiors). So it was strongly influenced by the last Superior General in office.⁹⁴⁷

It may be said that this constituted the most important difference from the spirit of the Constitutions of 1825. But nobody today could claim, with any hope of finding a basis in the documents, that this tendency toward absolutism which the Holy See so firmly rejected, belonged to the most essential nucleus of the Founder's spirit. We have already said what seems to be the most plausible explanation: a kind of sluggishness on the part of the chapter members, fomented by the affection which bound them to the Good Father, which prevented them from opening their eyes to the future reality of the community, in which he would no longer be present. In other words, a resistance to taking the step which, moving on from the charismatic period of the foundation, would lead them to the continuance of the Congregation in time, with its inevitable institutionalization.

Bishop Bonamie took this step, and did so very well, with great fidelity to the pristine spirit. The crisis which ended in the schism of 1853 was not important except that it stung the community at one of the most sensitive points, fraternal charity, and because the personal crisis which is its total explanation was a crisis of the man who held in his hands all the threads of the external relations of the Congregation. Thereby is explained how, viewed from the outside, it would appear a great crisis, but from within, one that was inconsistent.

⁹⁴⁷ Hulselmans *Op. cit.* 195

Bishop Bonamie sent to Rome all the documentation required for the approval of the new Constitutions in December 1838. When he saw that months were going by and no response was given, he decided to go personally to the Eternal City to expedite the negotiations, as did the Founder in 1825.

He left for Italy at the beginning of May, and was received several times by Gregory XVI. After a minute examination, and extended conversations, the Pope gave his definitive approbation to a text which had been considerably retouched by the Sacred Congregation, in his Brief of March 24, 1840.

Father Hulselmans summarizes the atmosphere in the Congregation on this subject at that moment:

Through the pontifical approbation, as stated forcibly in the Brief of 1840, the objective had been reached: the Congregation had a text of a quite precise and well ordered Rule. This was to enable it to regulate the life of the Institute and to lay out the path all its members were to follow to the end proposed by the Founders. Everyone was not in agreement with Bishop Bonamie when he proposed to perfect the Rule of 1825. But once the reform had been accomplished and the Holy See had given its approbation, not a single dissenting voice was any longer heard. Father Martin Calmet wrote in his *mémoires*: “As for us, I think I can assert that everyone received with joy and satisfaction that our Rule, modified by the Chapter of 1838, had been approved by the Sovereign Pontiff. I do not think that during many years anyone ever thought of censuring this Chapter for having introduced in the Rule very beneficial perfections.”⁹⁴⁸



948 Hulselmans *Op. cit.* I, p. 288.

Chapter VI

EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY

What we have said about the tendency toward despotism manifested in the legislation of the community obliges us to examine its exercise in practice. We want to find out whether actual use was made of the all-embracing powers which the law put in the hands of the Founders, powers which at their root sprang from the fidelity on which they counted in the minds and hearts of their disciples.

First of all, we must note that the problems of governing the sisters were quite different from those presented in the leadership of the brothers. This was due not only to the obvious differences between masculine and feminine psychology, but to many other factors which we will briefly indicate.

The first distinguishing factor is the number of members in the various communities. There were relatively few brothers in each house; with the exception of Picpus, there were rarely more than 10 or 12. Yet at the sisters' houses there were never less than 25 or 30.

Secondly, due to the attitude of the times, although both communities maintained contact with the civil and Christian community of the various cities, the life of the sisters was much more secluded "within the walls" of the convent than that of the brothers. Whether they were priests or not, the very nature of their activities obliged them to have greater contacts with the "outside," the world of the laity.

Finally, their formation was quite different. While the brothers, at least the priests, had at least finished seminary studies, even the better educated choir sisters had only secondary studies.

From all this there follows a greater disposition on the part of the brothers, in general, to practice religious obedience as an assumption of responsibility, and on the part of the sisters, in general, a greater danger of reducing the same practice to its abdication.

Another aspect worthy of consideration while studying the exercise of authority in the early community of the Congregation is the distance separating the other houses from the Generalate in Paris after 1804. This remoteness favored a certain decentralization, accentuated at times by the rarity of visits by the Superiors General, and the degree of independence or dependence in the personalities of local superiors.

Having said this, we shall sketch here three topics which we think will help in understanding what the actual government of the Congregation was during the lives of the Founders: 1. Relations between Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer. 2. Characteristics of Father Coudrin's government. 3. Advice on governing by Mother Aymer.

We shall only give a sketch, as we said, of these topics, because on the one hand, the matter is of great import, and on the other, almost unexplored. For its adequate elucidation much expertise would be required and research, which we have done but superficially. With this reservation, we make bold to write what follows.

1. Relations between Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer

The style of government always depends in large measure on the character of the person exercising it. This is particularly so in the case of the founder of a community, who by his very function is forced to expend in it all his creativity in a very personal manner.

Since the community of which we are treating had two branches, each with its Superior General, it is evident that its actual government was strongly conditioned by the character of both Founders, and by the nature of their mutual relations. This is especially so when, as in our case, acting harmoniously was ever a norm, since they had to make of both branches a single religious family.

Unfortunately, the biographies written up to now of Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer hardly touch this point, if they do not avoid it altogether, even though the documents are abundant. There is all the correspondence between the Founders, which is preserved almost intact, and innumerable testimonies of their contemporaries.

One thing is beyond doubt. There existed between Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer a very close and constant spiritual friendship, which contributed decisively to assure unity and harmony between the two branches of the Congregation they founded. Of course, it is not always easy to discern the spheres and fibers of the mutual influence, which was certainly there, as it always is between two persons joined in a true friendship.

In the particular field of the government of the Congregation, it has been said at times that it was Mother Aymer who gave the orders, and that Father Coudrin, forced by circumstances to live outside of Paris after 1820, would have left everything in practice to her. It is possible that, on the level of the domestic administration of Picpus, this would be partly true – first, because Mother Aymer was in fact the Procurator of both houses, and we know by experience how much weight economies have in running houses, and

how one must be able to count on them to keep things going, especially in a case like Picpus, with great works conducted at great cost.

There was, however, a deeper and stronger source of Mother Aymer's influence. She enjoyed the esteem of everyone, and, at least in the documents, it seems there was never a question of this.

Everybody, beginning with the Founder himself, held her in deep veneration, on account of their estimation of her virtue, and the more or less distant echo they had heard of the supernatural communications she received in prayer. Everybody consulted her and she had no need to intrude in anything to be in the middle of everything. This was encouraged by Father Coudrin himself, who saw in it no risk but rather many advantages.

Another factor which must not be forgotten is Father Coudrin's temperament. He was called "Good Father" because he was so kind. This kindness, however, was not an amorphous softness, and it would be a great error to conclude that he was someone who could be manipulated. The Founder was, in fact, of a very active and dominant character, very prompt in making decisions, and very tenacious in holding on to them. At any rate, he was the opposite of a "pushover."

This could be verified by the clergy and civic authorities of Mende when he was Vicar General (1802-1804), or by Chateaubriand himself, when he thought he could give him rules of conduct at the Conclave.⁹⁴⁹

He calls himself "timid," and certainly he always had a certain reserve with regard to the whole world of high politics and high society, being a "country boy" who went from a quiet little Village to the city, and later to the Capital. Yet his timidity did not come from any lack of self-assurance or slowness to take action. In other words, his was not the timid personality which use of the word often implies.

In dealing with Mother Aymer, after much reticence, due to his natural distrust of extraordinary phenomena, he acknowledged her prophetic charism. Consequently he

949 In *Mémoires* from Beyond the Grave, Bk. XIII, there is a dispatch of Chateaubriand when he was the French ambassador in Rome. It deals with the Conclave. The published text has mutilated the original which Sister Magdaleine Rougier discovered in the Archives Etrangères: «*The conclavists who accompany our cardinals seemed to me responsible men. Only Father Coudrin, of whom you have spoken to me, has one of those dense and narrow minds in which nothing can enter. He is one of those men who entered the wrong profession, and instead of being fierce soldiers, have become implacable priests. You cannot but know that he is a monk, the head of an order, and that he even has Bulls of establishment. This is not at all consonant with our civil laws and our political institutions. It is to be feared he will give violent counsel to Cardinal de Croy, who, left to himself, is an excellent prelate, very gentle, moderate, generous. He had decided to vote with his colleagues and to follow the line I was permitted to trace out for him. But today, secluded in a cell with Father Coudrin, will he not change his decision? I would not dare to answer that.*»

For us, the indignation of the romantic ambassador of Charles X reveals but one thing: the failure of his diplomacy when he tried, as he had done with the rest of the French cardinals and conclavists, "to trace a line" of conduct in the election of the Pope. There can be no better vindication of Father Coudrin's spirit than this.

accepted as something from above what she presented to him as a message. Here, however, we come to a point where a lack of information about the opinion of the community lends itself to misunderstandings.

We do not have any documentary proof that these communications continued after 1803. Inasmuch as without documentation we cannot assume they did, we must assert that, as long as the contrary is not proved, after this date they did not exist. We are confirmed in this stand by the fact, mentioned by Hilarion, that the General Chapter of 1819, in its efforts to compile the Constitutions, took very seriously the memos on the communications of Mother Aymer in 1800 - 1801, but as something from the past. If the Foundress' revelations had been occurring during the Chapter, it would seem to have been much more simple to ask her to write about them at that time, without need of referring to those which occurred 18 years before.

The only thing which may be affirmed from 1804 on, when the Generalate was moved to Paris, is that decisions were made following the norms of ordinary Christian prudence, always after mutual consultation and agreement, but not always according to the personal views of Mother Aymer.

Furthermore, we must not forget that from before October 1800, the date of her first public vows, the until then Mlle. Aymer had taken a vow of obedience to Father Coudrin. She always attributed such a force to this vow, that she had it put in the Constitutions, as one of the steps for taking possession of the office of Superior General of the Sisters.

It is very impressive to find among the Foundress' writings a whole series of short notes, undoubtedly written while Father Coudrin was still in Paris, therefore before October 22, 1820. In them she asks the Superior General for permission, as provided in Constitutions, to go outside the house:

- I would like to go out to get some corsets, shoes, and collect some Mass stipends. I just received a letter in that regard. Please let me know whether or not I may. I will do it as quickly as I can.
- Yesterday I could not ask you to go out. If you would like, I could go where you know my sister would bring me (in her coach). Please respond.
- I have the money to go and look for dear Rochette. IE you are willing I will go as far as St. Thomas (Parish).⁹⁵⁰

Obviously, this seems to us today rather extreme. But it is to be set in the picture and mentality of its times, when the only place it was thought nuns could be was in their

950 BM, 1436.

convent. No matter, what is of importance is to verify in these notes a strict consciousness of her obedience in respect to the Superior General. If this is not the meaning, they would have to be read as a trick to feign a real autonomy in making important decisions, the fruit of a practical craftiness which no one can attribute with reason to Mother Aymer.

On the contrary, we find in her correspondence, everywhere and throughout her life, the mark of a genuine attitude of obedience toward Father Coudrin, “Superior General of the whole Congregation.” But the best recourse is simply to have a look at the texts:

To Sister Ludovine de la Marsonnière in Cahors, May 6, 1805:

Monsieur Coudrin is so busy that he could not reply concerning the Aglae house. He and I hope that Monsieur Antoine (Astier) will not have taken an option, for most decidedly we cannot nor do we want to set up that establishment for the moment. Besides, in no way can we rely on our very dear Aglae. If it is possible, let us have no business matters with him...⁹⁵¹

To Father Coudrin, June 11, 1805:

A gentleman came asking to speak to me, proposing to take a very nice house in a little town of this diocese (Le lians)...He is bound to be back, and I will see what it is about. Have you any news about the house in Sees? I do not dare write anywhere for fear of contradicting you...⁹⁵²

To Father Coudrin, June 24, 1805, she presents some postulants from Le Mans for the sisters' community, and then adds:

See whether you agree with this and reply at once, because if you do, I will go to bring them here and spend 8 days to get them initiated.⁹⁵³

To Father Coudrin, November 1806:

While you are doing good things at Sees, I have done some stupid ones here (in Paris). I beg your pardon and accept your reprimand in advance. Here is what happened: Celestine (Fessard, a lay brother), on returning from his family, spoke to me about a little 12-year old niece whom he wanted to bring here. He gave me a lot of good reasons for wanting her to come. So I said: Write and tell them to bring her here. I should have waited until I got your advice. You will pardon me for this and for many other things, but I am very sorry...⁹⁵⁴

To Sister Ludovine de la Marsonnière (Cahors), December 1807:

I have no answer to give to the letter I received from you this morning. I have not been able to see the Incomparable (Father Coudrin) or at least to talk business with him...⁹⁵⁵

951 BM, 209.

952 BM, 214.

953 BM, 221.

954 BM, 272.

955 BM, 311.

To Father Hippolyte Launay (Cahors), November 7, 1816:

Monsieur Ildephonse (Alet, a priest of the Congregation) wrote yesterday to have two of his nephews directed to you. One is lame. Monsieur Coudrin asks you to receive them. They have nothing, but their uncle is *so good* that it is hoped they will be like him.⁹⁵⁶

To Sister Gabriel de la Barre (Poitiers), January 25, 1818:

We received the letter from Monsieur Isidore (David) yesterday evening, my dear friend, and after having read it, Monsieur Coudrin decided to write this morning to have Monsieur Isidore come right away...So it is in his name that I urge Monsieur Isidore to come without delay.⁹⁵⁷

To Father Coudrin (Troyes), November 5, 1820:

The brothers are still only coming and going (to Villemomble, where they had some property). This will get much worse. I thought that Poche (not a member of the Congregation, possibly an employee) would stay here, that the doors of Villemomble would be closed, and every eight or ten days they would be checked. So please let me know your final decision.⁹⁵⁸

To Father Hilarion Lucas (Troyes), January 28, 1821:

You will receive this little note Monday, I will get the answer Wednesday and I will leave in the evening if I find a place. Get me my authentic *passport* (permission from Father Coudrin) and I will be glad to come.⁹⁵⁹

To Sister Gabriel de la Barre (Poitiers), May 16, 1821:

My dear Helene (Sister Gabriel's baptismal name), I forgot to let you know that Monsieur Coudrin wants the little house to be bought in my name and not in his... For you *alone*.⁹⁶⁰

To Father Coudrin (Troyes), October 22, 1821:

Please let us know whether you formally order that Monsieur Jerome (Rouchouze, future bishop) is to leave...See in your wisdom, what you decide and you will be obeyed.⁹⁶¹

To Father Coudrin (Rouen), January 13, 1827:

I just now received a letter from Monsieur Isidore (Tours) who informs me...that you gave Monsieur Giralton (Father Paphnuce) permission to go and stay with Monsieur Baraut (at St. Mare, where a house was going to be established; Baraut had been separated from his wife, and his case made him the topic of gossip in Tours). I reply that Giralton with your permission can do all, but I will never

956 BM, 532.

957 BM, 608.

958 BM, 749.

959 BM, 778.

960 BM, 786 R.

961 BM, 840.

consent to receive in any of our houses (Baraut's) mother or daughter. That would lead to a series of troubles and incalculable disgrace.⁹⁶²

To Father Coudrin (Rouen), January 14, 1827:

I am very distressed, my Good Father, for having written so strongly to you yesterday. I had not a moment for reflection. I was so indignant at the way Messieurs Giraldon and Rochette (a priest of the diocese of Tours) had deceived you. I beg your pardon with all my heart...⁹⁶³

If we are far from having presented an adequate study of the relations between the two Founders, these texts, which reflect the general tone of their habitual relations, enable us at least to assert without hesitation that the Foundress never acted autonomously or independently, without acknowledging the authority pertaining to “the Superior General of the whole Congregation.”

2. Characteristics of Father Coudrin's Government

When we read the Founder's writings and those of his disciples, there are certain characteristics of his style of governing which come out very strongly and clearly from the body of these documents. Among the various authors, and throughout the whole period we have studied, the same traits are always revealed, traits which enable us to establish with assurance the main lines of Father Coudrin's profile as a Superior. Without pretending to be exhaustive, we present here those traits most stressed by the documents.

a. Awareness of his charism as Founder

In Part IV of this work we will have the opportunity to treat more thoroughly the theme of the faith in Providence which animated him. At this point, we can note that his having been chosen, in the midst of the revolutionary chaos, to form a new religious family, was not for him the least sign of the love God had for him.

The letter of 1804 addressed to Gabriel de la Barre, one of his first disciples, is a good testimony of his feeling:

Paris, August 4, 1804. Feast of St. Dominic, who passed through the crucible of tribulations, by way of a work like to that which, despite my exile, makes all my happiness. Yes, my dear daughter, I live only to lay the foundation, even at great cost, of the work of the Heart of this lovable Master who sheds his favors on me...

⁹⁶⁴

962 BM, 1323.

963 BM, 1325.

964 BP, 192.

In the last years of his life, he could affirm with absolute truth in a letter to the Prior of Picpus:

Rouen, March 5, 1830...Soon it will be 40 years that I work for the Society. I live only for it, and if I do not do even more, it is because I am not able. The Heart of the Good Master whom I serve will have pity on his work and on his poor servant, who up to now has counted more on his grace than on the talents or ingenuity of man.⁹⁶⁵

b. *Awareness of being a “servant,” not master*

The conviction of having been chosen to found a community of religious life, in circumstances in which simple Christians lived in a restricted situation with little possibility of counting on much in the way of human resources, and with still less opportunity to plan for a future which was so obscure, made him develop much more the sense of readiness to serve God’s plans rather than the very human temptation to take personal credit for what was the fruit of his labors and concerns. Thus, the title “Work of God,” by which he frequently referred to the Congregation, was never transformed into a pretext for confusing his personal points of view with the determinations of Providence.

When the famous *Ordinances* of Charles X promised to destroy the whole work of recruiting members for the community, and the winds of anti-clericalism brought with them dark omens, the Founder responded to Father Regis Rouchouze’s request for advice on the possibility of taking “with reservations” the oath according to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy:

Greetings and peace to my dear friends, Jerome, Eusebius, Edmond, Macarius, Regis and Apollinaris. Yes, my good brothers, we can never serve God by means of which he disapproves. The first oath ruined the priests. This one, proposed with restrictions, will be required to be simply taken in all its import. Judge whether it can be permitted for a child of the divine Heart to agree to do this. So, no matter what it may cost your hearts, let us abandon ourselves to Providence. It knows well what it must make of us and of your children...I expect everything from your steadfastness...Your poor servant and father.⁹⁶⁶

Thus, he never felt he was a proprietor of his Foundation; he was ever its servant, without thereby abdicating his responsibility as Superior.

c. *Conviction of being integrated in the Community*

A trait which springs up from these documents, and especially from his correspondence, is the conviction Father Coudrin had of being an integral part of the

⁹⁶⁵ BP, 1547.

⁹⁶⁶ BP, 1453.

community as one of its members. He did not look on himself as apart from and over his disciples, whom he loved to call “brothers” or “friends.”

Bred in the school of suffering, he had great sensitivity whenever he dealt with others. He tread very softly. His personality brings to mind that of a Pius X or a John XXIII. He never seems to have had a nostalgia for the formality and ballyhoo expected by those who feel they are important. He detested any practice that might distance him from his religious. To the good Father Abraham Armand, who had made the mistake of treating him as “Reverend,” he writes in March 1824:

I do not like to be “reverend” to my friends, my dear Abraham...Be careful, my good friends, and believe that, without “reverence,” I am your loving Father Joseph Marie.⁹⁶⁷

It was an attitude which formed part of his character as a country boy, confirmed, without any complications, by a Christian vision of the true social values, those of brothers and sisters in Christ.

During his studies at Poitiers, he was teacher of the children of a prominent bourgeois family who esteemed him very much. He wrote his father in 1788:

Although I feel all right where I am, still there is nothing nicer than being close to those whom I love and respect, and with whom I can have a nice quiet conversation instead of the balderdash of high society.⁹⁶⁸

When he arrived in Paris in 1804, he wrote the Sister Superior of Cahors:

Keep calm, the Capital will not change me. Here I visit many new persons and I am regarded as an important man. But I have ever in my heart and soul the feelings you know are there. My family (the Congregation) is my sole concern... The world and its grandeurs do not attract me in the least. I would very much prefer Abraham’s (Armand) little room to the finest mansions in the Capital. I am frequently with cardinals, bishops, government ministers, councillors of state, legislators. But all these honours give me less pleasure than the humblest hut.⁹⁶⁹

During his first days at Troyes, in October 1820, he writes Mother Aymer:

From there I went to the bishops residence. He invited me to the Soirees. I excused myself because I lived so far away. I asked him to give us a place to live together, etc. He answered: “Do you expect to stay there, to go with them (the missionaries), etc.?...That will be difficult to do because you are the Grand Vicar, assisting at the office of the Cathedral, the Council, etc.” I see then that I will have to take on the role of a great personage, be a special light, dressed in splendid garb, like Messieurs Moussac and Fauvette (two Vicars General of Poitiers). I am then very tempted to go and live with our men (the missionaries) and turn down

967 BP, 938.

968 BP, 6.

969 BP, 170.

the legal honor. Ah! the thought of my family! Here they have no idea what it means. Ah! it will be hard to call it that here...⁹⁷⁰

In fact, things were arranged afterwards with greater ease than he supposed. The Founder went to live with the missionaries at the house of St. Martin of the Fields, on the way out of the city towards Paris, a little over a mile from the Cathedral. This distance from the Cathedral obliged him, as time passed, to rent a cottage in the center of town, where traveling missionaries stayed, He lived in a passageway which reminded him of the confined quarters in the granary of La Motte. Three years later he remarks:

I have more things to do than I can say. I have to write twenty letters a day. I have to hold audiences like a minister. I laugh at myself on seeing carriages at my door, my finely furnished waiting room and persons of all classes waiting there in silence for their turn to come in. Truly the world seems upside down when I consider who I am.⁹⁷¹

Not only do the documents evidence the breaking down of any barriers that might separate him from his community; they clearly show the weaving of a close network of the most cordial and fraternal relations. To the Superior of Poitiers, Sister Gabriel, he writes in 1804:

Be sure to tell my children that nothing will ever separate me from the lively interest I have in them. Tell them, too, that would it be necessary to die for them, I am resolved to endure everything rather than ever forget my commitments.⁹⁷²

To Father Philibert Vidon he writes in January 1823:

In your letter you seem to be very upset. I assure you, my dear friend, that if I could bundle up all your troubles together with all those weighing on the cross which it is my lot to bear, I would willingly do so, begging you none the less to help me bear it. For I rely on you as much as on myself for helping me until death.

⁹⁷³

To Father Regis Rouchouze, December 26, 1823:

May they (the brothers) often recall during their adorations that I am one with them and that I do not let a day go by without turning myself toward all of you there and in all our houses, in order that the divine Heart of our Good Master protect and bless you all and grant you his grace and his peace. "*Filioli diligite alterutrum. Et si solum fiat sufficit.*" ("Little children, love one another. And to do that alone is enough.")⁹⁷⁴

970 BP, 657.

971 BP, 819.

972 BP, 194.

973 BP, 815.

974 BP, 897.

Again to Father Regis Rouchouze, April 25, 1828:

I am well aware, my good friend, that you have reason to complain about me. But believe me when I say I have no other joy than that which comes to me from your houses. To be sure, they have often had but little occasion to tell me about things that are consoling (problems at the school), but that is not your fault...May he (Father Regis) be convinced that I love him with all my heart just as I do the good Jerome (Rouchouze) and my other brothers...Be as prudent as possible, my dear children. These are evil days. Let us ask the Good God that our last day be a good day, and while awaiting it, all of you (brothers and sisters), my dear children, believe that I always have you in mind. I watch, I work, I pray and suffer with each and every one of you. Here is your poor father who does not live a single moment apart from you. "*Ab ortu soils usque ad occasum.*" ("From the rising to the setting of the sun.")⁹⁷⁵

d. Concern for each individual person

Father Coudrin knew very well each one of the members of his community. He called them by their names, he was concerned about their health and well-being, and kept as up-to-date on each one as he could. He tried as much as possible to see that they were content and making progress in the spiritual life. When he was already advanced in years, while the Congregation was growing, he regretted that he did not always remember everyone's name, and that he no longer had the strength to follow them as closely as before.

To Father Isidore David, who was left as Superior of Poitiers when the Founders went to Mende, he writes in August 1802:

What I now have to recommend to you, my dear children, is that you take care of your health and that of the brothers and sisters entrusted to you. I have learned to my sorrow that Brother Isidore again had to take medicine and that Sister Gabriel is still weak. I am very much afraid lest the deep sorrow and feeling of abandonment in which they find themselves (because of the departure of Mother Aymer) cause their frail state of health to become worse...⁹⁷⁶

The vaccine used against smallpox, which was being used for the first time, he looks on with great reservation. To this effect he writes at the end of 1802 to Sister Gabriel:

I want to say something to you about vaccination, inoculation, etc. Be assured that I prohibit once and for all these kinds of experimentation in our houses. The Good God is the Master of our existence. He can take it away when he likes. But I forbid as much as possible this kind of quackery. If out of a thousand even one should die, I feel I would have to blame myself.⁹⁷⁷

975 BP, 1351.

976 BP, 43.

977 BP, 43.

Sending him three youths to be formed in the religious life, he writes Father Isidore May 5, 1803:

I am sending them to you myself. Please accept them on that fact alone. Teach them French (they only spoke their dialect) if they cannot do anything else or it will not take too long. Give them a lot of freedom of mind and heart. Poor Joachim is quite worn out, Raphael is a rover, he walks all over, but Norbert will help everybody. I embrace all three, Hilarion, my little knaves (his nephews) and you...⁹⁷⁸

To Sister Ludovine de la Marsonnière, May 17, 1804:

I will not go into details, you know me well enough to know that I do not think them worthwhile nor indispensable (details on the various sacrifices inseparable from the religious state). The object of my constant solicitude is your health, your life. I have confidence that all the rest goes well.⁹⁷⁹

To Father Isidore David, September 16, 1805:

By all means, hire a gardener rather than wearing Norbert out. Spare nothing to keep him from being overcome. I tell in confidence that we are going to be obliged to send Raphael (Magnan) home. He has the second stage of tuberculosis.⁹⁸⁰

To Father Hippolyte Launay, February 28, 1809:

...I recommend that you do not wear yourself out. Arrange it so that you spend no more than 5 hours a day in the confessional. That is not an order, yet you will please me very much by doing what I suggest. More than anyone else, I know what it is to overdo, without particularly doing God's will, by spending more time in this exercise than is called for. Let us not neglect what is essential for ourselves while devoting ourselves to others.⁹⁸¹

To Father Philibert Vidon, September 22, 1813 (he was going through a period of depression which obliged the Founder to relieve him of his assignment as superior of Le Mans):

You will have Monsieur Chretien approved for conducting and directing the house of la Providence. Then you will give him the necessary documents, as a good brother, for his personal administration. Next, as privately as possible, you will pack your luggage and go to the minor seminary of Poitiers with Monsieur Philippe (Father Fezendier). You will be occupied only in saying Mass, supervising and study. Monsieur Isidore is a good father, he will not push you beyond your strength. You will find in our good Philippe an old friend, prudent and discreet, who will help you and serve you in all your problems. Come now, my dear Philibert, take courage and in a very short time may you be happy and more learned. For

978 BP, 102.

979 BP, 170.

980 BP, 240.

981 BP, 278.

the Good God has his eyes of mercy on poor you whom I will never hinder in your holy ministry. Write me now and then. Be fair and if, contrary to my expectations, you are not pleased at all with the Department (Civil) of Vienne (whose capital was Poitiers) be sure I will always do what I can on my part to please you.⁹⁸²

Faced with the severity of Father Hilarion at Picpus, he writes February 9, 1331:

I have learned to my sorrow, my good friend, that five or six of our lay brothers are going to leave the house because you found fault with them on account of some tidbits they cooked up on their stove...That they may have committed a fault, I have no problem in granting, my dear friend, but to make them flip out to the point of taking off, that is something else. I come today to ask pardon for them. Please forgive them...If they are not humble enough to do what you demand of them, I ask our brother Abraham to take my place as a suppliant before you. Do not say no, my good brother, and if I deserve to be refused myself on account of my sins, our brother Abraham, who has been delivered from so many dangers on the sea and elsewhere, (en route to and from Hawaii, passing around Cape Horn), in no way deserves to be refused.⁹⁸³

To the Sister Superior of Yvetot, who had some problem of conscience, and who asked him for help, he writes from Rouen May 30, 1832:

Since you are in pain, my dear daughter, come here to meet with the one who cannot at this moment go to offer you his services, unless you do not want to be too much trouble to me. I will go to see you next week. But, please, do not constrain yourself, for I would prefer anything in the world to impeding consciences.⁹⁸⁴

We find in the documentation nothing to contradict what is shown in these texts, but rather much more that confirms it. And of course there are all those in which he shows a constant concern for the physical health of everybody, and for the needs of the families of his religious, which he hastens to help as soon as he learns of a crisis.

e. Qualities of a “Superior” according to Father Coudrin

From the Founder’s writings emerges the outline of his image of a _Superior, qualities which are those we find most consistent with his own conduct in the government of the Congregation. On the one hand, the circumstances of the “underground” clandestine period and the distances separating the various houses, augmented by the slowness of communication, along with Father Coudrin’s own character, fostered a regime of great confidence in the superiors, coupled with, by that very fact, a remarkable decentralization in practice. On the other hand, the very concept he had of brotherhood,

982 BP, 464.

983 BP, 1616.

984 BP, 1704.

and of the importance of the intervention of Providence, led him not to overvalue his own intervention, and not to exaggerate the sense of the responsibility he had for all that happened in his community.

In his first official document addressed to the community, he writes August 1, 1802 to Father Isidore who, at the age of 31, had been left in charge of the community of Poitiers after the Generalate moved to Mende:

I am very sure that each one of you “on your own turf” will give your children the experience of that gentle joy which is inseparable from firm government permeated with charity. To achieve this end, and in order that no one be ignorant of it, I confirm, insofar as it depends on me, the appointment of brother Isidore as superior of his brothers in the house of Poitiers, and also that of Sister Gabriel as superior of her sisters in the house which is under her jurisdiction in the aforementioned Poitiers. We wish and order that in virtue of holy obedience both the brothers and the sisters who are there or who may be there in the future in the said houses of Poitiers, be bound to look on them as their superiors, unless ordered otherwise on our part; that they obey and respect them as holding in their regard the place of God on earth; and if, which God forbid, there come about doubts or controversies such as would make it necessary to inflict some punishment or strict measure, I wish and order that both brothers and sisters all know and learn by these presents that we approve and ratify beforehand all that he is pleased to rule and ordain which is not contrary to the customs and rules established in the houses which are under their jurisdiction. In addition, we wish that, if there should arise some difficulty concerning rights or important matters between the two houses, nothing be decided without our particular and general advice.⁹⁸⁵

In order to carry on the foundations, it became necessary that those who had some wealth sell their patrimonial properties and place what they, received at the disposition of the Founders. Perhaps the richest person in the whole community was Sister Therese de Beuvier of the Poitiers community. Apropos of this the Founder writes Sister Gabriel de la Barre July 15, 1804:

I think that Therese may keep on selling, if you do not find too many disadvantages and the price is not too low. You are on the scene, so see what effect that will produce.⁹⁸⁶

With regard to receiving persons in the Congregation, he says to Father Regis Rouchouze, the Superior of Mende, July 26, 1806:

I only fear criticism. You are in a position to judge and weigh things. Receive or do not receive, I give you full liberty.⁹⁸⁷

985 BP, 43.

986 BP, 185.

987 BP, 277.

To Sister Gabriel, giving her instructions about a considerable debt, September 9, 1809:

I rely on your prudence and above all on what you will do, fully convinced that you always do what is best.⁹⁸⁸

About a new foundation that was being suggested to the Superior of Cahors, December 1, 1814:

Our Father St. Benedict does not want us to take up new enterprises without knowing beforehand if there are subjects for undertaking them, and you see how little we can count on those whom we are educating. Houses are being offered us all over, and I am very embarrassed...Be a bit more open with each other. My friend, it is on this alone that we must rely for the consolations or the sufferings which come to us.⁹⁸⁹

To Mother Aymer, in regard to a new acquisition, April 28, 1827:

What can I decide about Montreuil, my daughter? First of all, make sure of the future bishop's attitude. I think he is likely to tell you that he has no authority as yet, that he will be pleased with all the good done for his diocese, etc. However, I think he will require you to do what you cannot do. Dear Esther (de Guerry) knows well what I think. So, brothers and sisters, give serious thought to the burden of an onerous acquisition, etc. In any case, ponder in the presence of God, and do what you will think is reasonable...⁹⁹⁰

To Father Philbert Vidon, he writes September 9, 1830:

Although I was very pleased to receive your last letters, my good friend, I must say that the first one pained me. I cannot see that there are any reservations in my confidence in you. You know better than I the persons who can cause you sorrow. Rest assured that I have neglected nothing to prevent its coming your way...Otherwise, tell me, with confidence, what you think I ought to do, and I will do it right away. I think you disapprove of my appointing Monsieur Andre (Bergounioux) as extraordinary confessor. Let me know your opinion, and keep me informed about all that is going on, if possible.⁹⁹¹

In August 1802, to Father Isidore David:

You must not be concerned about everything you order to be done. When you follow your conscience, you are never deceived, at least not in such a way as to render you culpable. So I authorize you to receive and to reject every candidate presented as you judge fit and proper. I have absolute reliance on you, not only in what regards our brothers but also our sisters, in concert with my very dear daughter Gabriel...⁹⁹²

988 BP, 391.

989 BP, 477.

990 BP, 1243.

991 BP, 1585.

992 BP, 45.

In November of the same year he adds:

I absolutely wish that you prescribe whatever may be helpful to her (Sister Gabriel) when the occasion arises. I know very well you are of no great worth, but you are a father – you must have not only affection, but also leadership and strength.⁹⁹³

To Father Philippe Fezendier, July 19, 1812:

Try, my good friend, to be more just toward your brothers than you are. They cannot speak to you about things of which they are no more certain than you are. A little kidding on their part should not make you so sensitive. The glory of God and the success of the work demand you stay in...We shall see how things turn out. Besides, my poor child, these hurts happen everywhere and those who are in charge always are the most affected...Do good courageously and support as best you can the dear brother of whom you spoke to me.⁹⁹⁴

To Father Hippolyte Launay, Superior of Cahors, October 15, 1813:

Yes, my dear friend, I love you and cherish you with all my heart, because you glorify, as best you can, our good Savior Jesus Christ. May he ever live within you. May he animate your zeal. May he sustain your courage and the courage of all. We hope our troubles will be less, that perhaps they are about to end. Custodi, rege, gubernata gregem tibi commissum, in multa patientia. (Watch over, rule, govern the flock entrusted to you, with great patience).⁹⁹⁵

April 15, 1817, to Father Alexis Bachelot:

You are going to have a friend and good advisor in Monsieur Bigot (Father Antoninus), our brother, my dear Alexis. Love him like a father and keep him in good health. He is priceless. Despite his timidity, he will take over any class you wish, for he is well instructed in all fields and loves to teach. Put him at ease, for he always holds back. Try to find out what he needs, for he never asks for anything, but suffers in silence and does not complain. Finally, I entrust him to your care. Be charitable and take care of him and of yourself.⁹⁹⁶

To Father Antoninus Bigot, Superior of Laval, September 1821:

So be a brave man, my friend, and throw yourself into the sea to save the ship. You will save yourself confessing others.⁹⁹⁷

To Father Hippolyte, Superior of Poitiers, October 7, 1822:

Now that you appoint a Prior, show your brothers then a certain air of confidence which will win them over to you. For in truth, my good friend, you have a way of handling everything like an absolute master. That, I assure you, is wrong. A bit of conciliation goes so well with the exercise of authority.⁹⁹⁸

993 BP, 80.

994 BP, 443.

995 BP, 466.

996 BP, 533 bis.

997 BP, 713.

998 BP, 786.

To Brother Severin Coulonges, February 18, 1836:

In your last letter you rang some loud bells, my dear friend. Unfortunately, I was not able to come near enough to hear the sound, as I had hoped. In a word, the humility to have managed to make a mistake is so becoming in everybody. If I confess quite boldly that it happens to me all too often, how could the same confession made at times by a good brother who is not infallible be then a sin?⁹⁹⁹

Shortly before his death, he wrote Father Macaire Pergot in January 1837:

On taking charge of the family of Cahors, my good friend, do not forget that you have to be a young “elder,” edifying everyone and being everywhere the sweet fragrance of Jesus Christ. Present our sisters with the expression of my respectful affection. May they have for their new superior all the devotion and obedience their vows demand...¹⁰⁰⁰

We do not repeat here what we have said about the importance the Founder gave to unity, peace and family fellowship, for we think it already sufficient. However it is necessary to recall it, to have a proper idea of his way of governing, carried out more by promoting a spirit than by the application of external discipline.

3. Mother Aymer’s Counsels on Government

When we read Mother Aymer’s correspondence with various sisters superior, we are left with the impression that her biographies are rather inadequate on this point, and that to arrive at a satisfactory picture of the way she governed, many inquiries are still to be made. Despite this, we need to make an effort to extract from these letters the principal content, at least the most obvious, in regard to her concept of religious government. This is found principally in what we might call her “counsels on government,” as a rule addressed to the young superiors who had been her novices, and less frequently to those who were her companions from the beginning.

Father Coudrin, as we have seen, felt himself obliged, in order to have canonical jurisdiction over his religious, to accept the position of Vicar General of important dioceses. This involved the use of his time to such an extent that it made him much less available for serving his community. The case of Mother Aymer is very different, because she could always give her full time to the government of her community.

The task was, as a whole, enormous, especially after the early years of the Restoration. We must remember that in 1816 the membership had reached 181 sisters dispersed in 8 houses. Continued growth had brought the number up to more than 520 by 1829, the year in which she became bedridden from paralysis. There were then already 17 houses.

⁹⁹⁹ BP, 2073.

¹⁰⁰⁰ BP, 2187.

The average number of sisters in each had risen from 22 in 1816 to 30 in 1829.

The Superior General could visit even her most distant houses relatively often, despite the fact that her responsibility as local Superior of Picpus consumed so much of her time. It had a large community, a novitiate of around 80 novices, a boarding school, a free school, and the sisters took care of the brothers' community and seminary next door.

To handle this enormous task, Mother Aymer relied on a penetrating mind which, at a glance, gave her a sort of x-ray picture of people. When she traces the psychological profiles of her sisters or novices, she is bluntly realistic. At times she may seem to us rather harsh. But she knows that charity demands a clear perception of the truth, and in the end we get the impression that this acute perception helped her to treat each one as she deserved and to put each one in her proper place in the community.

Her concept of order and regularity in the community seems rather original to us. Sister Gabriel de la Barre gives us a small resume of her positions on this point:

...But little concerned about an external and methodical regularity, which circumstances made impossible, she concentrated on the substance, the interior, what she was striving for. She did not seek to adorn the edifice before having deeply laid its foundations. This conduct, so conformed to right reason, earned her not a few persecutions.¹⁰⁰¹

The Foundress knew that a community cannot be built without persons. So her first concern was the physical health of her religious, something she insisted on. Their way of life was hard, but she was prompt to grant exceptions, even impose them when health required it. She who concealed behind a smile mortification which to us seems frightening, does not make calls to mortification, but indeed many to moderation of fasts and abstinence. The ravages of illness and death were for her a permanent cry of alarm.

The first thing she wanted to be sure of in each community was that it enjoy unity and peace, as we have said already, and she recalls this continually to superiors.

To achieve this, Mother Aymer wanted a superior to treat all sisters with great kindness and watch with special gentleness over the weakest among them. She desired that the superior be a friend to each one, if possible, while never giving up her office nor waiving obedience.

She knew that the secret of such a difficult balance, apart from situations calling for the exercise of authority, is a very solid and sound interior life, which permits great docility to the Spirit.

¹⁰⁰¹ GB, Mem. II, 78.

We now give the most representative texts in chronological order:

To Sister Ludovine de la Marsonnière, September 1803:

Let your mild and kind bearing reveal your soul's calm and peace. Make haste slowly. Do nothing of any importance (not even a remonstrance) without thinking it over a while. May the Spirit of the Good God act in you in such a manner that you act as he would. I have such need for these reflections myself, that I am really preaching to myself. Let all this not trouble you...May the loving wound of the Heart of Jesus console you.¹⁰⁰²

To Sister Collette Sejourns, Superior of Laval, November 1804:

Be gentle, kind, but do not permit that when you have said, "This must be done," anyone should order otherwise.

Never act on your moods, but be firm in your decisions. Consult us when you are in difficulty. As for meals, you know what I told you. Rising is at 6:00 AM, retiring at 9:00 PM, at the latest 10, and you personally always at the same time as the others. You can sleep on a plank just as Monegonde, but you will have big pillows which reach down to your loins and will be for you like straw pallets. Be well covered, and all will be fine. But be careful: It is false fervor not to do as I wish. You are going to have tiring tasks, one coming right after another. Do everything as if you were about to die, that is how to live right. Be consoled, be kind, and all will go along well. But keep on being the one in charge. Otherwise neither you nor they would be acting according to what God wants.¹⁰⁰³

To the same sister, December 1804:

It is to you that they all should have recourse, and not seek some individual's opinion. You will do well to consult them when you are in difficulty, but you remain free to do what you think best in everything. In your worries, troubles, perplexities, turn to God. He will help you, and if you have to deal with something unusual, write to us. But not with every mail.¹⁰⁰⁴

Again to the same sister, December 1804:

Above all remember that you must be obeyed. Do so with gentleness, good nature, cheerfulness and a certain gracefulness which according to God and the world leads others to do what you wish. In any case, if things do not improve, each one will go back home. Yet you are well aware of how painful this would be for these beings who, at heart, desire to give themselves to the Good God.¹⁰⁰⁵

To Father Hippolyte, Superior at Cahors, August 4, 1807:

Sister Ursula (Roulleau) is just but not flexible. She is too afraid of compromising her authority. When one is gentle and kind, one obtains something of what one desires. When one is too demanding one shatters everything.¹⁰⁰⁶

1002 BM, 135.

1003 BM, 192.

1004 BM, 194.

1005 BM, 198.

1006 BM, 300.

To Sister Ludovine at Sees, October 7, 1807:

Then give up this talent (coloring flowers), and use more and more your gifts to keep peace, unity, the only things which can bring about happiness in this world.¹⁰⁰⁷

To Sister Adélaïde Prieur-Chauveau, June 27, 1809:

What I recommend and even demand of you is that you watch out for your health. For that there is no need for you to let yourself be too affected by a thousand and one little things, which in reality are nothing more than a rattling in the head, having little or nothing to do with the will. Have much gentleness, kindness and a bit of firmness, and all will go well.¹⁰⁰⁸

To the same, November 1809:

Sophie's idle talk does not surprise me (a sister sent to her convent). You must put yourself above all that, redouble your patience, courage and resignation. Only in the crucible is gold refined.¹⁰⁰⁹

Again, August 7, 1810:

Here is a further annoyance for you (asking her to take over some charge). That's life! So be brave, my dear friend, keep peace, charity and even joy, if possible. For that you must put up with and tolerate everybody and strive not to make anyone suffer. Your position is a difficult one. But you must ever keep in mind that everybody has their weaknesses.¹⁰¹⁰

Again to the same person, June 29, 1812:

Although you are quite young, you have some experience. Try to be passably happy and may the others be so too. The constant "*fiat*" is indispensable for that, especially for one in your position.¹⁰¹¹

To Sister Adrienne de Bocquency, February 7, 1816:

I realize the obstacles in your situation. I think that the passage of time, patience, firmness, kindness, even more the grace of the Good God, will make it more and more easy for you to live your way of life in imitation of him. I most sincerely hope that your "sore heads" become peaceable and that with fewer external devotions there will be the uprightness and self- forgetfulness indispensable for all who want to be spouses of Jesus Christ and friends of his Heart.¹⁰¹²

To the same sister, April 22, 1817:

I am opposed to every transfer from Sarlat to Cahors and from Cahors to Sarlat without special permission, for each one would feel wronged. As much as possible every cause of disunity must be removed. Peace, charity, good will be indispensable

1007 BM, 307.

1008 BM, 357.

1009 BM, 372.

1010 BM, 390.

1011 BM, 420.

1012 BM, 490.

among us. There must be that intimate bond, that mutual support which is at the root of every virtue, or rather fosters their practice. So be kind even in the midst of the mischief of this full-blooded young girl who, too taken up with giving orders, understands how to obey only after reflection. Above all, do not let yourself be upset by these daily happenings which leave no trace in your heart. I know by experience how you must suffer, but, my dear friend, you must offer everything up, sacrifice everything to obtain peace and always, always carry the cross.¹⁰¹³

To Sister Antoinette de Beaussais, December 3, 1817:

I have, dearest Antoinette, decided to send you back to Pont-Lieu (near Le Mans) to be superior of the house of La Providence. I hope the Good God will bless my choice. Please leave at once. I urge you to take good care of yourself on the way and after you arrive there. You are going to dry many tears which will be renewed as you arrive. Their attachment to your predecessor is your assurance that the members of this pious community will have the same feelings and affection for you. Be their friend, their support, their consoler in their little troubles. Some of them were your own Mothers, so be kind, indulgent toward all, yet endeavor to maintain the regularity, the fervor and the good will which reign in that holy refuge. Do not be frightened at having so many duties to carry out, the Good God helps when he is obeyed unreservedly and with submission of spirit.¹⁰¹⁴

To the same sister, 1818-1819:

My very dear friend, be ever kind, have compassion for yourself and for others. All is misery in our poor humanity. You are too young not to be a bit severe. Punish abuses but treat with some kindness the weakness of individuals when you do not feel there is any ill will. I see you smiling and hear you say: "That is just like those who are old. They no longer have the necessary courage." Perhaps you are right, but you will be even more so if you believe in the tender friendship I have for my "little elf." My apologies to the very venerable Superior.¹⁰¹⁵

To Sister Adrienne de Bocquency, May 6, 1821:

I am very satisfied, my dear Adrienne, that good Monsieur Regis (Father Rouchouze) came bringing you peace. Try, my dear friend, to hold on to this peace without which everything goes wrong, and there is great unhappiness. The Good God permits everything to make you humble. Be brave, my dear, give up all over-sensitivity, but in spite of all do not tolerate abuses.¹⁰¹⁶



1013 BM, 554.

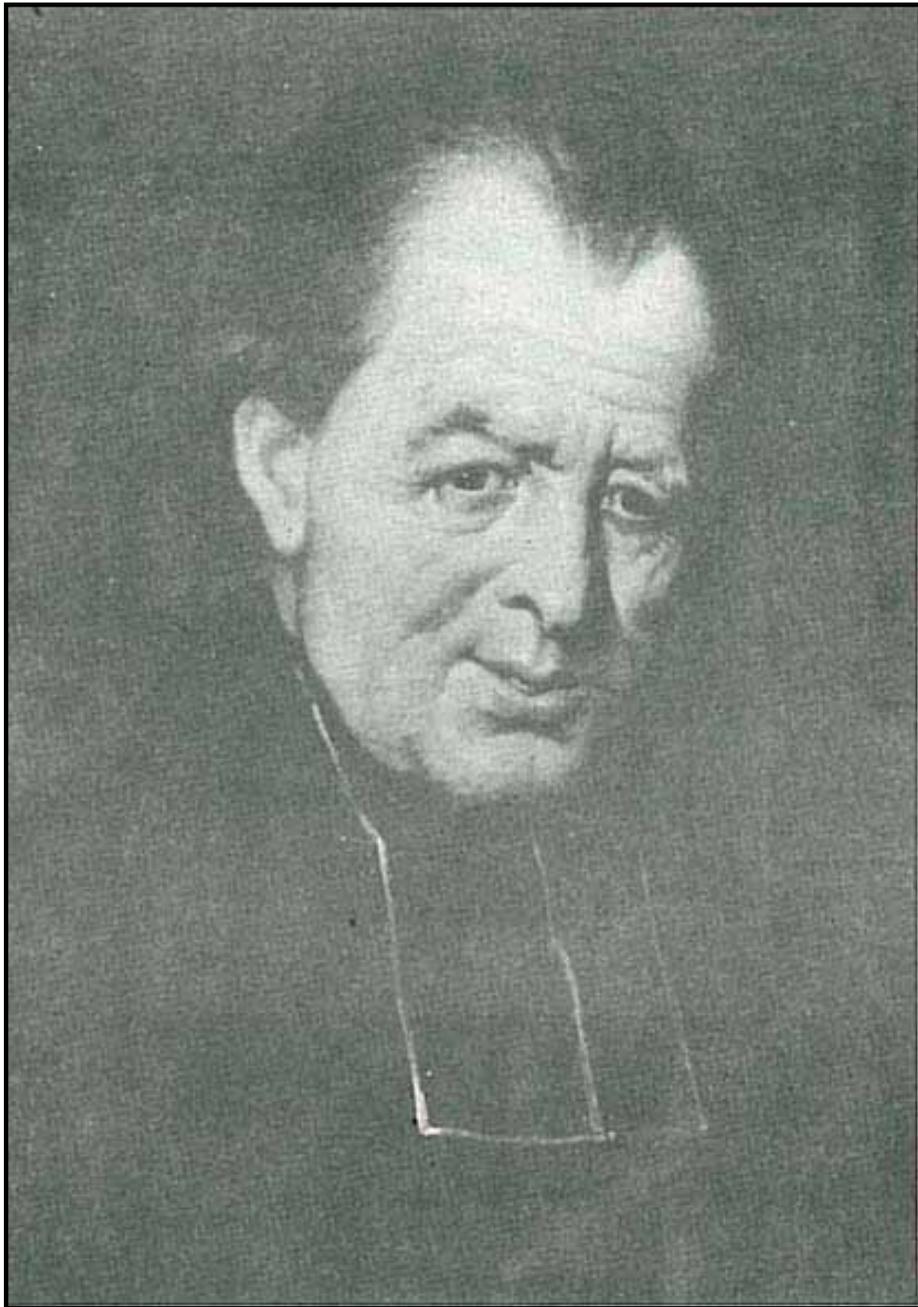
1014 BM, 581.

1015 BM, 645.

1016 BM, 2718.



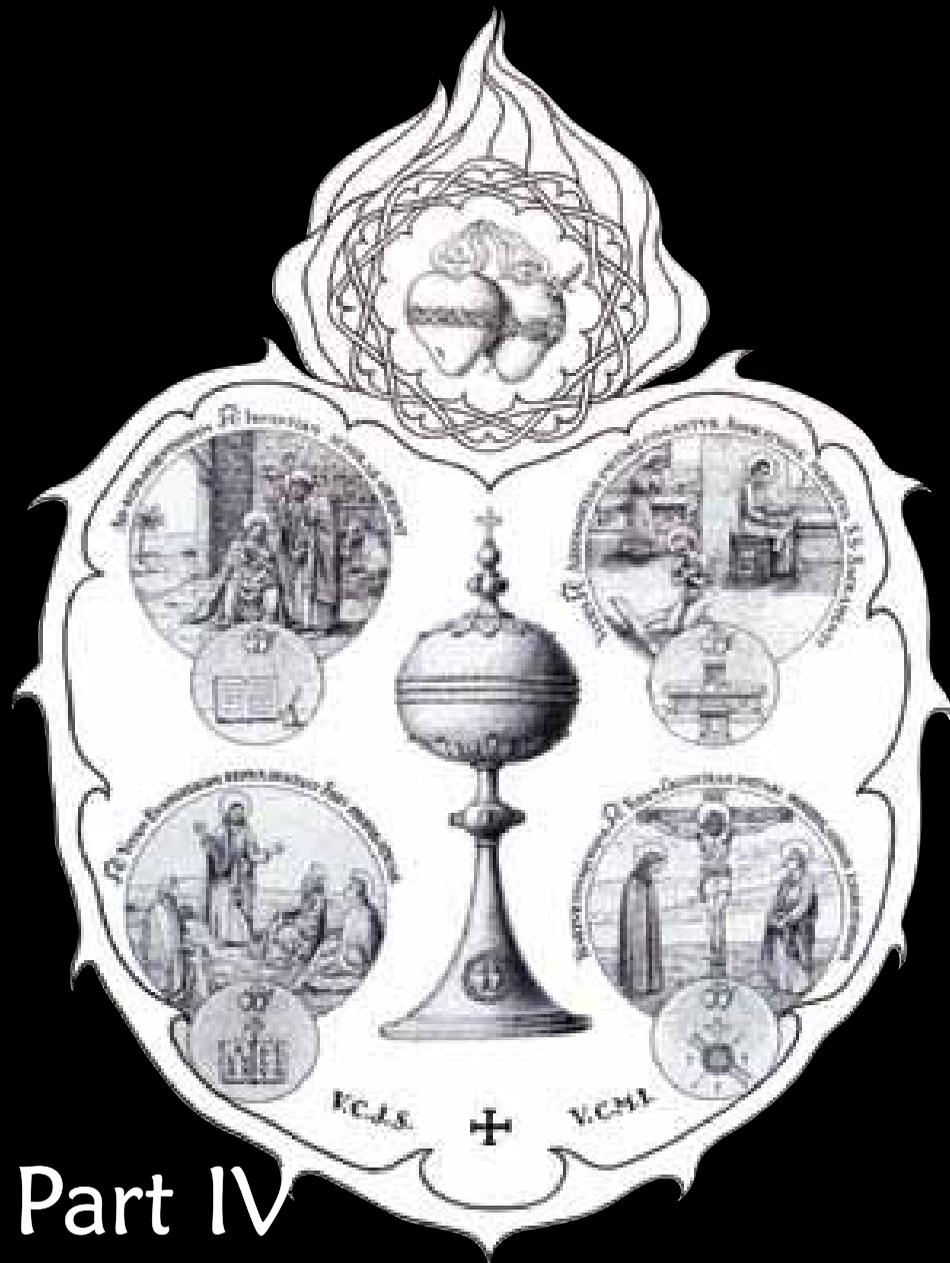
Sr. Gabriel de la Barre



Fr. Isidore David



Fr. Hilarion Lucas



Part IV

The Community's Life of Faith

INTRODUCTION

Up to this point we have been reviewing the more important events in the life of the Congregation founded by Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer. In this fourth and final part, we would like to examine more closely what could be called its inner core, which is also the very nucleus of the life of the community: the different elements that go together to form the Congregation's life of faith.

We are used to considering the life of faith as something that by its very nature is part of each person's inner life and that develops in the privacy of each one's conscience. Faith is adherence to the word of God preserved and taught in the Church. It is also a gift of God and a personal commitment. However faith is also the most important element in the communion of the ecclesial community and it is expressed in the confession of that faith. Each community that is part of the Church builds its unity around that faith and under the action of the Spirit seeks in the Church's deposit of faith the elements that will help it respond to its charism in the historical circumstances in which it lives.

In this sense we can speak of a religious community's "life of faith." We use the expression here including all its consequences, namely, communion in hope and charity, which govern the whole spiritual life both of individuals and the Church as a whole.

The importance of this "communion in faith" in the life of a religious community cannot be overemphasized. It is it what makes of a group of religious a community in the true sense. community is much more than mere submission to the same schedule or the same legislation and much more than obedience to the same authorities. That is easy to understand, if we keep in mind that this "communion in faith" brings into one all the reasons for submitting to a schedule, legislation or authorities. In that sense it is the soul of the community.

The elements that make it up have sometimes been called as the "spirituality proper to the Congregation." We prefer to avoid that term here because it seems prone to misunderstanding. "Spirituality" commonly refers to the "the elements of a doctrine or teaching of a school of spirituality seen as an organic whole." This concept takes us to an abstract or theoretical level. At least it leaves an aftertaste of the academic or literary, which we do not believe corresponds to the lived historical reality that is the object of our

study.¹⁰¹⁷

Just reading the documentation, as a whole, shows us that the Fr. Coudrin's community at no time in the period we are studying intended to elaborate "a spirituality" properly speaking. Not only did they not write a treatise on the spiritual or communal life, nor a manual for the community to use but they seemed to avoid treating any point in a systematic way. In any case, they did not take great pains to develop a strict vocabulary.¹⁰¹⁸

We prefer to speak of a "community spirit" that certainly followed a very strong and clear orientation in the selection of gospel values around which they centered their lives. Or rather, we could speak of "the community's life of faith" because the various elements arise little by little within the group creatively as their way of responding in faith to the gift of the charism.

We should not think that just because they were not very academic in creating the spirit of the community, that the connection between the various elements is any less coherent. Evidently, the unity between them is not merely logical but there is a kind of dynamic vitality that draws together the different elements of their life of faith.

Impelled by that energy, the life of faith, hope and charity seeks expression, or better yet, incarnation in the everyday life of the community. For what we are really talking about is making faith part of life to such a point that "faith works through love" (Gal 5:6).

This effort to incarnate the faith cannot be realized by an individual outside of time and even less by the moral person that is a community. From Abraham on, the life of faith has been a long and arduous process, an ongoing journey. In other words, whether the first conversion of an individual or the first time taking responsibility for a religious congregation, we are always embarking on a "history of grace." We use the word "history" because we are speaking of a journey, personal or collective, through time. We say "of grace" because of its very nature it is part of the building up of the body of Christ. As much as it is the work of man, it is also and above all, a work of the Spirit.

Someone might think that we are getting distracted from speaking of what is proper to our Congregation as we speak of religious life and even of Christian life in general. However we believe that we had to be clear about our position on the above points.

Of course, what is proper to a religious community cannot be some kind of

¹⁰¹⁷ See *Dictionary of the Christian Faith*, the Brosse/Henry/Rouillard. Du Cerf, Paris 1968.

¹⁰¹⁸ Most of the major religious families were not born of a "spirituality" in the strict sense, and in the course of centuries has seen the birth of different spiritualities within them. Vgr., that of St. Thomas, Tauler, Suso, St. Catherine of Siena, among the Dominicans; Saint Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, among the Carmelites, etc.

evangelical add-on. Any value that does not belong to the whole Church would simply not be Christian.

What is proper to each community is the historical and charismatic inspiration, by which the Spirit makes it more sensitive to certain values and creates communion around them. This always takes place as part of the Church, within which the new community emerges. Recognition by authority gives it its place and assigns it a role in “the building up of the Body of Christ,” as Saint Paul writes in Ephesians 4:12.

In religious life, the communal response to the charism of a common vocation and destiny gradually creates characteristics and lifestyles proper to each institute. That and the development of the original evangelical inspiration allows the community to continually integrate the Gospel into everyday life and that becomes a spiritual and historical experience particular to the community.

That experience and incarnation of Gospel values is not only a gift for the community that lives it but, because of the communication that exists in the whole Body of Christ, it is also the gift of a specific religious community to the Church and it becomes a message. We can say of every community what Saint Gregory said of Saint Benedict: “in no way could he teach anything other than what he lived.” Often when a message is lacking, what is really lacking is shared life and a shared experience of the Gospel. As the Gospel says, “From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34). Silence of the lips comes from an empty heart.

Thus the community's life of faith, like any Christian community, is nourished by the Word of God and the whole patrimony of the Church, it lives a graced history and it responds to its charism, all in one same movement. So these three realities are but different aspects of the richness of its life.

In the effort to reconstruct the main aspects of the Congregation's “communion of faith” at the time of Father Coudrin, it is important to draw the reader's attention to just who is the subject of that “communion.” First and foremost, we are speaking of a community of men and women determined to follow a vocation that is clearly religious and apostolic. As has already been said, the words of Vatican II clearly apply when it said, “apostolic and charitable work belongs to the very nature of the religious life....For that reason, the whole religious life of its members must be imbued with the apostolic spirit and all their apostolic action, formed by the religious spirit.” If the formulation is recent, never the less the truth expressed is ancient. Without a doubt, our founders would have subscribed to it without hesitation. We believe it is good to keep it in mind as we study the faith life of their Congregation.

In short, this means that the faith incarnated in the real life of the community leads to a life of common service to the Church. This gives to the more contemplative elements of the Christian life an orientation in which the desire “to be useful for the Church” is always in the foreground and is translated into a style of life.

This attention to the “subject” of the life of faith and its way of being, leads us also to recall something of which we have spoken repeatedly: the circumstances in which this “communion” was born and took on its basic characteristics. Insecurity to the point of constant danger, which continued for more than twenty years in the underground, could not but have very profound effects on the Congregation’s spiritual life.

If we want to have as exact an understanding as possible of that communion in the faith, we have to look at the problem of the sources. We are not speaking of the sources about its history but rather the works the community used to create its communion. We have already seen to what extent we can determine them up to this point. Here we only want to remember that we appeal to them very conscious of the modest input that they can give us.

The books that were available to the community in the first period of its life, so important for this discussion of its communion in faith, are known to us mainly by conjecture, from what we know of the spiritual literature of the time, through an inventory of the books printed before the Revolution which are conserved in the older libraries of the Congregation and through some scarce bibliographical references.¹⁰¹⁹

Nevertheless, we have to speak about this point. Even when we can only go on probability in speaking of the growth of this communion, we believe that knowledge of the literature of the time can help to reduce our spontaneous tendency to interject ideas from our time when we find something missing in the period we are studying. If we can achieve that, it would be of some benefit.

Obviously, we attach the highest importance to the study of the writings that the community has left us.

In preparing the outline of this last part, we have tried to follow as faithfully as possible insights coming from such documentation, giving greater attention to topics referred to more frequently or with greater meaning and then ordering them in such a way so that we could follow more faithfully patterns emerging in the consciousness of the community. We hope that will allow us to understand those topics better.

We would have liked to just put the texts in order and offer some guide for reading

1019 Cf. Appendix 15.

them, but we are convinced that that would have been to impose on the reader a rather annoying task. In contrast to the method followed to this point, we will give a brief explanation of each point, including the relevant texts at the foot of the page, with only the notes that are most necessary.

Finally, we have avoided an arrangement that could be too rigorous. It could have been only for our own benefit and we wanted to alter as little as possible the material contained in the documents.

So we present the following chapters:

- I. God in the Faith of the community
- II. The Church and the Congregation in the Faith of the community
- III. Devotion to the Sacred Hearts
- IV. Religious Profession in the Faith of the community
- V. Perpetual Adoration in the Faith of the community



Chapter I

GOD IN THE FAITH OF THE COMMUNITY

Let us begin by considering faith in God, as it was lived in the community. Not so much because this is the first article of the Creed, but because it is undoubtedly the point that is most fully documented: God is mentioned on almost every page of the Founder's writings, and likewise of his disciples.

There is no need to insist on the fact that we are not looking for original ideas or brilliant formulations. For if we were, we would do better to skip this chapter. What interests us, is to find out how faith penetrated the real life of the group and how the community saw itself in relationship to God.

It will be important to have an idea of what faith in God meant before looking at other points, since by its very nature this will condition our appreciation of those.

However we are not trying to be systematic. Just reading the documentation shows us that the concern of the nascent community was not so much to analyze the faith or express it intellectually but rather to live it. It seems that they had meditated on the words of the "Imitation of Christ": "What does it profit you to enter into deep discussion concerning the Holy Trinity, if you lack humility, and be thus displeasing to the Trinity? For truly it is not deep words that make a man holy and upright; it is a good life that makes a man dear to God" (Book I, Chap. 1, 3).

1. BP, 7. To Mr. Abraham Coudrin, end of 1788.

Here (in Poitiers) there are great troubles because of the convocation of the Estates General. If we observe so many calamities, it can only be because the sins of men have multiplied like the grains of sand on the sea-shore, and God punishes as he pleases. Let us adore his will and yet feel happy.

2. BP, 11*6. To Mr. Abraham Coudrin, 7-1-1789.

Working to earn a living is the lot of the poor like us but we will have a great consolation, if we are able to take all of that (his father had just lost a law-suit) as coming from the One who knows what we need better than we ourselves do.

3. BP, 18. ps. 2. To Mr. Abraham Coudrin, 3-16-1790.

Let us trust! Consider what trust has produced. Without Providence they would not have dispensed me from the title (a qualification for ordination): which should make you see that God does not abandon us, for never or very rarely are such dispensations obtained.

4. BP, 2202* 12. Sermon on Suffering (Cf. Appendix 1).

5. BP, 2202bis. Sermon on Final Impenitence, 1794.

Ego vado et quaeritis me, et in peccato vestro moriemini (Jn 8:21).

("I am going away and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin".)

What is decisive is that the historic circumstances in which the community came into being did not allow for greater speculation. Creating its first “communion in the faith” during the Terror and persecution proved decisive. The community does not encounter God in lofty concepts or other people’s experience read in books. In the midst of the whirlwind and dust raised by the great historic storm, the community feels Gods’ power present like a cosmic force that envelops it and drags it along, together with everything around it, in an incontrollable avalanche. Let us stop here for a bit.

1. Recourse to the Lord of History

Considering the documentation in its entirety, without going too deeply, we get the impression that when they speak of “Dieu” (God) or of “le Bon Dieu” (the Good God) the different authors of the community are referring to Providence that plans, decides and governs the events of human history. Since we cannot make an exhaustive study of such an enormous body of documentation, we have made a brief analysis of 750 of the founder’s writings in which he mentions God. We believe that his way of thinking is sufficiently indicative of the whole community, not only because of his role as founder, but also because he was spiritual director of the first generations and, as such, formed the faith of individuals and of the whole milieu.

What a bolt out of the blue for guilty France, for this impenitent city and perhaps for you and me, my brothers! Everywhere else in the teaching of Jesus Christ, there is a kind of severity mixed with kindness, consolation with reproach, warning with promise, mercy with justice. According to the beautiful reflection of Saint Ambrose, God often takes upon himself qualities and names which only sustain and increase our hope. Are we in darkness? He is our light. Are we wandering? He is our shepherd. Are we afflicted? He is our consoler. Are we cast down? He is our strength? Are we overcome by some awful sickness and near death? He is our physician, our resurrection, our life. But to hear what he says in this text, one can only groan and tremble... who of you will not wither in fear, given what meets our eyes? Churches destroyed, signs of our Redemption pulled down, altars overturned, the morality of God reviled and degraded, the faith almost extinguished in the hearts of everyone...

Abandonment of God, which was once the just chastisement for the crimes of the Jews, the almost complete impenitence of corrupt England and the schism and heresy of the proud and impious Orient, when it comes to us would this be the worse that he has in the storehouse of his vengeance?

We do not have to go to foreign countries to look for proofs of such a terrible thing, we have among us a Philippe d’Orléans, a Dampierre, a Custine, a Péthion, a Marat (all of them revolutionaries who met a tragic end), a Le Scève (constitutional Bishop of Poitiers who took office on April 10, 1791 and on the 22nd of that same month died in a latrine, while at a meeting of the bishops of the national church) and so many others. After being the shame of their order (nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie), the scandal of the Church and the horror of the human race, did they not vomit into hell the soul that they had already soiled by their crimes? Didn’t one of them, before our very eyes, end up like Arius, having like him profaned the temple and soiled the holy place?

If we recall the first experiences of the Coudrin the seminarian, especially from the time of major orders –he was ordained Sub-deacon on 3 April 1790– we cannot fail to note that the social circumstances of his country, and of the Church in which he lived, were extremely dramatic. Accordingly, it is easy to understand that history was uppermost in his awareness, including his encounter with God, and we could say, especially in his relationship with God.

Finding meaning in the distressing aspects of life is always a problem. But when the whole of society is rocked by a total collapse of institutions; especially when the madness affects the Church itself, and envelops religious life and the conscience of Christians with such violence as did the French Revolution, there is great anxiety to discover the meaning of events. This is particularly so when there is not the slightest human possibility of influencing them in any way or of altering their course.

Young Father Coudrin, confined in the granary of La Motte, felt the weight of the historical events in which he was living and so he spent his time reading Church history, in a climate of prayer and reflection on faith. Towards the end of his five months of reclusion, he expressed a fairly serene and objective appreciation of events, as suggested on the one hand by his conviction that the crisis would go on for many years more, and on the other by his decision to go out and face the dangers in order to serve the faithful deprived of priestly ministry.¹⁰²⁰

6. BP, 22 bis* 2. To the Bishop of Poitiers, before February 1798.

Without any exaggeration we could say that God seems to have poured forth on this budding establishment singular favors...

7. PAC.1160. Statutes of the Immensité, 1794-1795.

No-one can doubt but that the evils afflicting us now for some years are punishments inflicted on us by the justice of a God outraged by crimes of all sorts. Impiety, under the name of a false philosophy, has for a long while now been spreading its venom in almost all hearts. This poison has penetrated and has produced the unfortunate effects that skeptics expected, and –my God!– what effects! The faith undermined to its very foundations, hope wiped out, charity denied, all religion overturned and almost destroyed, the ministers of the Catholic cult ill treated, proscribed, expelled, dragged to the scaffold, unjustly murdered; virgins consecrated to the Lord obliged to abandon the institutions of piety, insulted and most of them reduced to lacking mere necessities; the faithful deprived of the services indispensable for their salvation; children dying without baptism, the sick without the sacraments, a multitude of Christians contracting illegitimate liaisons; the cross, that holy sign of salvation pulled down, broken, and trampled underfoot; finally the Body of Jesus Christ, the adorable Savior of the universe, insulted, and profaned. In a word, such are the horrid evils produced by impiety and godlessness.

¹⁰²⁰ HL, Qq.R.1, 60.

During the Terror, Father Coudrin is among the “refractory”¹⁰²¹ clergy. One of the roots of his resistance is his conviction that human history, especially the portion in which he finds himself, is the “dominion of God.” He knows the response of Christ to Pilate. With his hands bound he says, “You would have no power over me if it had not been given you from above” (Jn 19:11). He sees in everything that happens an intervention of God, who punishes men’s sins. This perception, already clear at the end of 1788, probably did not change substantially given subsequent events. The “vision” of September 1792 caused him to take a step. There is born within him a feeling of security in the midst of the storm. This is not a denial of his “providential” interpretation of history. Quite the contrary, his security comes from the fact that he feels chosen by the one who actually controls the events.¹⁰²²

He and other members would experience his very vocation as founder of a new apostolic community in the Church as a “work of God.” It originated in a call of Providence and will be find its main support in Providence. As we have seen, this is not “providentialism,” using “providence” as an excuse for inaction and for taking the responsibility to act in the world. Far from that, it is an incentive for creativity. All that we have seen in the Second Part, concerning the apostolic activity of the community, is ample proof of this.¹⁰²³

Before looking further into the contents of this Providence, it should be pointed out that, at least in the writings of the Founder, “Providence” is the equivalent of “Christ’s government.” So we can say that for Father Coudrin, Providence has Christ’s face, and is no other than Christ, whom he experiences continually intervening in the events of daily life.¹⁰²⁴

8. BP, 2201*26. Sermon on Sacrilege, 1790.

O nation that rebels against your God, how long will you despise the blood that he shed for you?

9. 2202bis*18. Sermon on Final Impenitence, 1794.

... But when they added to those crimes the death of God whom they sold and attached to the cross...

1021 Translator’s Note: This is the term used for the clergy who refused to swear the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

1022 HL, Qq.R.I, 64. -There is no doubt that the inhumane aspects of the fact of the Revolution, obvious as they were, did not favour the evolution of the orthodox religious mentality towards a secularization compatible with the faith, nor did they create a climate of serenity indispensable for adopting a sufficiently distant position for making any criticism.

1023 Cf., supra, p. 121 ff.

1024 BP, 170, 372, 469, 670, 1002, 1529, 1789, 1912, 2201, 2251. On the consequences of the “vocation for suffering”, whose formulation strikes us today as somewhat harsh, see Chap. V.

- 10. BP, 170*6. To Sister Ludovine de la Marsonnière, 17-5-1804.**
Let us hope for all from on high, let us all be conformed to the Heart of God (of Jesus) and every difficulty will be ironed out.
- 11. BP, 670*3. To Mother Aymer, 23-1-1821.**
I would feel truly grieved to oppose the Spirit of God. Accordingly, do as you see fit, and the Heart of God (Jesus) will sustain your work.
- 12. BP, 694*3. To Sister Françoise de Viart, 31-5-1821.**
We are very fortunate that the good God has received us in his divine Heart...
- 13. BP, 1002. To Father Martin Calmet, 23-12-1824.**
You know well that we can expect to be ill treated here below, as we follow the sufferings of the Heart of God... Let us take comfort, then, in Him.
- 14. BP, 1912*1. To Father Stanislaus Caupert, 13-6-1834.**
My dear friend, let us always be kind, and the Heart of God will help us in our troubles.

2. The Attributes of Providence

Without theological pretensions or trying to develop concepts and definitions, the Founder appealed to real Providence. He sensed it working powerfully in the daily life of his country, his Church and especially his spiritual family. Within the community, everyone senses Christ-Providence at work in every event. They see everything as coming from him. He is the Master who decides and governs, who allows or prohibits and who, in the final analysis, controls everything and can do everything.

1. BP, 29. *5*8. To Mons. de Chabot, 15-3-1802.

We are quite sure that your journey here (to Poitiers in 1801) was part of God's plans... God will sustain us (the new Congregation) in our weakness.

2. BP, 30*3*4. To Mons. de Chabot. 21-3-1802.

Happy for us and happy for me, Monsignor, if we can be of some help to you in spite of our great poverty. God is so good that we have reason to hope so.

3. BP, 66*9, Ps 5. To Father Isidore David, 17-10-1802.

We are not without troubles here (in Mende), however with the grace of God I hope that the Work will be sustained. If God wishes the number to increase, he will raise up sons of Abraham from the stones of Lebanon.

4. BP, 113*4. To our Brother and Sister Zealots, 19-6-1803.

I tell you all that my heart is overflowing with joy because the good God is blessing our Work and because he has given me sons and daughters so simple, so brave and so honest, to cooperate with His holy will, and with His great designs for us.

5. BP, 138*4*5. To Sr. Gabriel de la Barre, 1-11-1803.

... But I do not get too shaken up, at seeing rye at five or six pounds a bushel, having round about forty persons to support and without means. It is true that often God multiplies visibly what we have. This strengthens me even more in my belief that we are His children.

6. BP, 169, ps. To Sr. Gabriel de la Barre, 13-5-1804.

The Providence of the good God is so admirable in its effects that it will perform a miracle to at least save him the essential... (he is referring to the existence of the Congregation, threatened by the politics of Napoleon).

7. BP, 182*3. To Sr. Gabriel de la Barre, 30-6-1804.

God always knows how to make some good come from evil for those whom he puts to the test (his vicissitudes in Paris).

8. BP, 185*2. To GB, 15-7-1804.

If you bring him, said Portalis (to Mons. Chabot, speaking of Father Coudrin), we will make him stay... His business lies here. Meanwhile God makes use of this poor Caprasius (the Founder himself) to bring about a number of conversions... (in Saint Roque).

9. BP, 190*4*5. To ID, 30-7-1804.

I cannot tire of admiring God's plans, for the fruits the small instructions produce (at Saint Roque, Paris). People come who have not been to confession for twenty or thirty years, and thus far I have obtained only consolations from this. Thus you see that, if on the one hand I am slandered by the ministers, God compensates me a thousand times more than a wretch like me deserves.

10. BP, 192. To GB, 4-8-1804 (Cf. Appendix n. 4).

People's health and life, both spiritual and temporal depend on Him. One has to count on his aid and assistance to do the slightest thing. Only He can give the strength and courage first to struggle, and then to enjoy peace in the midst of human insecurity.¹⁰²⁵

11. BP, 218*1. To the Brothers of Poitiers, 5-1-1805.

Take comfort, my sons, God is with us, he will take care of the Family. I hope that the Bishop of Poitiers (the new Bishop) will take care of you all.

12. BP, 232*3. To Félicité de Charraix, 16-7-1805.

As for you, my dear daughters, (the religious, sisters of the new foundation of Pontlieu, close to Le Mans), be not too downhearted. Trust in the good God; He is our Father. He is so kind that He loves and cherishes his poor creatures, however weak they are. And this should reassure us.

13. BP, 244*1. To Sister Ludovine, 16-10-1805.

Be not too sad, my poor children, and remember from time to time that the good God is on our side, that He blesses His work, and that we must try each day to imitate the saints, who have preceded us.

14. BP, 254*6. To Sr. GB, 7-1-1806.

May God who loves us so very much, grant you all His graces.

15. 292*1. To Abbot Fillatreau, 3-12-1806.

It is true that the things that divine Providence has led me to undertake are rather considerable. Eight houses in France with over two hundred persons is a great responsibility. But God is so good, that so far we have lacked nothing.

16. BP, 314*2. To Sister Ursula Roulleau, 17-6-1807.

Truly, God sustains her (Mother Aymer) miraculously, otherwise she could not go on living.

17. BP, 384*1. To GB, 1-5-1809.

Madam, we sincerely share the concern for Adalzinda's poor father. God is so good in everything that concerns us that surely once more He will alleviate the sorrow that would be terrible for our best friends.

18. BP, 451. Note to sister in difficulty.

Yes, my dear child, you can and you must go to confession. When we are sick, we need a doctor. Take comfort. The good God loves you, I assure you, and recover some of your joy. You are where God has placed you. Remain there, calmly. The wind shakes but does not uproot well planted trees.

19. BP, 483*6. To HL, Rome, 17-2-1815.

Work for the work (negotiations for approval of the Congregation by the Holy See), may God sustain and assist you.

20. BP, 512*1. To Sister Hilda Lacoste, 27-8-1816.

I have reason to believe that God will compensate you for all the sacrifices that the good of the work leads you to make.

21. BP, 519*1. Memorandum on the title of Zealots, 6.12.1816.

At times people still speak well of respect for the Supreme Being, but they no longer know what the love of the Good God means.

22. BP, 526*4. To ID, 12-2-1817.

And still God does miracles for us in his invisible Providence...

¹⁰²⁵ BP, 128, 292, 387, 1950, 2113; - 480, 932, - 172, 351, - 189, 330, 474, - 249, 250, 708, 133.

Father Coudrin not only believes in theory that Christ reigns and presides over earthly history. We could say that he feels and experiences it. He sees it with the eyes of faith in the events of everyday.

What's more, he sees Providence as continually active in the life of the community and so he calls it the "Work of God." He sees himself as associated with this work, as its interment, by reason of a special vocation. Most of the texts that speak of God refer to this ongoing intervention in the creation and development of the community and all the members are called to collaborate in the work of Providence.¹⁰²⁶

Along with this belief in the "providential power" of God and Christ, an awareness of other attributes appears in the texts. At the beginning, we are speaking here especially of the period of the Revolution, what stands out more is the justice of a God who punishes. However, little by little references to goodness and mercy become more frequent. Love has a particular importance as the explanation of God's whole way of acting. This awareness comes from an experience of faith. There is the sense that this goodness, this mercy and this love is over him. The Good Father has a personal relationship with Almighty providence, as does each member of the community. These relationships exist by a free initiative of the goodness of God, who loves and who calls and who loves and calls the community with indescribable love. God, in Christ, loves his work and we come to appreciate that as we see all he does each day for it.

23. BP, 533*6*7. Circ. Approval of the Congregation, 14-4-1817.

Our Institution began in times when the blood of the servants of God was flowing on the scaffolds, and already we have existed for twenty-three years. The wonders of divine goodness were required to sustain us in the midst of storms. The Lord has not ceased to make the miracles of His Providence shine on us. It's as if he has led us by the hand. Each day we have had proofs of His all-powerful protection. We were spared under the reign of the Terror. Persecution under the Directory failed to affect us, and during the fourteen years of the oppressive government (of Napoleon), with the help of heavenly grace, we managed to conceal all knowledge of our institute and the relationships between our various houses from the crafty and perfidious police. To these many great benefits, the Lord has recently added another no less precious one... The Apostolic See saw fit to approve and confirm our institute on January tenth of this year.

24. BP, 673*1. To Father Hippolyte, 22-2-1821.

Let us never forget all that we owe the good God.

25. BP, 705*3. To Father Joachim Delétang, 14-7-1821.

My good friend, the good God sees that we have crosses. It is a proof that he loves us. Let us respond by our fidelity.

¹⁰²⁶ BP, 57*9; 73*2; 80*4; 125*4; 140*3; 144*2; 170*18,21; 172, ps.6; 179*6; 213*2; 292*1; 449*6; 453*2; 520*15; 1231*4; 1317*1,2; 1384*1;1453*3;1618*2; 2039*2.

26. BP, 1083,*2*3. To BM, 6-12-1825.

Your troubles... are more painful than my own. I read and clearly see the will of God in all that happens to us... Good Mother, may you at least endeavor to survive all these evils so as to be a comfort to us all. Nothing draws us closer to God than the tribulations borne for his glory.

It is not the least expression of love, to call the community to carry its cross, because this will help it see itself as following in the footsteps of the saints on the path of Christ himself.

3. Attitude of the Community with regard to Providence

Naturally, this faith of Father Coudrin and his community has a very practical and concrete consequence in their attitude toward God and Christ and toward His presence in contemporary and everyday history. This was Pierre Coudrin's attitude and the one he proposes to his community.

27. BP, 1387*1. To FV, 9-7-1828.

I pray to my august patron (Saint Peter) that he always keep you and my poor children in his little boat. I am very confident that my dearest oldest daughter (Sister Françoise, his earliest spiritual protégée) will never leave it. Could we ever have believed, my dear child, that it would have cost us so much to belong to the good God, as you say, for me from my time in the granary of the Motte, and for me I would say since the gardens of Roche-à-Gué. You were no more than fifteen years old and I twenty-one (in 1789), and even then, God had it all decided... I hope, therefore, that we will be happy in heaven: What a long life and it has passed so quickly. And in spite of everything, I hope (we have spent it) doing the work of the good God.

1. BP, 57*10. To BM, 15-9-1802.

My good friend, above all get well soon, for I do not believe that the good God wants me to have the sorrow of seeing you die so soon. After all the graces he has given me, in spite of my great unworthiness, I hope also for this from his merciful love.

2. BP, 80*9. To GB, 26-11-1802.

God above all, my poor children; mix a good bit of modesty and abandonment with everything; lost of wisdom and circumspection.

3. BP, 110*4. To ID, 5-1803.

Sisters Radegundis and Balbina are already nearing the end... And so, my children, let us hope for all from the good God, especially courage and peace. We begin as the saints and, I hope, we will end like them.

4. BP, 115*4*5. To GB, 7-1803.

Judge my sorrow by my tears, for my poor heart is sorely afflicted at the thought of all of you, my children. My poor Gabrielle even causes me greater sorrow (because of her illness)... Finally, may the will of God be forever praised and blessed by us all and by the whole universe.

5. BP, 128*6. To ID, 16-9-1803.

I am overcome with tears twenty times a day, when I think of all that the good God does for us...

6. BP, 129*6. To ID, 30-9-1803.

For the good God truly lets us know that He is our Father and that we must not misuse any of the goods that He has given us.

7. BP, 131*2. To GB, 14-10-1803.

More than once my eyes fill with tears, on seeing the gratitude you show me for feelings that are so legitimately owed you on my part. I feel your sorrow, I sympathize with your troubles. I wish with all my heart that you suffered no such clouds; but, my God! Can the children of the cross expect anything but crosses, with the sweetness of grace which makes us love their bitterness?

The first element of this attitude is faith in the goodness, mercy and love of God that is implicit in all of the texts. This is the cornerstone amidst all the uncertainties and obscurities of community life that develops first in a period when they have to be underground (1793-1814), and in the next period when they lack legal recognition (1814-1840). That is to say, they have no legal status and are thereby deprived of any kind of human security. In the documents, the love of God refers particularly to the community itself. The individual or personal aspect may clearly be supposed, but is rarely explicit. All of this leaves the impression that what is important is the community's attitude.¹⁰²⁷

8. BP, 141*7. To ID, 14-11-1803.

(Regarding the first deaths in the community) May nothing separate you from the love of Jesus Christ. Now more than ever we must belong to God; more than ever we must live for Him alone.

9. BP, 192. Cf. Appendix n.4.

10. BP, 305*2. To Father Hippolyte, 13-4-1807.

(Once more regarding sick members) God sends us trials; but it is the path that leads to heaven... we are living in wretched times. Let us have great confidence in the good God.

11. BP, 740*1. 1-2-1822.

I am forced to write to you from the confessional, Good Mother. The good God has plans of mercy for us. And so I find comfort while at the same time I am distressed that you were treated in such a way in the Mezzanine (of the Tuileries Palace). Especially if Mr. Frayssinous was the culprit. Do not be too distressed. God will do his work well without all of that.

12. BP, 776*2. To Father Hippolyte, 4-9-1822.

Then get rid of the false brothers (who left for questions of money) and give yourself to the good God.

13. BP, 814*2. To Father Antonin Bigot, January 1823.

Do not worry about the University (which is placing difficulties in the way of free education); I would give no response to their questions. What will they do to you? Nothing, I think. Dear friends, be united in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; but remember well that you must not expect to be happy without wanting what God wants. It's the only thing I ask of God for you all every day. We are in no better condition than our Fathers in religion. Per multas tribulationes, etc. / oportet nos intrare in regnum Dei. (We all have to experience many hardships before we enter the kingdom of God) (Acts 5:22).

14. BP, 861*2. To Father Antonin Bigot, 29-7-1823.

I am very grieved. I would like everyone to be happy, and I cannot seem to achieve this. I feel in myself that the good God wants us to be saints and accordingly all sorts of inner sacrifices are necessary.

15. BP, 1104*1. Circ., 11-2-1826.

For over thirty years now... the God of all mercy has not ceased to pour out His blessings on our institute. But it is particularly in this last year that our Congregation has received so many proofs of the divine goodness (approval of the Ritual and the Constitutions, as well as the missions in the Pacific entrusted to the Congregation).

¹⁰²⁷ This is not according to a collectivist conception, which loses sight of the person, but from the conviction that the person is only achieved in its membership in the community, and by building the Church in it, perceived as the "Work of God", of Providence.

This faith gives rise to hope and trust that, despite all difficulties, God's work, with which the community identifies itself, will go ahead and be brought to completion and individuals' lives and their generosity will not be in vain, but will obtain their crown.

It is trust and hope that go hand in hand with an urgent need for complete submission to the will and plan of God, and concretely to God's providential intervention, even if this involves suffering and the cross. Moreover, this will necessarily imply suffering, as it did for Christ himself. To follow him, one must take up the cross each day.¹⁰²⁸

However the fundamental duty, flowing from the awareness of God's goodness, mercy and his watchful care for the community and for individuals, is love which must be the way of submitting to his will and designs. From this love comes also the courage to carry his cross.

That love is a gift of God and a fruit of his Spirit, asked for in prayer.¹⁰²⁹

16. BP, 1210. To Sister Adrienne de Bocquencey, 3-1827.

I gladly ask that your hearts may belong to God, and that He alone may reign in them.

17. BP, 1261*1. To Sister Hilde Lacoste, 21-6-1827.

My dear daughters (Sisters of Rennes), for a long time now I have felt that God alone is our comfort here below. I have the hardest time seeing earthly princes, living in their palaces, enjoying their delicacies; more and more I think that the vegetables that the three young men had in the furnace are a hundred times a hundred better than all the dishes one could taste and the court and in the salons of their Highnesses.

18. BP, 1386. To the Sisters of Le Mans, 8-7-1828.

I often say to myself, before God, that if his mercy chose me to give you all a way of life that makes you suffer, my dear daughters, I have the confidence that you will all go to heaven. So never be discouraged my children. Just one day more and our troubles will be over. A little more than a day, and you will see God, from our good oldest sisters Clare and Donatienne to the youngest among you. I tell you, my dear daughters, taste, taste God on your journey through life. He alone is good. His will is the only good. Outside of his heart, all is bitterness. Say this to everyone. Say it to my brother and his friends (the Fathers who were the chaplains). I believe this for myself. All is nothing, save loving God.

19. BP, 1466. To Sister Justine, 17-2-1829.

(After the Ordinances suppressing all the minor seminaries of the Congregation, it was a difficult moment).

God is with you all, so bring all your troubles to the foot of the cross... For He knows your intentions. Rest assured that you will be comforted. I ask this for you all. I hope that the year now beginning will not be so difficult for you... By seeking God and his justice with all your heart, everything will be given you in abundance, even peace.

20. BP, 225*1. To Mme. Targe, 30-7-1821.

¹⁰²⁸ Cf. Part IV, Chapter III, 1 and Chapter V.

¹⁰²⁹ On this topic, further developments are described in Chap. III: the Veneration of the Sacred Hearts.

4. The thought of Mother Aymer and of the Chroniclers

Mother Aymer's contribution to the life of faith in Providence began with her silent example in 1795, when she entered the Society of the Sacred Heart (the "Immensité"). It did not take the form of a message until early 1800, when she confided her revelations to Father Coudrin.

What is most typical is the charismatic nature of her contribution. It could be said that she "prophesizes", in as much as she gives expression to God's plans for the community. Most of the revelations that we have refer to the community, because they seem to be the ones subject to the mandate to write imposed on her by Fr. Coudrin, her confessor, whom she obeyed even at the cost of violence to herself.¹⁰³⁰

1. **BM, 12. 1800.**

.... You should address yourself to Mr. de Mondion, the good God will put into his heart how he should answer us...

2. **BM, 21.**

It is no longer only the Blessed Virgin who wants this order, but it seems to have become a necessity for God's Heart, so great is his mercy for us. I find it impossible to explain for what I am telling you is nothing, in comparison with what I learned or experienced in this regard.

3. **BM, 28.**

I have taken another look at the little book, to comfort myself. This little book (containing the names of the professed in the society) indicates that we are the only ones, that we will be approved, that Mary is and will always be our protector and support, and that we will always occupy a place in her Heart; that we should have recourse to her when God seems to withdraw, in our troubles, our grief and in our infidelities. She will pray for us if we invoke her, instead of becoming distressed.

4. **BM, 30.**

The Holy Spirit will come down on you (Father Coudrin). The saints rejoice in the hope of seeing their number increase. The angels gather round the Holy Virgin, as during the Salve. Finally, Our Lord seems to open his Heart to us and say: "All of you, come to me", or "You are all mine".

5. **BM, 31.**

Our Lord reproached me for not having written yesterday, at the end, that he had revealed himself crucified. That tells us we will have many crosses. He told me this afternoon that we would be persecuted, even by saints. The Blessed Virgin prayed during Mass but for you alone. It was also revealed to me that several good subjects (men) would join us, who would give us great comfort, according to God and who would win us great respect outside. That will take place at a time when we are humbled, even a bit discouraged. The Blessed Virgin never stops praying for you.

1030 Let us recall what we said in the Part III, Chapter VI, n.1 and ff.

6. BM, 34.

(Our Lord) had looked on us with mercy... he reminded me that he had told me that his Mother liked our cause and that then she had taken it as her own.

7. BM, 36.

During the Salve, the good God opened his Heart to us, he said: Come, my children, come, my friends, come plunge yourselves in my heart, come submerge yourselves in love and suffering. The Blessed Virgin was not praying as usual, she was joyful seemed to show us to her Son.

As regards relations with God, the content of these messages could be summarized in God's love for the Congregation. God even has a special fondness for it and that is a guarantee of his assistance in obtaining approbation by moving the hearts of the Vicars of Poitier or the Pope, pouring forth the Spirit on the Founder, giving him his mother the Blessed Virgin as a special mediator and marking the community with his cross and also his consolation.

We have pointed out earlier that, apart from the "notes" written in a very sober style and all addressed to her confessor, Mother Aymer rarely deals with spiritual topics in her letters, as if she feared to take on the airs of a spiritual or betray the communications she received.

As a result, her written communications are very scarce but, at the same time, important for the forming the Congregation's faith in the love of God for it. For the founder himself received them as coming directly from God.

8. BM, 43.

At the moment we entered the church, the Holy Virgin began to pray: when the ceremony began, the whole celestial court interrupted what it was doing, to see what was happening in our chapel, as a matter of great wonder and of great interest for the inhabitants of heaven.

9. BM, 46.

I did what I could to wait to receive communion at Mass but Our Lord Jesus Christ put into my heart such a violent desire to receive that, in spite of myself, I grabbed the altar cloth. At the moment that I bent down my heart burst open, and God descended into it. The impression was so powerful, that involuntarily I brought my hand to my breast, to ascertain that it had not opened. When you began the Salve, it was as if the heavens had opened. I saw the angels and the whole celestial court saying it with you. The Holy Virgin appeared with the Child. And never have I seen the Holy Virgin so close to or so distinctly...

10. GB, Mem., Poitiers, 1802.

The means used by divine Providence at the beginning and the progress of the Order of Zealots of the Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary are known by few persons; they were concealed under the veil of the humility of the Founders of that order. Many of the wonders that God has brought about in them and through them will never be revealed. I propose to write the little I know and of which I have been an eye-witness. However I can say nothing of events without speaking at some length of the persons to whom they refer... (ANN., 1962, p. 172).

11. GB, Mem. II., Poitiers, 1823.

(Mother Aymer) In everything she did, she followed as closely as possible the Gospel maxim: "Each day has enough trouble of its own". Her foresight was without haste, submissive to the decrees of Providence, at all times towards sacrificing her own interests and living in utter self abnegation. Events could disturb her and cause her to suffer, but not fluster her.

As for the testimony of the chroniclers –Sister Gabriel de la Barre and Hilarion Lucas– at each step they merely confirm what we have said thus far, showing that they are moved by the same spirit as Father Coudrin. It would be superfluous to undertake further investigation of their persons and we will limit ourselves to giving a sample of their texts and refer the reader to their writings.

5. The influence of authors being read

As on many points, we only have clues about this. Explicit references are lacking. It will be helpful for us to remember what authors closest to the community said about providence.¹⁰³¹

12. HL, Mem. 1, p. 30.

Ever concerned with preparing the way for the holy establishment that God was calling him to found, our Very Reverend Father found some dispositions favorable to the religious life among a small group of persons with whom he lived. But he needed much prudence so as not to act precipitously in such an important matter... And so for a while he was happy just to pray to the Lord, imploring him to send a strong soul open to all kinds of sacrifices so as to follow the designs of divine Providence. Finally his prayer was heard. Beginning in November 1794 Mademoiselle Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie besought his ministry and she asked him to direct her in the path of salvation.

13. HL, Mem. 1, p. 36.

According to a document written in 1803 by Mme. Françoise de Viart, presently Superior General of the sisters, which is nothing more than notes gathered from the mouth of Mother Henriette, it would seem that the Lord, had first chosen other persons one after another to lead the Sisters and found the new institute but that those persons had not responded adequately to the plans of Providence, and that in God's designs, Mother Henriette had taken up their place.

1. Ps. 7:1

*LORD my God, in you I take refuge;
rescue me; save me from all who pursue me,
Lest they maul me like lions,
tear me to pieces with none to save.*

2. Ps. 11:1

*In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to me,
"Flee like a bird to the mountains!
See how the wicked string their bows...
The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven.
God's eyes keep careful watch*

3. Ps. 16

*You who deliver with your right arm
those who seek refuge from their foes.
Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings
from the violence of the wicked.*

¹⁰³¹ The texts cited belong to the actual repertory of the community, and at least allow us to imagine that it was not too different in the historic reality.

We do not have to resort to complicated reasoning to realize that just the weekly recitation of the Psalms, which Father Coudrin followed in his Breviary, must have become, given the circumstances, a clear message for him about Providence and recourse to it. It is not necessary to quote the Psalms in any great detail because they are all quite available to us. It suffices to remember that the text used by the Founder was that of the Vulgate. It is an interesting experience to imagine living in the midst of the terror reciting the whole Psalter. Think of how the psalms resonated in someone living in hiding, in continual insecurity and mortal danger.

Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622)

Apart from the Psalms, we can say that Christian spiritual writing in every age is filled with the sense of Providence. This is true, with varying emphases, in the lives of the saints and in the writings of ascetics and mystics.

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4. **Ps. 27:1** **The LORD is my light and my salvation;**
whom do I fear?
The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom am I afraid?
 5. **Ps. 120:1** **I raise my eyes toward the mountains.**
From where will my help come?
My help comes from the LORD,
the maker of heaven and earth.
 6. **Ps. 144** **Lord, you are near to all who call upon you,**
to all who call upon you in truth.
You satisfy the desire of those who fear you;
You hear their cry and save them.
You, Lord, watch over all who love you,
but all the wicked you destroy.

7. **Saint Francis de Sales. Treatise on the Love of God, II, 3.**

Now, Theotimus, speaking of heavenly things according to the impression we have gained by the consideration of human things, we affirm that God, having had an eternal and most perfect knowledge of the art of making the world for his glory, disposed before all things in His divine understanding all the principal parts of the universe which might render Him honor; to wit, angelic and human nature, and in the angelic nature the variety of hierarchies and orders, as the sacred Scripture and holy doctors teach us; as also among men he ordained that there should be that great diversity which we see. Further, in this same eternity He provided and determined in His mind all the means requisite for men and angels to come to the end for which He had ordained them, and so made the act of His providence; and not stopping there, He, in order to effect what He had disposed, really created angels and men, and to effect His providence He did and does by His government furnish reasonable creatures with all things necessary to attain glory, so that, to say it in a word, sovereign providence is no other thing than the act whereby God furnishes men or angels with the means necessary or useful for the obtaining of their end.

Among them, one of the authors most certainly read by the community from its origins, is the Bishop of Geneva, Saint Francis de Sales, whom Father Coudrin must have known from his university and seminary days, and for whom he always nurtured a particular liking.

A great theologian, the holy Bishop is, above all, a spiritual writer who never forgets the perspective of the practical life of faith, even when he shows his speculative skill. For this reason he is of particular interest to us.

In Book II of his *Treatise on the Love of God*, he devotes several chapters (22), to a study of Divine Providence.

Following the most rigorous scholastic tradition of Saint Thomas, after establishing that the divine perfections are but one single and infinite perfection, and that in God there is but one act, which is his own divinity, the learned Doctor goes on to explain his conception of Providence itself.

Taking as a comparison the wise government of Solomon, he shows how God, having the knowledge and skill to create the world for his glory, arranges everything to that purpose. God efficaciously leads everything to that objective, while acting on two different planes: that of natural Providence, and that of supernatural Providence.

He especially develops this latter point, to which natural providence is ordained. The whole economy of redemption unfolds, revealing its riches and variety of gifts, beginning with the special grace given to the Blessed Virgin, to each saint and each member of the faithful without ever repeating itself. The love of God is the great moving force behind this whole wonderful work. At the same time it is its great object. In the final analysis, God wishes to be loved with the free love of friendship. The whole series of gifts were ordained to make this possible, from permission for the “undoubtedly necessary sin of Adam”, to the great gift which transforms it into a “happy fault”: the gift of a Redeemer in Christ. From this gift a multitude of graces come, diversified according to the purpose for which they are intended, to help each person receive, in complete freedom, the gift of love, passing from faith to charity, through hope which becomes penance in the life of the sinner, and which ends up flowering into the love of friendship with God and through God.

8. Father Lejeune. Sermon 94.

In ipso vivimur et movemur et sumus (In him we live and move and have our being.)
Acts 17:28.

We move in God, we live in Him, we exist in Him, more than the ray of light in its sun, more than the branch in the root. Just as the mother carries her son in her arms, in order for him to fall, she has only to open her arms and make no move to offer her help, thus God sustains us so presently, we have such need of His continuous influence and causality, that in order for us to be annihilated He has to take no action whatever, but merely cease the action and suspend the help by means of which He holds us safe.

Father Lejeune (1592-1672)

Another author quoted by Father Coudrin very early on and certainly widely read by the first generation of his religious, is the Oratorian, a disciple of Cardinal de Bérulle, who dedicated himself to the spreading of Christian spirituality through missions. Several volumes of his sermons went into various printings before the Revolution. His name was Jean Lejeune, nicknamed “the blind man”, because in fact he went blind and continued preaching until the end of his life.

Bossuet (1627-1672)

Lastly, we cannot forget Bossuet. In his *Discourse on Universal History* he explains to the Dauphin the whole development of human history, as a work of God's Providence and the design of His wisdom. It is perceptible to the eyes of the faith in such a way that, what to simple reason appears confused, becomes illuminated when considered in the light of revelation and faith.

6. Brief Summary

Bearing in mind that the sample of texts that we have given is fairly representative of all of those examined, it seems possible to summarize their content in a few short points:

1. God (“the Good God”) is almost always synonymous with “Providence”, even in those cases in which that word is not used in the context, since God is always considered as intervening in the daily reality of history as it is lived.
2. Providence itself is not considered in the abstract, but in concrete terms. It encompasses not only the governance of God, but also the economy of salvation which He has chosen in Christ. Thus it is not rare that providence is also equivalent to Christ and that it is placed in close relationship with the mediation of Mary.

The faith teaches us, secondly, that everything that takes place in this world, either in the heavens, or on earth, or by men, or by animals, or by noble natures, or by those that are less so, or in things of slight importance, or in things of consequence, everything, everything that is done, except for sin, is done not only with God's permission, but by His will, because He ordains it, through His management and direction; and consequently, in God's eyes chance does not exist, destiny does not exist, nor fate nor accident, but rather it is He who disposes and ordains everything through His adorable Providence, which does nothing except with the utmost Justice, with the utmost wisdom and for some good reason: "Uli est cura de ómnibus" (He provides for all alike), says the Wise man (Wis. 6:8).

9. Bossuet. Discourse on Universal History, 424, 427, 435.

Thus, four or five authentic facts, clearer than the light of the sun, make us see that our religion is as old as the world itself. Consequently, they show that its author is no other than He who established the universe, who holding it all in His hand, alone was able to set in motion and carry on His design which embraces all the centuries... This is what the development of religion, in summary form before your eyes, teaches you... Through time, it leads you to eternity... While, the more you become more accustomed to following great things and tracing them back to their origins the more you are astonished at these counsels of Providence. It would be well for you to learn, from early on, the ideas that will be clarified day by day in your mind, and for you to learn to refer human affairs to the orders of this Eternal Wisdom on which they depend.

The God, with whom the community is in relationship, is the “Lord of History” and the Christ who has received power. As Saint Peter says: “His is the power forever and ever.” The community knows that it is not possible to go to the Father except through Christ, and that He can only be found in Him.

The great experience, fruit of this contact with God, is that of his goodness. So, on the lips of the Founder, “Good God” implies a special emphasis on “good”, which could perhaps be translated more exactly as “God of goodness”. This “goodness” for sinners is always “compassion”. This intense perception of the God’s love in Christ is closely related to devotion to the Sacred Hearts, as we will see in Chap. III.

Emphasis on the subjective is very scarce in the writings of the time. At a primary level of awareness there is the commitment to personal perfection, close attention to ascetical progress etc. We know that this phenomenon cannot be explained by forgetting the personal tendency to perfection or by a relaxation of ascetic discipline. On the contrary, that was very strict. The secret is a strong sensitivity toward the interests of the Church, and the “Work of God” in which the community is engaged. This outward orientation takes hold despite the opposite tendency of the literature being read, which was that of the spiritual books of the 17th and 18th centuries.



Chapter II

THE CHURCH AND THE CONGREGATION IN THE FAITH OF THE COMMUNITY

All the information we have about the understanding of the Church that was developing in the community, leads us to believe that its fundamental attitude, on this as on other points of its life of faith, was defined and matured during the Terror and persecution, which was in certain sense prolonged in the conditions of secrecy under Napoleon.

Apart from the circumstances, Father Coudrin's personal experience and consequent position, as also Mother Aymer's charismatic messages were determinative. So we will be referring to these.

1. Father Coudrin's position in the Church

As we have seen in the first part, Father Coudrin was always a pastor with a very active life, consumed by the task at hand. His attraction for research and theological speculation was one of the first sacrifices that the providential circumstances imposed on him. He was obliged to be ordained a priest before completing his academic studies, and for almost ten years his life was caught up in the turmoil of the refractory Church. We should not be surprised that he has not left us a systematic treatment of what he thought and felt about the Church.

If we want to get some idea of how he saw things, we have to carefully study the body of his writing and his thinking, and particularly that contemporary with the Revolution and the government of Napoleon. For the moment we will limit ourselves to his first important choice in this field, his association with the "ultramontane" school of thought. To get a better idea, we have to begin with his studies at the University of Poitiers, where he studied the treatise *De Vera Religione et Ecclesia* under Dr Charles Brault, from November 3, 1787 to June 22, 1788.¹⁰³²

1032 Cf. Part I, Chapter 1, n. 2.

1. BP, 2218. Certificate of Good Studies in Theology, 1788.

The undersigned, Doctor of Theology at the aforementioned Academy of Poitiers, Professor of Sacred Theology in the Royal College of Saint Martha, hereby certify that Mr. Pierre Coudrin, of the Diocese of Poitiers, has followed my morning lessons on Religion (regarding Religion), taking notes and listening with great assiduity and attention over the academic year, that is, from the third of November seventeen eighty-seven until the twenty-second of July seventeen eighty-eight.

I further certify that the aforesaid Mr. Pierre Coudrin undertook all his responsibilities as a student with diligence, ingenuity and profit, and behaved with piety, modesty and wisdom.

In faith whereof I have issued this document, undersigned by me, and complete with the seal of the Sacred Faculty of Poitiers, on the twenty-third day of July in the year seventeen hundred and eighty-eight.

BRAULT (heretofore)

(On the printed diploma, we find, handwritten, the words underlined here)

2. Brief Instructions in Theology, for the use of the Seminary of Poitiers. Poitiers, 1772.

The definition of the Church appearing there is subtly Gallican:

Very probably, the text used was the first volume of *Compendiosae Institutiones Theologicae, ed usum Seminarii Pictaviensis* printed in Poitiers in 1772. This is an openly Gallican manual, a fact which should not surprise us in France prior to the condemnation of Pius VI, dated 1794.

The general lines of the treatise are the classic ones of the manuals of his time; and of post-Tridentine theology in general. Everything is constructed on the basis of the polemics with the Protestants. It is divided into five *Disputaciones*: 1) Nature of the Church; 2) Properties and Notes; 3) Authority; 4) Members; and 5) Head of the Church.

Lestra says that the fact of his having become a member of “AA” supposes non-contamination with Gallicanism.¹⁰³³ We would doubt this, since in the third part of his *Mémoires*, Hilarion has recorded this brief but significant statement: “I must observe that our venerable founder had drawn these sentiments of complete submission to the Head of the Church only from the sense of faith that inspired him. For the professors in Poitiers, under whom he had studied theology, were attached to many Gallican liberties. For several years he himself suffered the effects of the impressions he had received but it was not long before he came back.”¹⁰³⁴

This passage from our chronicler tells us that Father Coudrin owed his ultramontane tendency to personal reflection, which produced fruit rather quickly. This does not mean that he did not maintain a Galican¹⁰³⁵ position “for some years”, which should be counted from the end of 1788 at the earliest. Nor does it seem that Bishop D’Aviau, who left Poitiers for good at the end of 1789, had anything to do with this reaction.¹⁰³⁶

The Church of Christ Militant, is as much as it is visible, is defined as a group of men united by the same Christian faith, and Communion in the same Sacraments, under the rule of the legitimate pastors, and principally of the Roman Pontiff, Supreme Vicar of Christ on earth. (p. 226)

The polemic point is in the last sentence, which states in opposition to Belarmine, that the bishops are also “quodammodo vicarii”. The formally Gallican themes appear in the “Disputatio de Auctoritate.” After dedicating more than six pages to proving the proposition from Scripture and Tradition, it concludes with a corollary:

Accordingly, the Gallican Clergy rightly pronounces in Article 1 of his Declaration dated 1682: The Kings and Princes are not subjected, by divine ordinance, to any ecclesiastical authority in temporal matters, nor can they, by virtue of the Authority of the Keys of the Church, be disposed of either directly or indirectly, nor their subjects be exempted from fidelity or obedience, nor the oath taken nullified. And this judgment, necessary for the public tranquility, and no less useful to the Church than to the Empire,

1033 Lestra I, p. 36.

1034 HL, Mem. III, 4.

1035 Translators Note: The original Spanish reads (p. 408) “anglicana” (Anglican). This is most certainly a misprint. The context would indicate that the correct word would be “Galicana” (Galican).

1036 Lyonnet I, p. 218 ss.

should be considered to be in accordance with God's Word, the tradition of the Fathers and the examples of the saints.

It recognizes that the Pope has the right to convene and preside over an Ecumenical Council. As regards "infallibility", a full century before Vatican I, it recognizes the definitions of the Council itself, while in a second proposition it specifies:

What appears more likely is that the explosion of the schism consequent on the approval of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and completed with the promulgation of the Brief of Pius VI, who condemned the oath (10 March 1791), opened his eyes and made him grasp the urgency of a closer reference to the Pope, if orthodoxy were to be saved. His participation in the campaign for the dissemination of the Brief in Coussay would seem to be an indication of this. No further testimonies are available.¹⁰³⁷

2. Experience of the Church during the Revolution

We are convinced that the attitude of the Founder towards the Church is not confined to his ultramontane tendency. Providence will oblige him to follow an intensive course in ecclesiology, which is his experience under the Terror and persecution, in which the famous polemic is less important than the urgent need to ensure the most basic unity of the scandalized and abandoned members of the faithful and the need to alleviate the suffering and misery of persons of all classes. The values of fraternity and charity as practical attitudes become more important than any ideological position.¹⁰³⁸

In June 1791, he is denounced, together with his parish priest of Coussay-les-Bois, for taking part in the dissemination of the papal Brief, and he has to take refuge in Saint Ustre. A few months later he decides to be ordained to the priesthood in order to remain in France, at the very time when almost all those who refuse to take the oath are forced to go into exile leaving the multitude disconcerted and distressed, deprived of their pastors.

From the outset, he holds a very clear position regarding the importance of the hierarchy in the Church, and will always act in the closest contact with Vicar Brunneval, who had received all the powers from the Bishop before going into exile. However the purpose of his work and the risks he takes is the direct service of the faithful, beginning with the poorest or sickest among them and those most in danger.

During the five months in the granary of La Motte, he spends much of his time reading the history of the Church. When he abandons his seclusion on October 20, 1792, the thing that impels him to defy danger is the responsibility to witness and serve that he owes God and his persecuted people. That has been awakened in him by the example of the martyred bishop Saint Caprasius, whom he read about in the breviary.

1037 Cf. *supra.*, Part I, Chapter 1, n. 5.

1038 Cf. Part I, Chapter II, A.2. and *Lestra* I, p. 119 and ff.

The active infallibility of the Church, by virtue of Christ's promises, undoubtedly applies, not to just a few bishops separated from their head the Roman Pontiff, but to the bishops united to the Supreme Pontiff, at least a greater number of them.

And in proposition IV:

In cases of faith and morals the Supreme Pontiff can neither err nor are his decrees unchangeable independently from the consent of the Church.

The years of ministry during the Terror follow. During that time he does not seem to have written any document other than a marriage certificate which won him a condemnation. His *Sermon on the Faith* dates from the time of the Directory (1795-99). In it the Church, considered as both an object of submission and an object of affection, is ever present in his mind. It is interesting to note that the “grounds for submission”, all of which are taken from the Holy Scriptures, come down to the need to behave like a “docile sheep”, like a “stone” which contributes to the building of the “Heavenly Jerusalem”, and to avoid having to be severed from the Body of Christ, like a “putrefying limb”. Accordingly, submission has to be firm and generous to the point of sacrificing everything: goods, health, freedom, and life, rather than yield. And he ends the paragraph with what appears to be an attack on the “submissionists” who have endorsed the oath of 11 Prairial of year III (30 March 1795): “Holy Church: may they cut off my right hand, if ever I should draw lines that my spirit refutes, may my withered tongue remain stuck to my palate, if ever I should pronounce words that my heart disapproves of. My religion teaches me to speak and not to dissemble; my faith teaches me to die and not to lie, and a faith that authorizes me to any such disguise could never count except with my anathemas. Come now, I would say to it, you are no Christian faith, pagan integrity is better than you are!”¹⁰³⁹

Once again, in the same sermon, he justifies the requirement of affection for the Church in its capacity as “Our Mother”, who has “engendered us in Jesus Christ”, who has held us in her arms, who has fed us with her milk (the Word?); who offers us the “Bread of the Angels”, who calls us when we go astray, who never tires of praying for us, who continuously offers the Sacrifice; in whose arms the speaker wishes to breathe his last breath. And he ends by saying: “Justice, gratitude, interests: are they not by chance many eloquent voices which clamor for you, and which require our heart? Let us consecrate to you forever then, divine Church, these hearts and all their feelings; let us give you all our tender love...”

In what is called the *Rule of the Good Father*, which does not appear to be later than 1797, we also find various references to the Church: “God, in causing us to be born in the Christian religion –he says, obviously meaning: ‘in the Church’– has called us to sanctity...” As if to say that our call to sanctity depends on our baptism. This is the introduction that he gives to religious life. Further on, he devotes the fifth Sunday, in those months when it occurs, to “giving thanks to God for having been born in the Church”. On religious feast days throughout the year, it is our duty to follow “the spirit of

¹⁰³⁹ Cf. Appendix 2.

the Church in the community.” And, finally, all Tuesdays will be consecrated to praying for the Church.¹⁰⁴⁰

In short, we could say that, guided by the daily exercise of charity, which is the soul of the Church, he came in contact with its mystery, with the reality of communion and with the mysterious presence of Christ who dwells there.

3. Being “useful to the Church” with great modesty

Around 1800-1801 the newborn community, hoping for the approval of Church authority, sends petitions both to the Vicars Capitular of Poitiers, and to His Holiness Pius VI. The very gesture reveals a willingness to be submissive to the authorities. In addition they include an explicit and, it could be said, “official” profession of their compliance with authority and their belonging to the Church.¹⁰⁴¹

In the petition of 1801, the Founder declares that he has the hope that his community is to be a solace for the Church, providing it with good subjects. The Vicar, Mr. de Mondion, would seem to share the same hopes, in the approval he grants at the bottom of the same document: “Let us grant it... because of its purpose which will deserve much from the Church, since the members of this apostolic society are eager to work.”¹⁰⁴²

To the Holy See, the community expresses its intention to “depend on it in everything”, and the desire to inherit from the ancient religious orders that have disappeared, “devotion without limit for the Holy Apostolic See and for your Sacred Person...” In October 1801, it is presented as “two Confraternities, free of any Gallican influence, constantly useful and devoted to the divided church...”¹⁰⁴³

Consequently they develop no ecclesiological theory but they do create an ecclesial attitude in an apostolic congregation which, in perfect submission to hierarchical authority, would spend its life serving the faithful and trying to make them living members of the Church. The Congregation was eager to distinguish itself by the “proclamation of the Gospel to the poor” and “the poor will always be the first ones served.”¹⁰⁴⁴

1. BP, 30. To Monsignor de Chabot, 21-3-1802.

Happy for us and happy for me, Monsignor, if we can be of some assistance to you, poor and humble as we are. God is so good that we have reason to hope so. And as often it is the weakest that is chosen, we will never be of any help in God's house in any other way.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Cf. Appendix 3.

¹⁰⁴¹ ANN., 1963, p. 175.

¹⁰⁴² ANN., 1963, p. 185.

¹⁰⁴³ ANN., 1963, pp. 182, 186.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Cf. Part II, Chapter I, n. 4; Chapter II; Chapter V.

2. Petition of the Founders to the Pope. October 25, 1814.

Footnote by Bishop de Chabot:

We hereby give witness and know that all that has been reported is true, that thus far it has been extremely useful to the Church and in future will be even more advantageous, above all if Your Holiness deigns to confirm it, so we recommend that with great insistence (ANN., 1963, p. 192).

3. HL. First Mémoire, 7-12-1814.

We conceived the plan of an institution which could be useful to the Church. It was resolved to establish a Congregation destined to spread the faith, to propagate devotion to the divine Heart of Jesus and to the Sacred Heart of Mary, to make reparation through perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar for the outrages done to the divine Majesty, and finally to educate children in piety and virtue...

These great ambitions to be of service are accompanied by a lively awareness of his own modesty and Father Coudrin compares his contribution to the widow's mite, who by giving little, gave much because she gave her all. In the authenticity of such generosity, protected by this same modesty, he expresses the hope that his contribution will not be refused. "And as often it is the weakest that is chosen, we will never be of any help in God's house in any other way," says the Founder in 1802 to Bishop De Chabot.¹⁰⁴⁵

Once in Mende, he is concerned about the approval of the house there by the new Bishop, appointed according to the Concordat, and he does not change his line of conduct.

When news reached France of the imprisonment of His Holiness Pius VIII in Savona (1809), the consternation in the community was great. Immediately a prayer campaign was started, and at each hour of adoration the seven penitential psalms were recited for the Pope's liberation. This practice continued until he was released.

The Founder did not conceal his position from Cardinal Maury, appointed by the Emperor as Bishop of Paris and never recognized by the Pope. He conducted all his canonical affairs with the Vicar General d'Astros, who was recognized by the Holy See. In the Picpus Seminary he had not fear to teach a more decidedly ultramontane ecclesiology, commenting to the seminarians on the Briefs of Pius VII against the man that was called the "usurper".¹⁰⁴⁶

But perhaps the period where we find the richest formulations of devotion to the Church is first that of negotiations for the approval of the Congregation, and then the Constitutions (1814-1826).

All the documents present not only what, in the past life of the Congregation, seemed to show its adhesion to the Church and to the Pope, but its desire that in the future it be comforted by pontifical approbation, truly useful to the Church, always pure of any Gallican influence and faithfully submissive to the See of Peter. Quoting a pope, Hilarion says that the community was eager to be the "Church's auxiliary troops" ready to take up the most urgent services. But its principal desire will always be to "carry the Gospel everywhere", as the Founder dreamed from the outset. That begins to take shape with the diocesan missions of Troyes in 1820, and acquires its true proportions in the foreign missions, beginning in 1826.

1045 Lk 21:1 ff. BP, 30 - Cf. ANN., 1963, p.185.

1046 Cf. Part I, Chapter II, B.2.

Still it was necessary to evoke the apostolic life of the Man-God... It meant following in men's society, what was already being practiced in the women's house, and adding the missions and the different tasks of the sacred ministry. Such an establishment was supremely useful, above all in the wretched circumstances in which the Church found itself...

This news (of the imprisonment of Pius VII) which distressed us greatly, at the same time indicated to us a new duty to be carried out: that of confirming the faithful in the faith amidst the storms assaulting the Church. This meant that it was our duty to remind Christians of the obedience they owed to the successor of Peter. The Lord inspired in us the necessary firmness to carry out this sacred duty so dear to our hearts. In catechetics, in private instructions and when preaching from the pulpit, we took particular care in speaking of the rights and prerogatives of the Church of Rome. We invoked the great principles of the hierarchy, and that powerful voice of tradition which always leads us to the chair of Peter. The correspondence of the Sovereign Pontiff with an ungodly government (that of Napoleon), the bull of June 10, 1809, the briefs to the Chapter of Florence and to Cardinal Maury were brought to the attention of our pupils who were destined to swell the ranks of the clergy... (ANN., 1963, pp. 194, 195, 201).

The documents could be taken as simple statements of protocol, written for the purpose of ingratiating themselves, winning the benevolence of the authorities and thus obtaining approbation. But they are backed up by large-scale daily modest service to the Church, offered selflessly and silently, without seeking the satisfactions of a worldly vanity or the compensations of power.

For the rest, the Founder always insists on modesty, saying that “We cannot be good workers/actors, unless it is through humility.”

Without quoting Saint Luke, he places his religious family in line with the Gospel: “when you have done all that you have been told to do, say: ‘We are merely servants, we have done no more than our duty.’”

It is easy to abandon the ideal of such perfect detachment in favor of a hidden individual asceticism, while the institutions founded to proclaim the Gospel through a quirk of human psychology adopt, as compensation, the attitude of “Ecce Nos” (“Look at us”) and end up distorting the message. Father Coudrin wanted his religious family to always remain faithful to the gospel attitude of service and never to yield to the temptation to be the lord and master, guaranteeing itself an area to dominate or a level of wellbeing where it begins to demand of others the service it should be offering.

4. HL. Third Mémoire, 24-1-1815.

Cf. infra p. 505 the complete text, in which we find this phrase that interests us: The priests of our Institution have devoted themselves zealously to the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Each day they bless the Lord, who has deigned to grant them graces in their apostolic works. Auxiliary troops of the Church, to use the words of a Pope, they can at least bear witness to the fact that they have not been entirely unfaithful to their vocation...

This respectable religious (Father Fontanta, Superior General of the Barnabites) knows that we have remained constantly faithful to the cause of the Church and of its Head (ANN., 1963, p. 212).

5. Note presented to the Nuncio in Paris, 16-5-1821.

We can testify that we have always been inviolably attached to the Holy Apostolic See, as is proved by the honourable testimony of Monsignor d’Astros, now bishop of Bayonne...

In his mémoire (the parish priest of Sainte Marguerite) complains that Father Coudrin, our Superior General and our Founder, disassociates himself from the doctrine of Bossuet and he does not support the Gallican liberties. He adds that, according to Gallican principles, our Bull is an illusion (ANN., 1963, p. 238, 240).

4. The Community wishes to “evoke” the Four Ages of Christ

The first article of what is called the “Founding Document” says: “The purpose of our Institute is *to evoke*¹⁰⁴⁷ the four ages of Our Lord Jesus Christ: his childhood, his hidden Life, his evangelical Life and his crucified Life; and to spread devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary”.

Leaving for the next chapter the part referring to the devotion to the Sacred Hearts, here we will deal with the first, regarding the Four Ages.

There is no doubt but that this is a subject to which the community ascribes great importance, since of the eight articles of the Preliminary Chapter of the Constitutions –for this was the role of our “Founding Document”– five are devoted to it. Its antiquity and the authority of the Founders give it the quality of a “venerable text”. The rest of it deals with the purpose of the community and its reason for existing in the Church. So it should be of no surprise to us that such great importance has been attached to it.

While that is all very true, it does not mean that these five articles are clear or easy to interpret for us who read them in the second half of the twentieth century. For that reason we felt it necessary to make an effort to clarify their meaning as much as possible. In order to do that we began by gathering all the texts mentioning the four ages that we could find written in the period in question and then we arranged them chronologically. It seems that just doing that suggests many things but let us proceed carefully and systematically.

1. **BM, 33. Note addressed to Father Coudrin.**

The Good God has made known to me that he showed himself in bodily form to Sister Marie Alacoque, so that she would make known the devotion to his Sacred Heart. He granted this grace to the daughters of the Visitation, since their rule is mild and easy for all, although it requires great inner spirit. He lavished on them a particular affection so that this devotion might be loved and spread. Now that it is already adopted, he wants an order that would be destined to adore his Heart, to make amends for the outrages it receives, that would enter into the inner suffering of this Heart, and evoke the four ages of his life. He wants the rule to be somewhat austere, so as to imitate his crucified life; but he wants us to enter particularly into the inner crucifixion of his Heart...

1. ^{bis}. **HL, VBM, 62.**

He wants an order that is destined to adore his Heart, to make reparation for the outrages it receives, that enters into the inner suffering of this Heart, and that evokes the four ages of his life: His childhood, by educating children; his hidden life, through perpetual adoration and silence; his evangelical life through preaching and the missions; and, finally, his crucified life, through the practice of Christian and religious mortification.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Translators note: “evoke” is a literal translation of the French. The work usually used in the English translation of the Preliminary Chapter of the First Constitutions is “retrace”.

a) *The series of texts*

The texts that we have collected are a series of 21; the most important of which is undoubtedly the one in which Mother Aymer reveals to Father Coudrin the communication she received from God. It is No. 33 of the letters of the Foundress in a collection put together for the process of beatification (LEBM, 33). The note is not dated, but it is not too hard to situate in time if we are satisfied with an approximate date. It is clearly pre-October 1801, as the Founder sent a petition to the Pope (October 2), which is the first mention in an official document of the four ages.

2. **Petition to the Pope, 2-10-1801.**

For the last eight years in the diocese of Poitiers there have existed two fraternities... Under the title of Zealots of the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, perpetual adorers, going to the Heart of Jesus through the Heart of Mary and under the patronage of Saint Joseph, they desire to reproduce in their life the different ages of the life of Christ, his childhood, his adolescence, his apostolic life and his crucified life according to what is proper to each of the societies... (ANN., 1963, p. 186).

3. **Petition to the Bishop of Poitiers, 22-5-1802.**

Besides these obligations each member of these associations also has individual duties to fulfill which are regulated by obedience and are in keeping with the purpose they propose for themselves in imitating as much as they can the four ages of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Some are destined to go to the countryside to give missions, instruct the people and spread devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Others are involved in instructing children that they propose to bring up to become priests or zealots according to their vocation and talents, or even good Christians living in the world. Others still are like other Moses destined to ceaselessly lift their hands to heaven to obtain the benediction of the Lord on the work of their brothers and to repair the outrages the Sacred Heart of Jesus has received, receives and unfortunately will receive from wicked Christians. And for the last nine years this reparation has never been interrupted in the women's association during either night or day, despite storms and persecutions... (Ibid., p. 187).

4. **GB. Mémoires, 71 and 73 (1802).**

She continued to discover what we were to do. First she saw that our order was to imitate the four states of the life of Our Lord: his childhood, his private life, his apostolic life and his crucified life. This is the goal for the children we educate, our donnés whose rule is restricted to the limits of a common and ordinary life, our missionaries, and finally the religious who consecrate themselves to penance and silence... Our Reverend Mother also saw that the missionaries were to hold first place in the order, because the apostolic life of Jesus Christ that they must imitate, includes the perfections of the other ages of his life (ANN., 1962, p. 212-214).

5. **GB. General Rule (1802-1805?).**

1. The Order of Zealots is called to imitate the four ages of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ: his childhood, his life with Mary and Joseph, his apostolic life, and finally his life of suffering and crucifixion (ASP).

It seems, moreover, that it cannot be dated before June of that year, because on May 20 the Vicars of Poitiers approved the brothers' branch, with a note at the bottom of a petition in which Father Coudrin explained the purpose of the Congregation without mentioning anything of the four Ages. This would seem unlikely if he had he had previous knowledge of the communication of Mother Aymer, which he considered a message from God, and as such to be obeyed without delay. Thus we can conclude that the "billet" of the Foundress dates from 1801 and was written between June and September of that year.

It must be noted that the variations Hilarion Lucas introduces when he quotes the text of Mother Aymer can be explained by the fact that he was quoting the text from memory without having the original at hand.¹⁰⁴⁸

Moving along in our series of texts, number 10 is notable for its authority. It is taken from the Founders' petition to the Holy See requesting approbation of the Congregation. It is a text that is a reference for all those that come after with respect to the four ages, because here we find the definitive formation of the idea, which then is used in text 13. That is included in the Constitutions of 1817 and the Papal Bull and with some retouches in text 18, which is our *Fundamental Document*.¹⁰⁴⁹

6. BP, 216. Note on the Congregation, 1804-5.

Our resolutions have, as their beginning and end, the four ages of Jesus Christ: his childhood, educating children to virtue; his adolescence, forming them to be good Christians in the world, or in the other state, if they have a good vocation; his crucified life, forming a society of perpetual adorers of his divine Heart in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; and his apostolic life, by instituting a society of missionaries at the disposal of the bishops, to announce the Gospel to the poor.

Everything that directly or indirectly may tend to weaken or destroy this spirit and this purpose in the society as a whole and among the members constituting it, is already unworthy of it and should be proscribed forever. If, in order to establish itself, other means than those that the Lord should provide for us are necessary, we cannot adopt them. Nothing more would be needed to make a building totally collapse as something which could or should not be undertaken other than for the glory of God and the salvation of souls (ANN., 1963, p. 189).

7. BP, 472. Letter to Hilarion Lucas in Rome, 16.08.1814.

Everybody loves you; but remember that the Lord loves you and wants you well; and that nothing should be overlooked as regards the four ages of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

8. BP, 473. Letter to Hilarion Lucas in Rome, 29.08.1814.

*How satisfied I am, my friend, with the steps you have taken and the response that his Holiness was so good to give you. How to send you a *mémoire* about a work that is our consolation but which is not even approved yet by the King! In short, as you know, the four ages of Our Lord Jesus Christ must form the basis of our institute, under the title of Clerics Regular of the Order of the SS.CC. of Jesus and Mary.*

¹⁰⁴⁸ The redaction of this text is late, and done by Hilarion Lucas, who was very aware of many other texts, if not all of them. The interpretation fills the gaps in the original, probably without the author being aware of it.

¹⁰⁴⁹ It may be interesting to note that this is one of the few official documents from the early period of the Congregation. We are sure that Hilarion did not have a hand in it because he was in Rome, and that it comes directly from both Founders, without interference.

The final text, number 21, is from Father Alexandre Sorieul, which is of particular interest not only because it represents the most extensive development of the subject. Its author is the first novice master who has left us some of his novitiate conferences and his teaching has the value of a witness who puts us in immediate contact with the Founder. Father Alexandre was novice master for the first time in 1824. He had made his own novitiate in Laval under Father Abraham Armand and in Paris under the watchful eyes of Father Coudrin between 1815 and 1817.

It should be noted that before text n.10, which is dated October 25, 1814 and which came 13 years after text No. 1, there is considerable hesitation in the interpretation of the message of Mother Aymer. Even a text chronologically after n. 10, n. 11, can be considered before 10, since it was written by Hilarion Lucas before he knew of text n. 10. In any case, this is a sign of the hesitation we referred to.

One of the reasons for this hesitation is the extreme sobriety of the charismatic messages of Mother Aymer, if we are to judge by Billet 33 (LEBM, 33) in which she writes of it.

But there is no need to go into further details. Instead we will not look at the text that has come down to us and that is called the *Fundamental Document*.

9. BP, 474. Letter to Hilarion Lucas in Rome, 25.10.1814.

Your letters console us. They make me regret even more the inaction of this country so that we can get nothing that is solid. The Deputies of the departments have to review everything. Judge for yourself... Try to obtain approval under the title Adorers, if you cannot get it as Zealots. You know well our four ages...

10. BP/BM. Petition, 25.10.1814.

This Congregation is consecrated to the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary... Its main goal is to recall the four ages of our divine Savior: his childhood, by instructing poor boys and girls and forming young students for the sacred ministry; his hidden life, by repairing through perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament the outrages made to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; the Most Blessed sacrament of the altar is adored without interruption, day and night, especially in the houses of the Sisters, who are more numerous; his apostolic life, by preaching the Gospel and Missions; finally his crucified life, by practicing mortification of the flesh and spirit, as far as our human weakness allows (ANN., 1963, p. 189).

11. HL. First Mémoire presented to Rome, 07.12.1814.

To recall more easily to the members who would be part of this new Institute, the full extent of their obligations, they were given as a model the four ages of our divine Savior, his childhood, his hidden life, his apostolic life and his crucified life. By the apostolic life of Jesus Christ I refer to the years He devoted to preaching his Gospel, for which he was sent by his heavenly Father.

Our sisters are able to evoke the childhood of Jesus Christ by raising children of their sex. They imitate his hidden life by perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the spirit of withdrawal. They imitate the crucified life, as far as human weakness allows, by mortification of the internal and external senses and austere practices of penance.

It was still necessary to evoke the apostolic life of the Man-God. For that purpose Father Coudrin determined to establish a Congregation of men, forming one order with the Congregation of the Sisters and like them devoting themselves entirely to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. What was already practiced in the house of women was also to be followed in the community of men adding the missions and all the tasks and occupations of the sacred ministry. Such an establishment would be most useful, especially in the unfortunate circumstances where the Church found itself (Ibid. p. 193).

b) Observations on Text 18

So far, we have not found in any book of the period, the theme of the “Four Ages of Christ” as such. This does not mean that it did not have literary antecedents, because the contemplation of Christ’s life in its various “mysteries”, that is, at different moments of his earthly life, and particularly his childhood and his long years in Nazareth was a frequent topic in the spiritual literature of seventeenth and eighteenth century France.

Speaking of “literary antecedents” is not intended to cast doubt on the “revelations” of Mother Aymer. We know that the Founder considered them authentic, and we do not intend to reexamine the issue. However in order to communicate her message, the Foundress had to use expressions of her time so as to make herself understood, and that is what we are referring to now.

12. HL. Third Mémoire presented to Rome, 24.01.1815.

The life of our Divine Savior is the model for all Christians and particularly for religious communities. With that thought in mind, we conceived the desire that our institute as a whole retrace the four ages of Jesus Christ: his childhood, his hidden life, his evangelical life, and finally, his crucified life. (ANN., 1963, p. 212).

13. Preface to the Constitutions of 1817, Preliminary Chapter.

(This text is identical to that of our “Foundational Document” that we reproduce in text N° 18. There are only differences in articles 2 and 3, that have no number in the Bull and that we reproduce here)

2. In order to evoke the childhood of Jesus Christ, we educate at no cost poor children of both sexes; we open free schools for all the poor children who cannot be formed in our houses; we receive borders of both sexes. In their schools the brothers will give attention to preparing young students for the sacred ministry of the sanctuary.

3. We strive to imitate the hidden life of Jesus Christ by repairing, through perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the outrages committed constantly against the Divine Majesty (ANN., 1961, p. 178).

14. BP, 532. To the Great Chaplain of France (Mgr. de Talleyrand-Perigord), 14.04.1817.

To more easily remind the members who make up the new institute of the full extent of their obligations we propose to them as a model the four ages of our divine Savior: his childhood, his hidden life, his evangelical life and his crucified life.

15. BP, 2131. Petition to the Holy See, 17.05.1817.

... Among the main goals of this Congregation, is the imitation of the apostolic life of our Savior Jesus Christ and that, accordingly, the priests of the Congregation should, logically, be devoted to missions, to the preaching of the divine word and the administration of the Sacraments (ANN., 1963, p. 227).

16. BP, 533. Circular Letter, 14.04.1817.

One of our main duties is to retrace the four ages of the God-man, his childhood, his hidden life, his apostolic life and his crucified life. Let us not forget that Our Lord wants us to enter especially into the inner crucifixion of his Heart. We must therefore, like Magdalene, remain at his feet and, like Saint John, accompany him right to the cross (ANN., 1960, p. 177).

Our text speaks of “ages” as do all the others, except for n. 4, in which Sister Gabriel de la Barre speaks of “states”, which is a term to which de Berulle gives a new meaning. In the absence of other references, we need not give too strict a Berullian meaning to that word, because if there was an influence it seems that it was not very direct.

As for the verb used in all the main texts – and remember that this is a text conceived in French– the word is “retracer”, which the Founders themselves translate into Latin in text No. 10 as, “in memoriam revocare” (to bring to mind). Later in the text of the Constitutions of 1817, Hilarion Lucas translated this as “imitari” (to imitate), which found its way into the Constitutions of 1825. This translation has antecedents in texts 3, 4 and 5, but the Constitutions give it official value, though we believe that it would have been more accurate to retain the precise meaning of “retracer”.¹⁰⁵⁰

17. BP, 662. Circular Letter, 26.11.1820.

Eternal mercy calls us to imitate the evangelical life of our Savior Jesus Christ. We will start the important work of giving missions in the diocese of Troyes, which has been particularly recommended to us by the Supreme Pontiff (ANN., 1960, p. 193).

18. Preliminary Chapter. Constitutions of 1825 (Fundamental Document).

1. *The purpose of our Institute is to retrace the four ages of Our Lord Jesus Christ: his childhood, his hidden life, his evangelical life and his crucified life; and to spread devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.*
2. *To retrace the childhood of Jesus Christ, we freely bring up poor children of both sexes. We open schools, which are free for all poor children whom we are not able to raise in our houses. We also take in boarders of both sexes. The brothers have a special concern to prepare young students of the sanctuary for the functions of the sacred ministry.*
3. *Through perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, we strive to retrace the hidden life of Jesus Christ by making reparation for the injuries done to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary by the enormous crimes of sinners.*
4. *The brothers retrace the evangelical life of the Savior by the preaching of the Gospel and the Missions.*
5. *Finally, we must recall, as much as we can, the crucified life of our Divine Savior by practicing with zeal and prudence the works of Christian mortification, above all by restraining our senses.*

19. BP, 1053. Mémoire to the Holy See, 15.07.1825.

Our Congregation ... Its purpose is to recall the memory of the four ages of Our Lord Jesus Christ: his childhood through the education of children, his hidden life by reparation through perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament day and night of the outrages made to the divine majesty, his crucified life by acts of mortification, and his evangelical life by sacred missions (ANN., 1963, p. 279).

¹⁰⁵⁰ Littré in his Dictionary, after giving the literal meaning of the word “retracer” “trace again”. (E.g.: this avenue is badly drawn, we must “trace again”, “retrace it”); he then gives a second meaning to it, “a figurative one”: “rappeler le souvenir, renouveler la mémoire” (literally: “to renew the mémoire”), and quotes Racine: “Retracez-lui, d’Esther l’histoire glorieuse” (Retrace for him, the glorious story of Esther).

20. BP, 1104. Circular Letter, 11.11.1826.

You are also aware that Propaganda Fide has asked us for priests of the Congregation to go and take the torch of faith to the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands, located in the Oceanic Sea ... Thus eternal mercy offers us the means to imitate more perfectly the evangelical life of our divine Savior and to begin the important work of foreign missions, one of the main purposes of our institute and one which has been specially recommended to us by the successor of Saint Peter (ANN., 1969, p. 224).

There is no doubt that the Founders used the word in a metaphorical sense when they translated it into the Latin “in memoriam revocare” and so we think it can be translated into Spanish as “evocar” (In English: “to evoke, to recall” or traditionally: “to retrace”).

The nuance between “evoke/recall/retrace” and “imitate” it is not irrelevant in our context. While “imitate” suggests an effort to become like Christ, who implies being satisfied with such an achievement, “evoke etc” suggests an effort to revive the memory of Christ in others, which is not achieved with mere likeness, but also involves a duty to make it understandable to men.

21. Father Alexandre Sorieul. Conference 16.10.1845.

The particular end of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts is to:

To make up for loss of so many religious communities that the Revolution had destroyed and to respond in some way to the cooling of faith and charity in all the orders. Such were the two ideas at the basis of the plan of our Founders in establishing our Congregation. But they also believed that there was no better way to reanimate this faith and this charity, than placing themselves under the special protection of the Sacred Hearts. It became a rule for them to spread this devotion, at the time little known and also opposed by heretics, Jansenists and even by a certain number of good Christians who had a false conception of it. At the beginning our Founders had the intention of taking as a model the institute of the Carthusians or the Trappists but, as we said, at the time there were no congregations in France and so they modified their plans and introduced something of each one, until such time as God would restore them. This was a double work, including men and women. It was an immense undertaking that demanded nothing less than the assistance of the Holy Spirit. It was founded by two people of no influence, with almost no money, at the time of the Terror. A difficult work, God has blessed it.

Thus, in the mind of the Founders, we were to come to the aid of all those who needed us. As a Congregation that helped, we were to repair as far as possible, the wounds caused in the church by impiety. We must note that our Congregation, already ahead of many others, did not embrace one particular aspect of the life of Jesus Christ. It tried to evoke his whole life, divided in four ages.

His Childhood: To understand how to honor and imitate the holy childhood, we have to imagine how He was as a child, that is, his interior and exterior dispositions. As for the latter He lived in a state of incomparable humility. God as his Father came down, as ourselves at this age, with the face of a young child, grows like one, suffers the weaknesses of a child, silent at first, then babbling, giving the impression that his mind is being formed, developing his intelligence over the years; showing himself as obedient as a child. Is there something more admirable? Not only being a child, but a poor child by choice! His interior dispositions were of a divine perfection. Out of obedience to his Father and out of for love of us, He came to earth in obedience to that dual impulse of a heart devoured by the most ardent charity. It is incomprehensible how pure his life was and how great, candid, and simple were the virtues he possessed then. He had all the qualities of that period of our life, all of them, but elevated to a sublime level and restored and crowned in Him by the most admirable innocence.

What can we do to honor this state in which he remained for a long time just like other children? First we can work to preserve in children the practice of the virtues that

are particular to them and help them grow in the same dispositions as the divine Master. A very beautiful work! The pagans turned it into a kind of priesthood: maxima debetur puero reverentia (a child deserves the greatest reverence) and si quid turpe paras, ne tu pueri contempseris annos (if you conceive something evil, don't think little of the short years of the child.) Theologians tell us that it is very beautiful to bring sinners back to virtue, but it is much more beautiful to see that they do not become sinners. It is always better to prevent evil. This is the reason why this work is so holy. On the other hand, to lead children to the imitation of the virtues of the child Jesus, isn't that a way of honoring the holy childhood? Isn't it also to honor his humility? From a human point of view. It is lowly and humiliating for a knowledgeable man to teach children the first principles of all things. The priest, the man who does this to preserve their innocence, is also imitating the humiliation of the childhood of Jesus.

As regards the names given to the Four Ages, the first one is always called "Childhood, or Infancy" and the fourth the "Crucified Life", even though text n. 5 adds "suffering", which is rather redundant. The third text was at first called the "Apostolic Life" but later beginning with text n. 12 it became known as the "Evangelical Life", with the exception of text No. 16 that goes back to the older term. They are clearly equivalent.

A certain degree of uncertainty is present in the term used for the second age, which in texts n. 2 and n. 6 is called "Adolescence", in text n. 4 the "Private Life", and in n. 5 appears as "Common Life with Mary and Joseph". From n. 10 onwards it is always called the "Hidden life."

In a Congregation like ours, not all can be employed in this work. However all can satisfy this prescription of the Rule, by imitating the virtues proper to the holy childhood, such as the renunciation of goods, being quick to believe, submissive, innocent and frank. The child has no idea of evil, believes without arguing over what his parents tell him and obeys the word. Working in this way, we but put into practice the recommendations of the Savior: if you do not become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. In other words, if you do not practice his virtues. The child is detached from the goods of the earth. He only takes what he needs to eat. The rest he does not touch. Dignities and riches hardly attract his attention. He puts next to his mother, poor and badly dressed, a queen with all the robes of her office. He will leave the queen standing there to go to his mother. Devotion to the child Jesus is wide spread. Through the devotion, a great number of souls have arrived at a high level of perfection and incomprehensible familiarity with God. We can cite Brother Francis of the Child Jesus, who without personal resources founded convents, and hospitals and was respected by the kings and queens of Spain and all that through his devotion to the holy childhood. He had a little statue of the child Jesus, another of the Blessed Virgin and a third of the devil. When he had some matter at hand, he would say to the statue of the child Jesus, "Holy Child, if you do not let me succeed in this affair, your mother will scold you." And if the matter did not turn out well, he would threaten the Blessed Virgin to put her out, and would do it immediately, and everything would turn out as he wanted in the first place. If the demon raised obstacles to the success of any of his works, he would put his image under that of the Blessed Virgin saying to her, "Hold him down, don't let him move from here."

Hidden Life of our Lord Jesus Christ: *Et erat subditus illis (And he was subject to them.) From this we see that our Lord simply limited himself to living the life of his parents, working, obeying and giving no sign of his divinity. Thus he gave example of great humiliation. But during all that time he also adored his Father, striving to render him the homage due him that men did not render. He also desired to repair their offenses, already committed and to be committed, in giving him to Him, as victim, looking forward to his passion, in order to redeem men.*

We must imitate him in these two ways: 1) By concealing ourselves like him, living in obscurity, not looking at the world unless except when it is impossible to do otherwise. Avoid appearance and try to observe what it is allowed to have. Above all practice this sublime maxim: ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari (Love being unknown and being considered nothing.) 2) By adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. We must do what our divine Savior did during his hidden life, with the intention of making up by our own adoration, the adoration that so many men owe and do not render. 3) By offering ourselves like him

as a victim, so as to repair all the outrages of sinners. But these dispositions must not be limited to the time of adoration. We must continue them and maintain them in our hearts during the whole day. That was what Our Lord did, but much more perfectly than we could ever do ourselves, because of his intimate union with God.

c) **Content of text 18**

To read the text in the sense that it was conceived and written, we have to be careful first of all not to take it in the traditional ascetic sense of the “imitation of Christ.” It is not an “individual path to perfection” at least directly and immediately. The clear intent of these articles is to determine where the community fits spiritually within the Church and to indicate the responsibilities entrusted to it.

The use of the verb “to imitate” instead of “to recall” or “to bring to mind” has undoubtedly contributed to confusing things, and it seems that the first step toward clarifying the text would be to restore the exact meaning of “retracer” as intended by the Founders when they developed text n. 10.

But what prayers can we use in this circumstance? I would say that all are good, both vocal and mental, provided that they are directed by intention to the double object of adoration. In order to imitate this hidden life of Our Lord that continues in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, we may also offer to God everything that we are, all we have, everything we do and suffer for the fulfillment of his divine will, and thus repair the outrages made to his name. But we must always remember that the greatest mortification consists in the fulfillment of all of one's obligations. It was to be perpetual in the Congregation, in order to imitate the conduct of Our Lord who made it perpetually. This does not mean that all the members are obligated to follow the continuous prayer of our Lord. That is not possible, only in the sense that all can, by intention, transform all their actions in so many other acts of reparation according to the adage: the one who works prays. Doing continually the will of God as indicated by the Rule, the religious prays continuously. And in each exercise he performs, he can lift himself to God, whose precepts he fulfills faithfully. And so we see Our Lord himself interrupt his prayer to give himself to the needs of nature, without interrupting the reparation he has begun, because all that he did was in conformity with the holy will of his Father. Quae placita sunt ei facio semper (What is pleasing to him, I do always.)

Regarding perpetual adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament, there are always some people who are there, without interruption. In the name of the house they represent, they adore, repair and atone for all the bloody outrages made to the Heart of Jesus. This is a perpetual adoration: 1) to thank God for his graces and his benefits which are perpetual; 2) to repair the offenses, omissions and coldness of men, which are repeated endlessly against God.

Evangelical Life of Our Lord: *Our rule tells us that we imitate the evangelical life of the Savior by missions. But there are many ways to proclaim the Gospel. The purpose of our Lord was to convert sinners and lead them to believe in his word. Any means that we use to arrive at that goal, we are practicing the evangelical life in our own way, whether bringing back to the fold the lost sheep or keeping in the fold those who are already within.*

We note that Jesus did not send himself. He came only to do the holy will of his Father. Given that Jesus never set aside his mission: no sum missus nisi ad oves...quae perierunt domus Israel (I have been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel), we must also remember that in the place where obedience places us, we must be happy to say: I have been sent nowhere but here.

It would be an error to believe that the only possible place for mission is among pagans. We must go first especially to those of the house of faith: Primum ad domesticos fidei (first to those of the household of faith). Wherever obedience calls us, we can live the evangelical life. Everyone always has two effective means of preaching: good example and prayer. We know what Saint Francis of Assisi did one day, going through the city without saying a word, he answered a companion that he had asked to go with him to preach: we have preached, brother, by our behavior. We can say that our Lord converted more by his example and prayers than by his words, because there is no better preaching than good example.

The result of this clarification is that the vocation of the Congregation - its "purpose" - is to "recall", that is, to evoke in the minds of those who see the community live and work the image of Christ in the various mysteries of His mortal life. Perhaps appealing to the doctrine underlying this idea would shed more light. There are two complementary influences that are intertwined: the first is the Berulian concept of the "states" of Christ and the second is the conception of the different religious vocations in the Church, as spoke of at the time.

The Idea of Berulle

Cardinal de Berulle, (1575-1629) was a sharp thinker, and a man of original and penetrating insight. In his study of the mystery of Christ present in every one of his actions and every moment of his earthly life, when he speaks of what he calls a "state" of Christ, it is more than a mere example or a meditation on the story of the Savior.¹⁰⁵¹

A "state" is the inner attitude of Jesus in each of the circumstances of his earthly or glorious life. Because it has been assumed by the person of the Word in virtue of the Incarnation, it is an eternal reality. It is always present, a source of grace and a source of a particular grace.¹⁰⁵²

We do not think that Berulle's works were read by the primitive community in Poitiers, but there is no doubt that in the brief words of Mother Aymer in text n. 1, there is something reminiscent.

Crucified Life. *We imitate the crucified life by practicing Christian and religious mortification, with the reservations formulated by the Rule and the Superiors. As for extraordinary mortifications not foreseen in the Rule, unless under an order of the confessor, these must be submitted to Superior, first of all to sanctify them by obedience, and secondly*

1051 It would seem useful to reproduce a page of the Cardinal, quoted by Brémond III, II, 70 "The Spirit of God, by whom this mystery has been accomplished, the internal state of the exterior mystery, and the effectiveness of the virtue that makes something of that mystery alive and active in us, that state and disposition of virtue, the virtue by which we He has acquired us for his Father ... up to the present taste, the willingness to live by what Jesus has done in that mystery is always alive, current, and present to Jesus ... This forces us to treat the things and mysteries of Jesus, not as in the past and extinguished but as alive and present, even eternal, from which we need to harvest a fruit that is present and eternal. As in us, there is a soul and a body, and all this is only one, so in the mysteries of the Son of God, there is the operative and patient spirit of the mystery, the light and grace of the mystery, the plan to establish some effect of the mystery, and the body or the action of the mystery ... We give an example: The Childhood of the Son of God is a passing state, the circumstances of that childhood have passed, and He is no longer a child, but there is something divine of that mystery that persists in heaven, and that works a similar kind of grace in souls on earth, whom it pleases Jesus Christ to destine and dedicate to this humble and first state of his person. We even see that Jesus Christ has found the way to establish as aspect of his passion in the state of glory, keeping his wounds. For if he has been able to preserve something of his passion in his glorious body, why could he not conserve something of it in his soul in the consummated state of his glory? But what he preserves of his passion in his body and soul is life and glory and he does not suffer either in one or the other. And it is what remains in him of his mysteries, what happens on earth as a working of grace, through which the mysteries of Christ, his childhood, his suffering and the others continue and are alive on earth until the end of the ages."

1052 The attitude of the Christian's response consists - always according to Berulle - of recognition, through "adoration" and in the union or adhesion, which he calls "adherence".

so as not to damage your health. I say unless by special order of the confessor, because that court is without appeal. But we must always remember that the first mortification is fidelity to the Rule, always ever more perfect. All others, without it, are useless.

This is the particular end of our Congregation.

As for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we must not believe that it consists in separating the Heart from the rest of the divine person of the Savior. No, we adore it in as much as it is part of that same person, so that the faithful, honoring him under the symbol of his Heart, his passion, and his sufferings are stimulated to a greater devotion. In ordinary speech, the heart is considered as the seat of love. It is love and an immense love, which led our Lord to suffer and die in our place and to live always in the Eucharist. So we adore his Heart as the principle of those two mysteries and the inexhaustible source which pours over us all sorts of graces, the fruit of his love (PAC, 3364).

Diverse Vocations

As for the theology of the specificity of the different religious orders in the Church, each community would have its own character, and would justify its difference from others, by seeking to imitate a particular mystery or action of Christ that would give meaning to its inner life and also give it its place in the Church.¹⁰⁵³

Conclusions

From everything that has been said we could conclude:

1. That the openness of the community to having within it different modes of life, is a choice made before the message to Mother Ayer and not a consequence of it.
2. That the Foundress' "billet" (n. 33 of her writings, and n. 1 in our text) tries to give a unified spiritual sense to the "pluralism" of the community. The idea is that we complement one another in evoking the totality of the mysteries of Christ and each mode of life is responsible for making the image of Christ present to people.
3. The application of this idea in the law of the community, with the corresponding interpretation of each age of Christ, was made in 1814, after a period of vacillation.
4. To evoke the childhood of Christ, we image him by educating the children; (cf. Art. 2), the hidden life by perpetual adoration (Art. 3), the evangelical life by preaching and missions (Art. 4) and the crucified life by mortification (Art. 5).

5. The Patron and the Protectors

Article 7 of the *Fundamental Document* says: "We have as a special patron Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and for particular protectors Saints Augustine, Dominic, Bernard, and Pachomius."

¹⁰⁵³ Although we are certain that *The Interior Life of Jesus and Mary* of Father Grou, was not used by the community prior to 1815; what we do know is that it was composed in the second half of the eighteenth century, and transmitted an approach similar to that produced by the expression of the "Four Ages".

"It does not depend on us to imitate the outer appearance of the life of Jesus Christ. And God only asks that of a small number of Christians that he calls, some to the imitation of his poverty, other to that of his hidden life, others to the works of his public life, others to his ignominy and suffering. The difference of states and conditions in human society does not allow Providence to make use of them in another" (II, LXVI).

"Religious have not abandoned the world, they have not made vows of religion, they have not submitted to a rule, but to make themselves like Christ, to place themselves in the happy need to imitate him, to assure the means of doing so and to move the obstacles out of the way. Each institute proposes the interior of Jesus as its principal point of perfection and although they have a different object, some solitude, silence, the fasting of Jesus Christ in the desert, other his active life completely given to the glory of God and the good of the neighbour, all however tend to the same end, which is to form in those who embrace them, faithful images of Jesus Christ" (II, LXVIII).

Besides Saint Benedict, considered as our father (Cf. III Part, Chapter V.1: The Rule of St. Benedict), and chosen as foremost master in the religious Life, since its very beginning the Congregation has recognized the patronage of Saint Joseph.

Saint Joseph, Patron of the Congregation

We have no evidence that Father Coudrin had read the Life of Saint Teresa, where she greatly recommends devotion to the Holy Patriarch to those wanting to make progress in prayer. It is likely that he encountered the cult of Saint Joseph in the popular devotion of the people of Montbernage, and in particular through his contact with the Daughters of Wisdom, who were founded by Grignon de Montfort. Besides the hospital for Incurables (today Pasteur) and other houses in the city, they had a residence and a chapel in Montbernage.¹⁰⁵⁴

Saint Joseph is proclaimed Patron in the first document that we have from the community as such, i.e. the *Solitaries* and it is the so-called *Rule of the Good Father*, which would be from 1797 at the latest and probably before.¹⁰⁵⁵

“God is our Father, Jesus our Spouse, the Holy Spirit our light. The Blessed Virgin is our good Mother, the Holy Angels our guardians and Saint Joseph our Patron”.¹⁰⁵⁶

It could be said that devotion to the Sacred Hearts, and meditation of the mysteries of the childhood and the hidden life of Christ, introduced the community to Saint Joseph, and it would be unnecessary to seek the reasons for his proclamation as patron elsewhere. But what the Montfortian source suggests is that, the text of the prayer to St. Joseph adopted by the community at the time, the *Ave Joseph*, is to be attributed to St. Grignon de Montfort, and it is most likely that Father Coudrin discovered it in his contacts with the Daughters of Wisdom.

1. Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort. *Œuvres*, p. 404: «Méthodes pour Réciter le Rosaire», 12.

Hail, Joseph the just man, Wisdom is with you, blessed are you among all men, and blessed is Jesus, the fruit of Mary, your faithful wife. Saint Joseph, worthy foster father of Jesus, pray for us sinners, and obtain for us from God divine Wisdom now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

2. BM, 26. Billet addressed to the Good Father, 1800-1801.

This morning I saw Saint Bernard with the Lord. He was the first I could make out. Then Saint Dominic and Saint Augustine, whom I had trouble finding, Saint Pacomius,

¹⁰⁵⁴ Cf. Saint Theresa, *Life*, Cap. VI. She might have read the eulogies of Bossuet, and what he says in his *Elevations on the Mysteries and Meditations on the Gospel*.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Cf. Appendix 3. BP, 2197, *Rule of the Good Father*.

¹⁰⁵⁶ BP, 2197.

whose name I had to be told as I took him for Saint Jerome thinking that he was to pray for you. You, you alone, must do all that the institutions they founded did. Saint Pacomius means that you will have a large number of disciples and that they will lead a penitent life; Saint Augustine, that you must easily believe in the conversion of sinners, receive them, help them, that you will convert many with an easy manner; Saint Dominic stands for erudition and that you are to preach and instruct youth. But it is Saint Bernard that you are to imitate. He includes everything: his love for children, his solitude, and his dealings with the Pope, Kings, and the great. You will be criticized and persecuted like him, even though your undertakings come from God.

Finally, I suffered so much, I was so overwhelmed, that I do not really know what I saw of them. I only know that Saint Bernard is the one with whom you have most in common. I also know that they are our protectors, especially yours, for I was praying very much for you when they appeared. They seemed to join with me in praying to Our Lord who was there. As Saint Bernard was close, I looked and I saw that the side of the Lord was still not pierced. That's about all I know. ...

3. BM, 29. Billet addressed to the Good Father, 1800-1801.

This morning I found myself even more with the good God than ordinarily. I never heard Mass like that. I prayed for you constantly and it seemed to me that the good God was hearing me. At least, I can assure you that he pours a very special mellifluous love into my heart, when I pray for you. Particularly in the time after Communion, something like a big cloud passed over me. It opened up and I saw on one side Saint Magdalene at our Lord's feet. I felt the Lord's presence but he was in the cloud. On the other side was Saint Joseph. In the middle was Mary presenting you to Our Lord. She was between Saint Joachim and Saint Ann. Behind were our four Saints who were presenting paper scrolls which contained their institutions. They seemed to intercede for us and say, "They accomplish all that." We must have special devotion to Saint Magdalene and like her remain at Our Lord's feet. You must have devotion to Saint John. We will have Saint Joachim and Saint Ann for protectors. You must preach devotion to these two saints whose intercession is sought very little. It could be a source of many graces. We must have a very special feast for that.

The Four Protectors

As for the four protectors, the community's devotion to them clearly originates in the charismatic communications of Mother Aymer, which date from 1800-1801.

Attention to the great religious founders, is inscribed in that climate of "Return to sources" that we discussed in Part III (Chapter II.2: Return to the Sources), and there is no doubt that the fragile community full of grand spiritual ambitions wanted to find the secret to a solid restoration of religious life in the history of the Church at a time when smoke was still rising from the ruins of religious life in France.

On three different occasions, and thus in three different *Billets* of Mother Aymer, who unfortunately did not bother with dates, the Foundress speaks of the presence of the four protectors. This was an obvious indication of the community's openness to different forms of religious life: "You, you alone must do all that the institutions they founded did"¹⁰⁵⁷. "Behind were our four Saints who were presenting to Our Lord roles of paper which contained their institutions. They seemed to be interceding for us and saying: They will accomplish all that."¹⁰⁵⁸

According to the lights of the Foundress, each of the four Protectors stood for a particular religious value:

St. Pachomius (292-346), born of pagan parents, was converted to Christianity by observing the charity of Christians toward each other and toward pagans. Right at the moment of baptism, he received a light that made him leave the world and seek the eremitical life. He followed the teachings of a solitary elder and soon became a master of the religious life himself and the first legislator of coenobitic life, which he organized with admirable talent. He always lived in the Tebaid.

Mother Aymer, in two *Billets* (26 and 40), sees in his presence in the community the example of his life of penance and silence and also an indication of the multitude of religious, all so different, that were to form the community, as in the Pacomian monasteries.

4. BM, 40. Billet addressed to the Good Father (1800-1801).

...I find myself in a situation before the Good God that I have never experienced. In other words, from the moment that I am at his feet it's like I am dead, only he exists. What takes me away from his presence kills me but if I remain there too long, I could very really die. Once more I saw our four saints. Our institution, all by itself, must fulfill the purpose of each of theirs. Like Saint Pacomius you must have many children who, leading a different

1057 BM, 26.

1058 BM, 29.

life, will have the same spirit. I saw your donnés, whom you do not speak of. We must imitate his life of penance, his silence, his prayer. Saint Augustine stands for preaching, facility in welcoming and converting sinners, those at present who have wandered from the faith. Saint Dominic is there as one of the dear children of the Blessed Virgin whose particular privileges he victoriously defended when some dared attack them. I was unable to find out which one. He stands for instruction of youth and preaching and erudition. Saint Bernard is the one who has the most in common with you. Like him, you must stand alongside the Pope, the King and the bishops. Like him, you will be criticized and condemned. You will have his manner of preaching and his way of being with the good God. Like him you must bring up children. You will receive satisfaction from them. Finally, like him, if you can find the time for prayer, you will experience a certain sweetness of love that he still has in heaven and that is special to him.

Saint Augustine (354-430). In the same *Billets*, Mother Aymer indicates the meaning of Saint Augustine presence among the protectors. He reminds the community of the faith it must have in the conversion of sinners and how it can be facilitated by an easy manner (“facile abord”). *Billet 40*, mentions a special charism, a “facility to convert” through preaching, especially those who have wandered from the faith.

Saint Dominic (1170-1221). His presence indicates the vocation to learning, to preaching, to the formation of youth and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

According to the Foundress, of the four **Saint Bernard** (1090-1153), is the one that has the greatest meaning for the Founder and his community, because he has a greater resemblance to Father Coudrin in what might be called his “spiritual temperament”, and because in a certain way, he brings together in himself what the other three mean.

In sum, the four protectors on the one hand reflect the designs of Providence on the new congregation indicating a whole range of possibilities. At the same time they assure the assistance of God’s grace to fulfill that same mission.

Appendix: The Community and the Vow of Louis XVI

In a note on the Congregation, dated November 19, 1822 in the handwriting of the Founder, there is a phrase that seems to require some explanation or at least an attempt to explain it: “Its (the Congregation’s) main purpose was to appease the wrath of God, to fulfill the vow of Louis XVI and not to allow the remembrance of the religious state to be completely extinguished in France”¹⁰⁵⁹.

That was all Mr. Lestra needed to imagine the young recently ordained Pierre Coudrin in Paris, being confided with word of the “King’s vow” by a fellow retreatant in the Lombard College. His knowledge of the “royal vow” would have been a factor in his idea of founding a community, a few days before he enclosed himself in the Motte and months before the “vision” of September, and would have orientated the whole spirit of the new congregation.¹⁰⁶⁰

Like almost all of the priests of his day –that is the Orthodox and those who refused the schismatic oath– Father Coudrin was in favor of the Bourbons, especially before the Restoration. It was very obvious that the Church, under the Kings, received less brutal treatment than under the revolutionaries or the boot of Napoleon. In the midst of the storm we could not expect them to step back and take a more critical position. However barely had the Restoration taken place that he began to take a more distant and personal

¹⁰⁵⁹ BP, 789.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Lestra I. pp. 89-94.

stance. In any case, from this political choice common to all the clergy of the time, it does not follow that the Congregation identified itself with the cause of the monarchy in France.

Moreover, one fact that can make us suspicious regarding the claim by Mr. Lestra that the Congregation had been conceived as a way of fulfilling the vow of Louis XVI is the total silence on the matter in all the documents we have studied.

If such a statement were true, it is unimaginable that there would be such absolute silence. Especially after the fall of Napoleon and there was no more reason for secrecy, this idea of fulfilling the royal vow would have been a splendid “captatio benevolentiae” not only before the Holy See but especially in the sight of the bishops of France and in particular before the Grand Chaplain, Monsignor de Talleyrand Perigord and his Vicar Monsignor de Quelen.¹⁰⁶¹

But if this were the explanation, then what seems even more incredible is that Hilarion, who was a passionate royalist, in his *Mémoires* written after the Restoration, never made the slightest allusion to this idea that was so central in the foundation, according to Lestra. At any rate, there is a yet more decisive argument.

The Congregation only came to know of the existence of the royal vow when news of it was made public in 1814-1815. The Founder could not have known of it at the time of his ordination in Paris. The reason is simple. Father Coudrin was back in Coussay-les-Bois on April 8, 1792. According to historians, it only occurred to the King to make the vow between June 20 and August 10 of that year. So it was impossible for people to be speaking of it three months previously!

What becomes an enigma is the famous phrase of Father Coudrin in the document quoted above.

To try to shed some light, let us first recall briefly the content of the King's vow.

In short, Louis XVI, after invoking the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his Mother, made a number of promises should he regain his freedom, his crown and his power: He promised six things: 1) to revoke the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; 2) to restore legitimate pastors to their Sees; 3) to make all necessary contacts with the Pope and the Bishops, to establish the feast of the Sacred Heart on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi with a reparative procession; 4) within three months, beginning from the day of his release, to go personally to Notre Dame or to another principal Church of the place where he would be and, at the foot of the altar, pronounce in the hands of the celebrant a

¹⁰⁶¹ BP, 532, Letter of April 14, 1817.

solemn act of consecration of his person, his family and kingdom to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with a promise to give example to all of the devotion due to this adorable Heart; 5) to erect and decorate at his expense, in the Church chosen for this purpose, a chapel or altar dedicated to the Sacred Heart Jesus, as a monument of eternal recognition and confidence in the Sacred Heart; 6) to renew every year in the place where he would be, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, the act of consecration pronounced according to N. 4, attending the procession in the main Church of the place.

As can be seen, in the King's vow there are few things that could eventually become the reason for an institution's existence, except the very generic sense it gives of devotion to the Sacred Heart. But even with regard to that it seems highly unlikely.

So what did Founder mean by his note?

We need to remember that it was a simple note which was never developed into a document. It never became something that the founder experimented with and then left aside.

One hypothetical explanation: Father Coudrin had to explain the Congregation to a person of noble extraction. He wrote the sentence in question considering the importance given at the time to the royal vow. Going back to it later, it did not seem helpful, so he put it aside, forgetting to destroy it.



Chapter III

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEARTS

It is enough to read the ancient or present title of the Congregation to realize that those responsible for its formulation considered the “Devotion” as something important.¹⁰⁶²

If we then take a brief look at the *Basic Document*, we find that the first article reads: “The Aim of our Institute is to imitate the four ages of Our Lord Jesus Christ...and to propagate the Devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.”

Later, Art. 6 insists: “Furthermore, we have for a goal to do all in our power to spread true devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the most gentle Heart of Mary, following that devotion as approved by the Apostolic See.”

There is no doubt that if the community intends to spread devotion to the Sacred Hearts throughout the world, the community itself cannot remain indifferent to such devotion. To confirm this, it is enough to take a look at the formula of the vows, as it has been used since 1800, and even the promises before that, as we shall see.

For now, what interests us is to try to understand how the community came to this devotion, and what spiritual content it had.

If the “Four Ages” was enigmatic, this terminology is very difficult to manage in our time without prejudice, and without provoking all kinds of reactions. This is not the place to attempt a defense of that vocabulary and the spiritual reality that it translates. Our task is to seek the meaning that all this had for the community that we are studying. We believe that this may not be as negligible as it first sounds to our ears today.

1. The meaning of the word “devotion”

Although specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias are generally more accurate in the use of the word “devotion” today it often acquires almost a pejorative meaning of “assiduity in external and personal religious practices”, which makes spiritual writers today reluctant to use it.¹⁰⁶³

¹⁰⁶² Cf. Antoine Hulselmans, ss.cc. *A Historical Account of the Preliminary Chapter of the Rule of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts*. Fairhaven, 1961. (First edition, Braine-le-Comte, Belgium, 1948)

¹⁰⁶³ Cf. vgr, *Catholicism, hier aujourd'hui, demain*. Letouzay.

1. St. Francis de Sales. Introduction to the Devout Life, I, 1.

But, in fact, all true and living devotion presupposes the love of God;—and indeed it is neither more nor less than a very real love of God, though not always of the same kind; for that Love one while shining on the soul we call grace, which makes us acceptable to His Divine Majesty;—when it strengthens us to do well, it is called Charity;—but when it attains its fullest perfection, in which it not only leads us to do well, but to act carefully, diligently, and promptly, then it is called Devotion...In short, devotion is simply a spiritual activity and liveliness by means of which Divine Love works in us, and causes us to work briskly and lovingly; and just as charity leads us to a general practice of all God's Commandments, so devotion leads us to practice them readily and diligently. And therefore we cannot call him who neglects to observe all God's Commandments either good or devout, because in order to be good, a man must be filled with love, and to be devout, he must further be very ready and apt to perform the deeds of love...

Everything that is external or ritual and repeated in a stereotypical way or that becomes a gesture with social significance runs the risk of becoming empty of content. This is because the observance of received norms and rites performed under a certain social pressure does not always coincide with the subjective state of the soul. But also our “inside,” by its very nature, is less inclined to pay attention to things we repeat with a certain frequency.

However, this lack of correspondence between the subjective and the social, external and repeated, can be an advantage of the social and communal. For what is external and repeated is based in a common way of looking at important aspects of life. Indeed, experience tells us how changeable the state of our spirit is and how fragile our steps along the spiritual journey. Ivy needs a tree or a wall to climb and the growth of the spirit can only overcome the spirit's inconstancy with the faithful, methodical and social as its underpinning.

What is important is that the repetitious and external retain its link with its source of motivation. In that way, it can be a continuous call to a more spiritual dimension.

“Devotion” is always in danger of becoming something empty. We believe that Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer's community was aware of that and tried to develop a sound idea of devotion. We know of two main sources, which are sufficient for us for the moment: the teachings of St. Francis of Sales (1567-1622), and those of Father Nicole Grou S.J. (1731-1803).¹⁰⁶⁴

The teaching of the holy Bishop of Geneva on the topic is found in the first chapter of his *Introduction to the Devout Life* in which, after an effort to free his readers from mistaken notions, concludes saying that true “devotion” is nothing more than the perfection of charity, whose fervor allows it to carefully, diligently and promptly observe all the commandments. For one who does not keep them is not called “good” and even less “devout.”

Father Grou, in a small booklet printed some years before the Revolution and certainly used by the community, particularly by the Foundress, tried to help the devout have a clear idea of true “devotion”, because he observed that frequently people followed their prejudices or imaginations and that there were very few who had a correct idea of devotion.¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁶⁴ We have no explicit quotations from the *Introduction*, but we know of the esteem and veneration of the Founder for Saint Francis de Sales, and the wide dissemination of the work at the time, so it does not seem illegitimate to assume it. As for Father Grou, Mother Aymer quotes him in a letter to GB (BM, 250) of 20.01.1806, which reads: “Please tell each and everyone that I am very devoted to them. If they have read Father Grou, they will know the real meaning of that term.”

¹⁰⁶⁵ Grou, Jean-Nicolas. *Characteristics of True Devotion*.

2. Father Grou, S.J. Characteristics of True Devotion.

Chapter II What is devotion? Each one defines it in its own way. To a worldling devotion consists in believing in God and in holding some principles of religion. To a saint it consists in being absorbed and lost in God. Between these two extremes there are almost an endless number of definitions, which are more or less exact as they approach or move away from one another.

To define it exactly, I adhere to the word itself and to the idea which it expresses. The word "devotion" comes from the Latin and in our language it precisely signifies the state of being devoted or consecrated. Therefore, to be devout, is the same thing as being devoted or consecrated to God. It is upon the idea which the term "being devoted" offers to the mind that I shall ground whatever I have to say on devotion, after having premised that, when God and our duties toward him are in question, the word should be taken in its most serious and broadest sense.

He starts by giving the etymology of the Latin “devotio”, which means “surrender”, “consecration” or “giving oneself entirely.” In this sense “dévouement” or “dévotion” are in French as in Latin the stronger terms. In Spanish there is not a nuance that is entirely equivalent.¹⁰⁶⁶

The characteristics of this “surrender” (dévotion) are: intimate attachment, absolute voluntary dependence, and loving zeal. Naturally, when this “devotion” refers to God, these characteristics would be raised to their highest level and realized in an eminent sense. “Devotion” owed to God, according to Fr. Grou, is unique as it is founded on qualities that God alone has and which he cannot share with any other being. He is the first principle and ultimate end, to whom we owe all the goods of body and spirit.

As we shall see later, the community saw itself practicing this “devotion” in its religious profession and as it lived that profession in daily life.

2. The Devotion to the Sacred Heart in France before 1789

Formally, the *Devotion to the Sacred Heart* made its appearance in France in the second half of the seventeenth century, during the reign of Louis XIV. It is impossible to even briefly mention the entire social and cultural context, of this golden age of French literature that was also very abundant in spiritual writers.¹⁰⁶⁷

Putting things in a nutshell we can say that it had two main protagonists: St. John Eudes (1601-1680) on the one side and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1649-1690) on the other.

Now in French (English) as well as Latin, we know no expression that is stronger than that of “being devoted,” in order to express intimate attachment, absolute and voluntary dependence, affectionate zeal – in a word, a disposition of the mind and heart of wholly submitting one’s self to the will of another, of anticipating his wishes, of embracing his interests and of sacrificing everything for his sake. Thus we say of a child, a servant, a subject that he is devoted to his father, his master, his prince. We also say that a man is devoted to ambition or to any other passion when he only thinks of satisfying it; when he seeks every means, directs all his views and enterprises to that purpose and when it so absorbs him that he can hardly pay attention to any other object.

Being devoted to God comprises all this in the very highest degree and it adds a consecration, in virtue of which he who is consecrated belongs no longer to himself – has no longer a right over himself; but belongs by an act of religion, the most sacred and most irrevocable, to the Supreme being to whom he has devoted himself.

Chapter III: Devotion that is due to God is singular in its kind; it is founded on titles which appertain to him alone and which he cannot share with anyone. God is our first beginning and our last end...

¹⁰⁶⁶ Translator’s Note: The same could probably be said for the English word “devotion.”

¹⁰⁶⁷ In its modern and more widespread form among the faithful, because we can certainly say that many saints and spiritual people, such as Saint Gertrude of Helfta (1256-1303), practiced it. But before the seventeenth century, the devotion was confined to the world of mysticism.

These two saints were unknown to each other, so did not influence one another. They produced two very different versions of *Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*. What seems to be the fundamental difference is the source of each one. While that of St. John Eudes was the culmination of a secular maturation process in the consciousness of the Church, that of St. Margaret Mary is the product of a charismatic inspiration that has no literary background or immediate tradition. The first took shape between 1643 and 1672 and the second between 1673 and 1675.

Often we want to see the two developments as opposed to one another but that seems far removed from the designs of Providence. What we observe in the history of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception applies in a similar way to the Heart of Jesus. While the definition of Pius IX crowned a long discussion of theology and piety in the Church, Bernadette Soubirous, totally ignorant of this fact, received the news at the Grotto of Massabielle in a vision of Mary. The charism confirmed the authenticity of what the Spirit had been maturing in the community.

Paray-le-Monial

The best known version of *Devotion* is the one initiated by St. Margaret Mary, who entered the Monastery of the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial on June 20 1671 and was professed on November 6, 1672. The first great visions were those of December 1673. They begin a series that would end with the great vision of June 13, 1675:

Being one day before the Blessed Sacrament ... I received from my God signal tokens of his love and felt urged by the desire of making some return and of rendering him love for love. Showing me his divine heart, he said, "Behold this heart which has loved men so much, that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify to them its love; and in return I receive from the greater number nothing but ingratitude by reason of their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt they show me in this Sacrament of love..." (Autobiography 92)

1. Father Croisset, S.J. *The Devotion to the Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I Part, Cap. I, on what is meant by Devotion to the S.H. of O.L.J.C., and in what it consists.*

The particular object of this devotion is the immense love of the Son of God that led Him to surrender himself to death for us and to give himself entirely to us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The vision of all the ingratitude and all the outrages that he would

receive in this state of sacrificial victim to the end of time does not keep him from performing this miracle. He prefers to expose himself daily to the insults and reproaches of men rather than not testify to them, by the greatest of wonders, the excess of his love for us.

This is what has stimulated the piety and zeal of some persons who, considering the lack of response to this excess of love and the extent to which Jesus Christ is not loved and how it is so little to afflict oneself for one's beloved, have not been able to accept seeing him so badly treated every day, without showing him their deep sorrow and their extreme desire to repair as much as possible such ingratitude and disdain by an ardent love, profound respect and every sort of homage...

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, it seems that it would be impossible to express better the particular character of this devotion than by this title. For in the end, it is really nothing more than an exercise of love: love is the object, love is the principal reason and love must be its ultimate goal.

Father Claude La Colombière, (1641-1682), Superior of the Jesuits in Paray-le-Monial, recognized the authenticity and orthodoxy of the Visitation nun's message, welcomed the call to the Society of Jesus and consecrated himself to the Sacred Heart.. He was the first great conquest of St. Margaret Mary, who at that time was criticized and even persecuted in her own convent.

Through Father La Colombière the torch of the devotion to the Sacred Heart was passed to several religious of the Society of Jesus of whom perhaps the most important were: Father Croisset, who published *La Dévotion au Sacré-Cœur de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, and shortly after Father Gallifet, who published *De l'excellence de la Adorable Dévotion au Cœur de Jésus-Christ*. Meanwhile, a secular priest, the Abbé Languet, a friend of Paray-le-Monial and the message of Margaret Mary, who was appointed bishop of Soissons, promised to write the life of the nun, in whose holiness he was convinced. The book, which cost the author many years of work, did not appear until January 1729.

One fact would contribute more than many books to spreading the new devotion. In May 1720, a ship arrived from Sidon and Tripoli in Syria bringing the plague to Marseilles. Despite the quarantine and precautions of the time, by the first days of July the sickness had spread all over the city.

A Visitation Sister nun appealed to the Sacred Heart and received a revelation: The Heart of Jesus called for the establishment of the liturgical feast as requested by Margaret Mary (the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi), and that meanwhile, if each of the faithful was to consecrate himself or herself to the Sacred Heart using a formula approved by the bishop, the city would be rid of contagion. Her Superior obliged the religious to write to the Bishop. Bishop de Balzunce, afflicted by the ravages of the sickness, issued a mandate on October 22 which made the Feast of the Sacred Heart a holy day of obligation.

Not content to wait eight months for the event, he ordered an expiatory procession followed by a solemn consecration to be held on Friday November 1 despite resistance by the authorities who feared that such mass gatherings would cause the plague to spread. But the plague began to decrease. The bishop was encouraged and ordered two more processions, one on November 15 and another on December 31. The plague disappeared.

2. P.J. de Gallifet, S.J. *On the Excellence of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Part I, Chapter V. About the difference between the devotion to the*

SH of Jesus, and the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

First they differ with regard to their object: because one proposes only the adorable Heart of Jesus, without relation to the rest of His sacred body and the other aims at the whole body of Christ under the sacramental species, with no special relationship to his Heart ... In the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, the main reason for honoring this Heart, is his ardent love, and what He has suffered from the ingratitude of men, but what is only appropriate to this divine Heart, and not to any other part of his Body ... (Finally) as regards the (Feast) of the Sacred Heart, the main purpose for its institution is to make reparation to Jesus Christ for the insults which his love has received in the Blessed Sacrament by the ingratitude of men, reparation that Jesus Christ wants to be directed to his Heart, which is the source and foundation of that love.

One can imagine how large and popular the feast of the Sacred Heart was in Marseilles that year. It fell on June 20. It was something that made an impression on public opinion of the time, not only in the city but throughout France. This can be seen in the place given to reports of it in manuals and pious books about the “devotion.” The prologue to the Regulations of the “Immensité” in Poitiers 1794-95, will quote it 75 years later.¹⁰⁶⁸

This is not to say that devotion to the Sacred Heart enjoyed popular acceptance as that experienced during the nineteenth century, especially towards the end, which saw the inauguration of the Basilica of Montmartre. During the eighteenth century there was in fact great resistance and not only from the Jansenists.

How was the devotion presented? If we take as an example the book of Father Gallifet, without entering into his literary schema, we can distinguish, as in all devotion, two objects: one that is visible and physical (Jesus’ real heart of flesh), the other that is invisible and spiritual (Christ’s love for us, despised and offended by the sins of men). Naturally, the invisible is the most important and it gives dignity to the sensible and corporal, which for its part, is what gives the name to the devotion. He defines it: “An exercise of religion which has as its object the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ, burning with love for men and offended by the ingratitude of these same men. Its purpose is to honor this divine Heart with all the homage that love and recognition can inspire and in particular to make reparation for the insults it receives in the Sacrament of his love.”¹⁰⁶⁹

Turning to the “practice” of the devotion, –we continue to follow Father Gallifet– after explaining how the interior cult of this devotion consists in the knowledge of the excellence of the Sacred Heart and the acts of the will that follow from this knowledge: worship, love, thanksgiving, praise, recognition, trust, imitation, zeal for his glory, the suffering for the injuries suffered by the Sacred Heart, the will to repair, etc., he goes on to indicate the “external cult” that he divides according to time.¹⁰⁷⁰

Each year, there is the feast on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus. That involves: celebration of the Mass, with the administration of penance and reception of communion; various visits to the Blessed Sacrament in different churches, with the intention of repairing the offenses He receives there; prayers proper to the devotion: Office, Litanies, acts of adoration; preparation of the feast with the Vigil, following the ancient Christian custom.

¹⁰⁶⁸ PAC, 1160.

¹⁰⁶⁹ P. Gallifet, Jean. *De l'Excellence de la Dévotion au Cœur Adorable de Jésus-Christ*. Première Partie, IV.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Op. Cit.* III Partie, II.

Each month: Consecrating the First Friday to the cult of the Sacred Heart and receiving communion “in reparation.”

Every week: Friday should be a day devoted to the Sacred Heart.

The book of Father Gallifet –and many manuals will follow him in this– adds toward the end, a brief explanation of the devotion to the Heart of Mary, with “parallel” practices, so to say.¹⁰⁷¹

This version of the devotion to the Sacred Hearts is comprised of two juxtaposed devotions. The second is as an echo of the first. They follow the place that Mary has in the designs of God, in the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, and Her place in the Church. Everything said about devotion to the Sacred Heart is applied to her - servatis servandis. Its object is studied, and the practices of devotion are indicated.

Saint John Eudes

Less well known than the version of Paray-le-Monial, because it did not have the backing of the Society of Jesus, this version came to its full expression, as we said, some years before St. Margaret Mary. It is particularly interesting for the ways that this expression of the devotion was conceived and given birth and by the very form it took in John Eudes' hands.

Disciple of de Bérulle, (1575-1629), and de Condren (1588-1641), Founder and second Superior General of the Oratory - St. John Eudes did not come to the Heart of Jesus through some private revelation, but through the growing in a particular form of meditation on the Scripture carefully followed by the fathers, doctors and spiritual authors.

His teachers initiated him in a solid and profound spiritual life, strongly centered in Christ, in which the Incarnation in its temporal and historical realization is contemplated as a perpetual source of grace. The various moments, passages, or mysteries, of the earthly life of Christ, because of their connection to the divine person of the Word, became a perennial source of a particular grace. There is in each of these various circumstances, a different inner attitude of Christ, that Cardinal de Bérulle called “states.”

3. Saint Jean Eudes. *The Admirable Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God, L. I. Cap. II.*

To know better what is meant by the admirable Heart of the Blessed Virgin, we must know that as we worship in God three Hearts, which however are but one, and as in the

¹⁰⁷¹ *Ibid.*, IV.

God-Man there are three hearts that are but one heart, so, we honor three hearts in the Mother of God, that are but one Heart.

The first Heart that is in the Holy Trinity, is the Son of God, that is the Heart of his Father ... the second is the Holy Spirit, that is the Heart of the Father and the Son; the third is the Divine Love, one of the attributes of the divine essence that is the heart of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, three Hearts that are nothing more than a very simple and very unique Heart, with which the three eternal Persons love each other forever with a love as big as they deserve, and that they also love us with an incomparable charity.

The first heart of the Man-God is his corporal heart that is deified like all other parts of his sacred body by the hypostatic union with the divine person of the Eternal Word. The second is his spiritual Heart that is the superior part of his holy soul, which includes his memory, his intellect and his will, and that is particularly deified by the hypostatic union. The third is his divine Heart, which is the Holy Spirit, by which his humanity has always been more adorable, animated and enlivened than by its own soul and his own heart. There are three hearts in this admirable Man-God that are really but one heart, because his divine heart forms them into such a perfect unity that these three hearts form but one sole heart, which is full of infinite love for the Holy Trinity and an inconceivable charity for men.

The first Heart of the Mother of God is her corporeal Heart, enclosed in her virginal breast. The second is her spiritual heart, the heart of her soul, as designated by these words of the Holy Spirit: "Omnis gloria Filiae Regis ab intus" (All the glory of the Daughter of the King has its origin in its interior), that means in the Heart and the innermost part of her soul, of which we will talk more extensively later. The Third Heart of the Divine Virgin is that of which she speaks when she says: "I sleep, and my heart keeps vigil" (Ergo dormio et cor meum vigilat) (Song of Songs 5.2). In other words, according to the explanation of several holy doctors, "while I give my body the rest that it needs, my Son Jesus, who is my Heart and whom I love as my own Heart, is always watching over me and through me."

St. John Eudes is above all an apostle and a missionary, eagerly seeking a deeper knowledge of Christ in order to give this to the men of his time. In his search, Scripture has a place of preference. He also reads regularly Saint Bernard, San Bonaventure, the Benedictines of Helfta, Saint Gertrude and Saint Mechtilde; and among the authors of his time, especially Saint Francis de Sales, who is his favorite writer, especially his *Treatise on the Love of God*.

Before all the “states” of Christ Father Eudes considers the symbol of the Heart, which he found in his readings, and particularly in the Bible, to be the equivalent of “inner world” of the Redeemer. It should be noted that, without knowing the details of his personal evolution, it seems that he did not come quickly to a definitive formulation.

In the beginning, he applies the term “heart” to both Mary and Jesus, and only later does he begin to distinguish more clearly one from the other, placing them always in close relationship, not only in his teaching but also in his worship, because he contemplates them united in God’s plan in actual history.

The “Heart,” in Jesus as well as Mary, is first of all the person, considered in all his/her interiority and the bodily organ is only a symbol. The devotion he preaches is therefore quite different from that presented later by Father Croisset, in which the heart of flesh will always have an important role, as an “object” of worship.

Father Eudes established the public feast of the Heart of Mary in 1648 in Autun, and the feast of the Heart of Jesus in Caen in the year 1672.

Some contemporaries of Father Eudes

Initiated in meditation on the life of Christ under the scheme of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, and more or less influenced by the Oratorian current of the time, which stresses the importance of the inner world of Christ, many Jesuit spiritual masters and retreat preachers spoke at times about the Heart of Christ, as the fathers or doctors had already done or as Saint Francis of Sales himself.

It cannot be said that they “preached the devotion,” in the sense that their message did not address a particular form of worship or furnish a lens for reading the Scripture. However they are witnesses that it was in the air in the seventeenth century. Let us look at the main authors, because they were read by Father Coudrin’s community, although for some we do not know exactly when they became part of its patrimony.

Going in chronological order, the first is Father Saint-Jure (1585-1650), chancellor of Amiens, Orleans and Alençon. His apostolic work was spiritual direction. He often

spoke of the Heart of Jesus, especially in *De la Connaissance de l'Amour du Fils de Dieu, Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (1634), *Le Livre des Elus* (1643) and *L'Homme Spirituel*. A fine and sharp spiritual thinker, his teaching is rich in the knowledge of the Fathers and spiritual writers.

Father Luis Lallement (1588-1635) is certainly the most important figure in this group of Jesuits, even though his thought is only known to us through notes taken by his disciples. His silent life as a spiritual master is not sufficiently known to us. He knew the works of Bérulle and shows their influence but his strong personal and original synthesis shines through. He has interesting passages on the Heart of Jesus and they come from an apostle of the active life. This is basic theme of his spirituality, which strongly influenced the formation of other masters in the Society of Jesus.

Another Jesuit of the time was Father Joseph Surin, (1600-1665), disciple of Lallement, a spiritual writer of great importance, and certainly read by the Father Coudrin's community. We are particularly interested in his *Fondements de la Vie Spirituelle, tirés du livre de l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, which expresses his gift of leading others to the Gospel.¹⁰⁷²

All these writers are prior to the influence of Paray-le-Monial, and many of them hand on the inspiration of Bérulle and the Oratory.

4. Saint-Jure. *L'Homme Spirituel, Part II Ch. IV * 2.*

The third thing you should consider as regards union with our Lord is the place where we should practice it, and the fourth is the practice of it in itself.

As to the place, I say that it is the Heart of our Lord where we must be united to him in a special way. Even now we are all already there, because we know certainly and infallibly that He loves us and that love always receives the beloved into its heart, as in its very own dwelling place. What's more, we can place ourselves there and remain there by our thoughts, as when we are joined to someone in spirit and enter into their heart.

This is where we have to establish our home. There is no one so poor that does not have a place to retire. The monks make profession of poverty and of a total deprivation; however, they still have their cells. The hermits, the cloistered, have a tiny room where they live and do their exercises. Our Lord receives us in his heart, this is our home and we cannot have one that is better or richer or more beautiful or more pleasant. There is nothing more holy or more divine. And all the palaces of kings and of the most powerful monarchs, all the chambers of the queens and princesses do not come near to it.

¹⁰⁷² We must also recall Jacques Nouet (1605-1680), also a disciple of Father Lallement. He also was dedicated to spiritual direction and retreats, and left us his *L'Homme d'Oraison*, which was finally published in 1692 and was read in the community. Of the whole group, he is the one who most develops the theme of the Heart of Christ in all his meditations. Nor can we forget Father Vincent Huby (1608-1693), also a disciple of Father Lallement and a missionary from Brittany, who gave significant space in his preaching to the Heart of Jesus. Finally we must add Father François Guilloché, (1615-1684) who from 1673 was a spiritual master in Paris. He published several works that show that a deep assimilation of the teaching on "the interior of Jesus." He also speaks of the Heart of Jesus.

That is why, St. Bernard says: "Oh my Lord! You have wanted your side to be pierced so to open a door for us to enter. You have caused your heart to be opened more by love than by the lance so that we can dwell there and be sheltered from all outward disturbances. So let us go joyfully to take rest in that heart, to never leave it. Oh, how good and how pleasant it is to dwell and work in his Heart!"

Yes, to work, and that is the fourth thing we have to speak of, because it is in the Heart of our Lord that we must do absolutely everything we do, and exercise all aspects of the purgative life, the illuminative life, and the unitive life.

5. Father Surin. Fundamentals of the Spiritual Life, L. V. Cap. VII.

On the words (of the Imitation of Christ L. II. Cap. I.), "If you had once entered to the Heart of Jesus and if a flash of the fire that burns in it had adhered to yours ..."

Question: How can one enter into the Heart of Jesus?

Answer: Penetrating and tasting what is in the deepest part of that heart. I find there especially three things: 1. The feelings of love that He always had for his Father and for us. 2. The maxims of morality that He recommended more frequently and that He had more at heart. 3. His interior pain and suffering.

Question: What are the tenderest sentiments of the Heart of Jesus?

Answer: Those He had for his Father are: a generous love toward this so lovable Father, a continuous dependence on His orders, an ardent desire to see His wishes fulfilled in everything. He said, "I always do what is more pleasant to Him" (Jn 8,29). And elsewhere: "My food is to do the will of the one who has sent me" (Jn 4,34). Those that He had for us are a paternal affection, and a very ardent desire for our salvation. Whoever wants to enter, therefore, into the interior of Jesus, must experience his sentiments and to try to reproduce them, in order to more closely united to him, and according to the precept of the Apostle, experience in his heart, what Jesus experienced in His own (Phil 2.5).

After Paray-le-Monial

The diffusion of the message of Paray, as presented by Father Croisset and Father Gallifet, opens a new stage in the development of the devotion in France and there appears a group of apostles and writers who adopt it, acknowledging the influence of the Jesuits referred to above and the Oratorian current of John Eudes. Those waters flow together without the polemical opposition that a century later will do so much damage to the devotion's evangelical content.

Question: What are the moral maxims most appropriate for the Christian soul?

Answer: They are the main points of the doctrine of the Savior, which contain his spirit. These points can be summarized as the frequent practice of humility and gentleness, patience among the evils of this life, the love of the cross and mortification, charity towards others, evangelical poverty, and especially the desire to be despised and humiliated as He was during his passion. That is to be one of his own; that is to use his livery; that is to enter within Him. This mystery is hidden in Him, and it is known but by very few people.

Some have respect for Jesus, love Him, bend the knee before him as to their Lord, and yet have always a secret aversion to the most basic morals. They know the outside of Jesus, his sovereign power, his greatness, his majesty, his plan is to save men, and the like, but they ignore what is most hidden within him, and more pleasant to His heart. That is why one could say with the author: If you had once entered the interior of Jesus, etc.. ... And what he says elsewhere: whoever has the spirit of Jesus, will find the hidden manna. L. I. Cap. I. This heavenly manna is nothing else than the abundance of grace, of light, of comfort, of spiritual delight, that Jesus allows those to experience, who get into and meditate on his maxims.

Question: What is the third thing that we observe concerning the inner life of Jesus?

Answer: They are the sufferings that we must try to imprint on our spirit, meditating on them continuously tenderly and lovingly. As a consequence when someone wants to know and experience what is happening within Jesus who is loaded down with sadness and suffering, he must hold before his eyes continuously the passion of Jesus and cling to that not only in thought but also by a feeling of compassion that penetrates the heart.

Another way that is very effective is to experience the suffering of Jesus Christ. As our author says, no one can better experience the sufferings of Jesus Christ than someone who has experienced something similar. L. II. Ch. 12. St. Bonaventure teaches us that this is done when someone contemplates this divine model of patience; they experience at first hand, the rigor of His torments. So to know what he suffered when he was bound to the column, this holy doctor says that one must take the discipline to the point of drawing blood. A soul who sincerely loves our Lord and never desires anything so much as to share in his suffering, can then see better than ever how cruel was the flagellation and what pain the nails that pierced his feet and his hands caused him. Many devout people in this world falsely persuaded that it is enough to cultivate an inner sense, could see from this experience, that exterior exercises of virtue really serve the soul who desires to be buried with Jesus Christ in God. I would add that an infinity of religious people who do not have great responsibilities outside and who have the time to remain in their cells, should consider themselves blessed to be able to converse as a friend with Jesus crucified, instead of wasting time reading strange books and profane stories or thinking of their health and how to heal or avoid imaginary ailments. This would be infinitely more useful to them. Their spirit would become more fervent and their body healthier and more vigorous.

The first of these new apostles of the devotion was Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716). Father de Montfort was a priest with an Oratorian formation, a man of an unusual piety and zeal, and original spiritual insight, who devoted his entire life to preaching, especially missions among the poor. What has come down to us of his teaching on the Heart of Christ and the Heart of his Mother is found in many of the songs he composed for his missions. Without a lot of poetic fancy, they set out clear doctrine, perhaps richer than it seems at first sight. In any case, they represent a more developed preaching, whose points of emphasis are not too difficult to reconstruct. Given the impact that he most likely had on the community we are studying, it seems useful to summarize it briefly:¹⁰⁷³

1. The Heart of Christ is the “Heart of God”, presence and symbol of divine goodness and the love of God for sinners, the center from which his mercy is proceeds.
2. Love for God his Father and love for his brothers/sisters for love of his Father intertwine and are joined together as a huge conflagration, from which is born the mediation of Christ, which brings about the salvation of humanity in the sacrifice of the cross and gives all honor to God.
3. The Heart of Christ is a haven of peace and source of holiness and life for human beings. It is the “City of Refuge”, “Ark in the Flood” and “Temple”, which we must enter to give worship to God. It is the “cavern in the rock” where the nuptials of the soul and God take place. It is the “dwelling of the perfect” and “the center of peace.” All spiritual riches are contained there and from there, as from a font, all life and holiness is poured forth. It is there that all the saints found the secret of perfection.

As for the inner sufferings of Jesus, it is also sweet for the soul to share in them. If it should experience the neglect, pain and anguish that we have spoken of elsewhere (Lib. I, Ch. VII) it must take advantage of that and believe that it is as a door to enter within Jesus, who suffered not only in his body but also in his soul and it is there that happens the union of a holy soul with its divine spouse. It is also for that reason that Saint Bernard always had before his eyes Jesus nailed to the cross and he never stopped thinking of his death, as is seen in various passages from his writings, especially on the Song of Songs.

The same is said of Saint Francis and in the chronicle of his order it is said that one day a passerby heard loud yelling and imagining that someone was being killed, ran to the places where the cries came from but when he got there, he was surprised to see Saint

¹⁰⁷³ Saint -Marie Grignon de Montfort. *Œuvres Complètes*. Seuil, Paris, 1966. The songs dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus are: 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 128, 132. The Heart of Mary: 63, 87and 134. There are some samples in Part IV, Chapter III.3.

Francis lying there crying. Recognizing him, he asked him why he was crying. Francis answered, "My Savior is dead! He has suffered so much and you ask me why I am crying?" His ardent suffering came from a passionate burning love that had gone so deeply into the interior of Jesus. All those who, like these saints, meditate on the sufferings of their Lord, like them will be strongly impressed by the many evils that the Son of Man deigned to suffer to the point of being sacrificed for their salvation and the salvation of all sinners.

4. The Heart of Christ is, at present, (the time of Saint Louis-Marie), the object of constant insults in the Eucharist, sacrament of his love and his sacrifice. All men and women are called to love the Heart of Christ, and to enter into this refuge of peace and aware of the offenses that He receives, repair them with their personal consecration and love.

As for the Heart of Mary and her relationship with the Heart of Jesus, the Saint presents them intimately and inextricably united in the plan of God. Both must be praised, but only Christ is adored. Through the Heart of Mary we go the Heart of Jesus, and this is a path that quickly leads to perfection. The best way to love Mary is to love her through the Heart of Jesus. With the heart of his mother, his heart forms but one heart in heaven, where they offer themselves continually as immolated victims. We are all called to enter there and loose ourselves, there where all is united in love and where everything becomes one.

A bit after Father Montfort there is a Jesuit, Bartholomew Baudrand (or Baudran) (1701-1787), who had Father Gallifet as director of probation in 1735 and who was for many years a preacher and spiritual director in Aix-en-Provence, where he was director of a school from 1759 on. It was in that position that the decree suppressing the society took him by surprise in 1764. First he withdrew to Lyon and then to Vienne, where he devoted himself to spiritual direction and the writing apostolate. Even though he was not a first class writer, his works were received extraordinarily throughout France. His first book was *The Soul Lifted up to God through Reflection and Feeling*. Among the fourteen works that followed, mention must be made of *The Soul Aflame with Divine Love through Union with the Sacred Hearts*. It went into twenty editions, into the nineteenth century. The secret of his success is his clarity and accessible thought and the solidity and balance of his teaching, the fruit of the rich spiritual literature that preceded him.¹⁰⁷⁴

6. Baudran, *The Soul Consumed in God's love by its Union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary*.

The Devotion to the Sacred Heart is one of the greatest means of sanctification which God has granted to the Church in recent times ... The great mystery that was hidden in past ages has been manifested to the world (Col 1). ... Here in these great words, is the fulfillment of the oracle by which the Prophet announced that a time would come, in the days of his mercy, when God would give men a new heart: "cor novum Dabo Vobis" (Ez 36:26). In different times God had granted various benefits to men. ... Finally, at the end of his course, He gave them and left them his Heart, and with his heart, his love, his

¹⁰⁷⁴ Several of his works are preserved in the Library of the Generalate in Rome, and it is precisely among the books from the time of the Founders in Poitiers.

tenderness, his feelings, because in giving us his Heart, how could He not give us all those other things? “Quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis non donavit” (Rom 8:32).

... Let us enter into the interior of this Devotion and the great object that it presents us in the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ. See it open, offering Himself to us. Let us explore the dispositions of this Heart, admire the feelings that love produces, the wonders of love. It is in that wholly divine heart, the great object of God's good pleasure, where the work of redemption is consummated. That is where the covenant between God and humanity is fixed. It is where justice and peace have met and have given the embrace of peace in order to be one forever. “Justitia et pax osculatae sunt” (Ps 84:11). It is in that heart, as on a living altar, where a Savior God, offered once in sacrifice to his Father offers himself anew everyday for us and offers to his heavenly Father the homage due him and which our hearts are incapable of offering: a sacrifice of praise to honor his greatness; a sacrifice of propitiation to expiate our sins; a sacrifice of thanksgiving to acknowledge his benefits; a sacrifice of intercession to obtain new graces every day. It is in this heart, as in a living sanctuary, that the sacraments of the new covenant give life and from where their virtue, strength and effects purify, sanctify and transform us into new men.

Another Jesuit of that time is Father Nicolas Grou (1732-1803), who in his youth was a notable humanist, and professor at the famous college of La Fleche (Le Mans) and who, from contact with a Visitation nun in 1769, was “converted” to a more fervent spiritual life and resolutely began to live the mystical life. His spiritual works bear the mark of a very rich inner life and a broad theological and humanist culture and are of ongoing value. Only part of it appeared before the Revolution. Among his works are: *The Nature of True Devotion* in 1788, and *Spiritual Maxims with Explanations*, which appeared in 1789. *The Manual of Interior Souls* was not published until 1833 or 1847. *Meditations in the Form of a Retreat on the Love of God* was written in England in 1796 and was not published until 1920.

As for his most important work, *The Interior of Jesus and of Mary*, critics say that it ranks him among the great spiritual writers of his century. After multiple adaptations by the author it was not published until in 1815. In this work, the influence of Bérulle and his school, through Guillore and Surin, shows his obvious spiritual consanguinity with the Oratorian movement. He has a chapter on then Sacred Heart in which he says that without naming the heart, he believes that he has been speaking of it throughout the book. The first part is dedicated to the interior of Jesus and the second, written first though placed second, to the inner life of Mary.

Slightly before Father Grou, is Monsignor Paul D’Albert de Luynes, Bishop of Bayeux, (1729-1753), who published in Caen, (1749), a small manual entitled, *Instructions on the devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, with practices, prayers and offices proper to this Devotion*. It seems that the Bishop was not the actual author of the “manual” but rather that he had it written according to his directives. Whatever the case, one notes the influence of St. John Eudes, impossible to ignore in Normandy, as well as that of Margaret Mary. However it goes its own way, as can be seen from the Feast of the Sacred Heart being fixed on the first Friday of August. The first part of deals with the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (158 pages) and the second is given to the Heart of Mary (126 pages).

In 1765 Gabriel Nicollet published a manual entitled *The Perfect Adorer of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or an exercise greatly needed by the followers of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*. A 536 page volume, it brings together without much order or attention to originality abundant material on the devotion, mediations, historical notes, spiritual texts, hymns, offices, etc. For example, parts are simply adaptations of Fr. Croisset. Among the information is a list of 329 places in France that have a “Confraternity

of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of Mary” as of that date, a bit before the birth of Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer.

It is always from this heart, as from an abundant and unending fount of water springing up to eternal life that all graces flow to us; graces for all people and for all time, for all circumstances and for all categories...It is from this heart that we receive everything. It is to this heart that we owe everything...

The fruit of this Devotion: Since Jesus Christ in his ineffable goodness asks us for our heart, we have the unavoidable duty of preparing our hearts to offer them to him in a holy manner and to form within us hearts like his heart, hearts that are charitable, humble....

(Fifth consideration) A Charitable Heart: Resolutions:

- *Never say anything that could hurt the neighbor’s heart.*
- *As soon as some emotion against someone appears in our heart, suppress it, drown it instantly.*
- *Anticipate those to whom we have caused us some grief, showing a serene face and an open heart.*
- *Pray especially for those towards whom we felt some strong emotion.*
- *Know that afflicting the hearts of others, we afflict the Heart of Jesus himself.*
- *Take as a model for our charity toward others, the charity that the Heart of Jesus has for us.*

We do not intend to be exhaustive but have tried to give a rough idea of the resources for practicing and spreading the devotion to the Sacred Hearts, which were available in France immediately before the Revolution. We gave more importance to the authors represented in the original libraries of the community, and therefore, were more likely to have been known and used by it from the time of its origins. We do not have the impression that they were limited or of poor quality.

3. Devotion to the Sacred Hearts in Poitiers just before the Revolution

Looking at France, we are interested in finding out what was the status of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in Poitiers and the region in the years immediately preceding the Revolution, because it was there that the community found what it would later adopt as its own purpose.

Unfortunately, we did not find specialized studies on this point, so we will limit ourselves to recall some generally accepted facts that at least will give us some sure points of reference.

First of all, there is no doubt that the devotion was widespread in the city and region. Nicollet, in the work quoted, lists among the confraternities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, those of Poitiers, founded in 1693, and therefore with 96 years of existence in 1789; of Parthenay founded in 1741 and of Beaumont (we are not sure that it is the village of Poitou, because there are others of the same name in France) in 1737.

This is not the only source of certainty in this regard. Just remember that until 1764 the Jesuits had several houses and ran several colleges in Poitiers and we know that Father Nectou was a fervent apostle of the Sacred Heart. Even if the Jesuits were suppressed in 1764, the Visitation nuns were not. They had a flourishing monastery in the city at the time of the Revolution. They were forty or more religious, of whom 31 were choir sisters. Surely it can be assumed that the convent with their chaplains had to be a focal point for the devotion as presented in the manuals of Fathers Croisset, Gallifet, Nicollet, and d'Albert de Luynes, always with a kind of echo, which accorded the same devotion "servatis servandis" to the Heart of Mary.

We also know that there was another center from which the devotion to the Sacred Hearts was spread in Poitiers. Grignon de Montfort was in the city three times between 1701 and 1706: the first time for eight months, the second for six, and the third, for almost two years. During his time in Poitiers, he founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Wisdom and preached missions in various parishes, especially in Montbernage. In his

sermons, the message of the Heart of Jesus had an important place, and in Montbernage, ninety years later, people still knew his sacred hymns by memory, many of which were dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the heart of Mary.¹⁰⁷⁵

The presence of the holy missionary continued in his congregation, which in 1792 had 21 religious in the city, in five different houses: 6 at L'Hotel-Dieu (the principal hospital across from Notre Dame la Grande), 4 in the Incurables (today Hospital Pasteur), 4 in The Penitentes, 4 at Montbernage and 3 in Cueille-Mirabalaise.¹⁰⁷⁶

In the neighboring Vendée, the spread of the devotion to the Sacred Hearts, promoted by the Missionaries of Mary, led by Father Mulot, successor to Father de Montfort, took the color of resistance to the Revolution, and despite the missionaries, took on a marked political tone. In Poitiers itself, although revolutionaries saw each “badge” as an “anti-revolutionary” sign because of the proximity to the Vendean front, it does not seem to ever have had that meaning among the people who wore it.

Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. Complete Works: Songs. Du Seuil, Paris 1966. (Excerpts).

1075 M. Courzac. *Le Faubourg de Montbernage au point de vie religieux pendant la Révolution Française* (The Suburbs of Montbernage from the religious point of view, during the French Revolution.), II, 15. Picking up the traditions of the neighborhood in the third edition of 1859, he described the meetings of worship and said: “To begin they said the rosary aloud, followed by singing the songs of Father Montfort. They did it with such enthusiasm that one night they sang all but two songs of which they did not know the melody. The booklet contained 154 songs ...”

1076 Archives Révolutionnaires de la Ville de Poitiers (Library of the University) P-10. *Etat des religieuses, locataires et à l'arrêté du Conseil Général de la Commune ... Août: 1792, doivent contribuer au logement des gens de guerre.* Cahier 10.

Song 40

4. Angels, tell me, I pray,
What is this beautiful fire brazier?
It is the Heart of the Son of Mary
And of the only Son of God.
10. Oh! How many flames to the Father
That heart sends day and night!
Oh! How the man loves his brother
With pure and ardent love!
19. This is the City of Refuge
Where He is never offended
And the true Ark of the Deluge
Where you never drown,
24. This heart is our living Ark
That contains all the Law
The secrets of the innocent soul
And the mysteries of faith.
33. Praising this adorable Heart
I praise with proportion
The Heart of His admirable Mother
Their union is so great.

Song 43

32. Do we have a heart of stone
And not participate in His sufferings?
Ah! Let us suffer with Him on earth
Let us mix tears with His blood!

Song 44

2. Let us love this heart that loves us so!
Love is paid with love.
But let us love with extreme love,
And pure love, day and night.
9. Let us melt our ice,
In the Heart of the burning bush
Let us pick all the graces
From that abundant store.
16. To be able to have a heart
According to the Heart of God
To be able to be a man,
Abundant with grace and fire.

Song 47

15. My Jesus, mercy
For the sins I have committed against You,
If your Heart does not grant it to me
I am lost forever.
27. By the Sacred Heart of Mary,
Honor to yours, my Jesus,
Hear this heart that implores
And is the one that loves you most.

Song 87

6. Their Hearts strongly united
By close ties
Are offered both at once.
To be two victims
That will stop the punishment
That our crimes merit.
8. What a marvelous mystery!
What admirable raptures!
What a delightful rapture!
In these lovable Hearts!
Only in heaven will see
9. These ineffable secrets.
What a beautiful union!
Mary is all in Jesus,
Her faithful lover,
Or it is better to say, there exists no more,
Than only Jesus in Her!
10. let us all go into these two Hearts
To melt our ice,
To share their fire,
Their virtues and their graces.
Let us go, They love sinners,
There is a place for us.

Song 134. To the Heart of Mary

7. Her Heart is a fire,
A burning bush all aflame
That only finds in God,
Being, support and life.
It burns without being consumed
Because it can never love enough.
8. Love it seems to be, in this great mystery
Of their Hearts, be but one.
Between them, everything is common,
Because the Son is all in His Mother,
And the Mother cannot be seen anymore.
Only her beloved Son, her love: Jesus!
9. It is then, that through her prayer
She obtains from Our Savior
Pardon, for the poor sinner.
He is Her Son, She is His Mother.
Her holy heart and Her chaste womb,
Make the weapons fall from His hand.

4. Father Coudrin's Community and the Devotion to the Sacred Hearts

Of course, Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer's attachment to the devotion constitutes an important factor in the direction that the community would take spiritually. Unfortunately the information we have on the subject is insufficient, scarce and incomplete.

Given the popularity of the devotion in Poitiers and in France, as we have seen, it would seem absurd that a pious seminarian like Pierre Coudrin, who took courses at the University between 1785 and 1791, could escape its influence or at least not have knowledge of it. It is unlikely that he was unaware of it and to explain how he discovered it, it is not necessary to refer to the secret society "AA", of which, moreover, we know so little.

That accepted, we believe that his membership in AA does not date from his time in the seminary but must be after the Motte. The reason we think that he joined relatively late, is that there is no trace of any such commitment in the Founder's writing from that period. For example, if he had been an enthusiastic devotee of the Sacred Heart when he wrote his Sermon on Suffering, there is no doubt that he would have demonstrated it. But nothing allows us to suspect that.

It is clear that Cormaux in his retreat of late March 1792, which the new priest attended, preached on the Sacred Heart and that Father Coudrin signed a document addressed to the Holy See which referred to the Sacred Heart. But we also know that the document was a secret presentation of the "Society of the Sacred Heart" of Father de Clorivière. The young priest did not have the slightest knowledge of that at the time and signed it as an act of attachment to the Holy Father. That was very much like him. He probably signed it with devout enthusiasm but that is not enough to suppose that by doing so he had committed himself to devotion to the Sacred Heart.

BP, 141. *The Good Father writes to Father Isidore on November 14, 1803: "My poor children will always be the children of the cross, in order to belong perfectly to the Heart of our good Master."*

BP, 22 bis. *The Founder describes the "Solitaires" as, "A small society of people of the female sex, from every walk of life and most commendable by their virtues, that ... who, through all kinds of good works especially works of mercy, have gone to great lengths to placate the divine anger especially by turning to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, inexhaustible source of grace and love."*

BP, 2197. *"His divine heart will be our refuge and our exile. It will be the solitary place to which we will often withdraw so that He might speak to our hearts."*

"It is there that the union of the holy soul with the Divine Spouse takes place."

Another indication that the Founder did not discover the devotion on his trip to Paris for his ordination is the fact that in no account of his stay at the Motte, which began forty days later, does he make reference to his devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus or Mary, as he does in reference to the Eucharist. When leaving his hiding place, he surrenders himself to God at the foot of the oak tree. If he had been the devotee he was shortly afterwards, he would not have omitted some invocation to the Sacred Hearts. But it does not appear.

On October 20, 1792, he began his journey to Poitiers where his main support would be the two houses of the Daughters of Wisdom, outside the city walls, toward the east: the Hospital of the Incurables (today Pasteur) and the chapel of Montbernage. There the memory of Saint Grignon de Montfort was kept alive. His songs, as we see in the texts cited above, were more doctrinal than poetic and contained on the whole a rather complete exposition of the devotion. The simple language had been well understood by the people of Montbernage who sang them continuously and the circumstances made them up to date. It is likely that the young apostle was impressed by the strength of the devotion among the faithful.

Our impression is that it was in that environment, in contact with the religious community and the people of Montbernage, that the Founder encountered true devotion to the Sacred Hearts. Certainly this was not the first time that he had made a personal synthesis of his faith, as we can see from his writings before the Revolution. Before his priestly ordination, he already had that inner sense of God's providence present in life and history, of which we spoke, and a Christ-centered vision of existence. Especially after the Motte, he has a profound impression, the certitude of faith, of being loved by God and by Christ in a strong and palpable way. That was which is translated in thousands of ways in the day to day life that was his apostolic adventure during the reign of terror. From childhood he had a loving friendship with Mary. Now he begins to perceive that these sisters and this people profess and sing of the mystery of love of by which he felt himself inundated and a profound sense of communion is born.

In April 1794, Marche-à-Terre has to take refuge within the walls of Poitiers and loses no time in getting to the house on the rue des Olérons. The house and its inhabitants have been placed under the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus following the Jesuit and Visitandine version of the devotion. Father Coudrin makes the condition that they admit all to assist at Mass and so his spiritual directees begin to find their way there and the number multiplies rapidly. With the death of Robespierre in August of that year, a

strong desire for liberation from oppression and terrorism is felt everywhere, and the work of spiritual formation intensifies. The priests who are part of the resistance gather around the Sacred Heart, in large part due to the encouragement of Father Coudrin. It must have been a time to share experiences and to seek out the rich literature of the past centuries. It is not unreasonable to assume that they had a pretty good library. The abolition of religious orders (1790) was likely to have put into circulation books of piety from many monastery libraries, which passed into private hands, as we noted in the third chapter of Part Three. In this environment Father Coudrin enriched what he had acquired during his apostolate in Montbernage.¹⁰⁷⁷

If this is correct, Father Coudrin's commitment to the devotion would go back to the years 1792-94. It would seem impossible to separate Mother Aymer's from her choice of the Founder as her spiritual director.

The first document of the Founder in which the Sacred Heart is mentioned, is the so called *Rule of the Good Father*, published in the Appendix No. 3 (Appendices), and is usually dated 1797. It does not speak of the Heart of Mary. Not counting the formula of the resolutions of August 25, 1797, we do not see it alongside the heart of Jesus until near the end of 1800, in the vow formula of December 24. In the title of the Congregation, the Sacred Hearts appear for the first time in the Petition to the Pope, which was dated at that same time.¹⁰⁷⁸

5. The Significance of the Sacred Hearts in the faith of the Community

With the devotion to the Sacred Hearts, we come to the very core of the faith of the community. It includes everything we have said about faith in God and his Providence. As we have seen, its mission in the Church depends on this devotion. On the other hand, it contains the concept of religious life and of perpetual adoration, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

This is why, to better understand the community's whole life of faith, it would be good to pause a bit to study the significance that the Sacred Hearts had for the community. As "object" of the devotion, the Sacred Hearts constitute the key to its spiritual vision.

The documentation available abounds in references to the Sacred Hearts but is short on explanations as to their meaning. It is always supposed but never explained.

¹⁰⁷⁷ It is an interesting coincidence that the phrase of Montfort: "Let us melt our ice in that Heart." (c. 44.9 and c. 87.10) is quoted almost literally in the "Letter to my Brother" of Gabriel de la Barre, 1795.

¹⁰⁷⁸ In this brief study we have not followed the schema of Lestra, which he based on a series of assumptions that we consider to be historically weak. For the same reason we do not follow Father Ignacio Baños, who at this point follows the position of Lestra uncritically.

This silence is due to the fact that they considered the available literature to be sufficient. The impression is given that they did not feel the need to put together a manual for the Congregation's use, as was done at the end of the century. This means we have to study the whole body of references in order to discover at least the major themes they contain. We have only done this with the writings of the Founder, as they seemed sufficiently representative of the thinking of the community, for the reasons already explained with reference to faith in God.¹⁰⁷⁹

It is good to remember that at the time, even among the more orthodox, the devotion was frequently received with some misgiving. One of the problems often sighted was that it was a "novelty." It was suspected of not really being in conformity with the Church's tradition and, as such, with authentic Christian piety. And so, as a precaution, all the manuals begin by insisting that in substance the devotion is as old as Christianity, that it was the devotion of all the saints and things like that. For example, D'Albert de Luynes says, "The Devotion to the Sacred Heart, properly speaking, is nothing more than loving Jesus Christ, who is always present in the Eucharist, perfectly and in showing him our love by all the means that piety, recollection and zeal can inspire. In all ages this has been the character and occupation of the saints."¹⁰⁸⁰

1. BP, 205. Letter to Gabriel de la Barre, 15.10.1804.

I only have time to tell you how happy I am in the midst of my difficulties and my sorrows, to have a family whose members love each other with all their hearts in order to only please the heart of our adorable Master Jesus Christ, who takes a faithful account of even the smallest sacrifices done for Him, and rewards them.

¹⁰⁷⁹ We did not want to use as a witness to the faith of the community of the era of the Founders, the writings of Father Euthyme Rouchouze, certainly very rich. However they were developed as a summary response to the circumstances of the crisis after the schism of 1853, even though they are inarguably of a more traditional line.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Instructions sur la Dévotion aux Sacrés Cœurs de Jésus et de Marie, avec des Pratiques, des Prières, et des Offices propres de cette Dévotion*, Cap. II, p.9.

In support of this assertion, the authors that defend the devotion not only speak about its content but cite doctors and masters of the spiritual life, such as Saint Bernard, Saint Bonaventure and others, right up to Saint Francis de Sales, who speaks explicitly of the heart of Christ. Baudrand relates it to the revelation of the great mystery “hidden from the ages in God”, of which of St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, and puts it in relation with God’s design to give humanity the “new heart” that Ezekiel proclaims.¹⁰⁸¹

Within the community, they did not feel the need to “justify the devotion.” The impression is that neither did they feel that need when presenting the Congregation to Church authorities, whether diocesan or Roman, because they never offer arguments justifying it. However, within the new community there is the conviction of having come up with a short cut to evangelical perfection, already taken by the saints that allowed them to breathe the air coming from the times of Aquila and Priscilla. This seems like an undeniable historical fact, after what we have said in the third part in connection with the building of the community and we believe that all the documentation, which we will be studying, will confirm this.

a. *In the crucible of tribulation*

To better understand the meaning of the encounter of the community, especially the founder, with the devotion to the Sacred Hearts, we have to take into account the historical circumstances of France: the Terror and the Revolution.

At the time all Christians were suffering by reason of the social and political conflict, with its attendant hardship, fear and violence. The religious upheaval touched the souls of all, depriving the faithful of their pastors and putting to the test their faith with the scandal of schism. There was also unleashed a campaign of “dechristianization,” which involved the desecration of all that popular piety held most holy and most dear. The distress increased as Christians saw themselves powerless to stop the uncontrolled destruction and as the devastation seemed destined to continue for the foreseeable future. That darkened the hope of seeing better days.

This great tribulation was like a crucible that separates the gold from the dross. As we have seen, it forced them to turn to the Master of history and to seek in his Word the meaning of their suffering. Without a doubt, the devotion to the Sacred Hearts was one of the responses to this question.

Fortunately the Founder’s previous ideas on this point are well documented. We have his sermon on the *Blessedness of Those Who Mourn*, which we have included as

¹⁰⁸¹ CF. above, Chapter III, 2, *After Paray-le-Monial*.

Appendix 01. In order to grasp the meaning of the devotion, it could be useful to look at its main points, trying to get beyond the oratorical style to its scriptural basis.¹⁰⁸²

2. BP, 232. Letter to Sister Felicité de Charraux (To the Sisters of the Community of Le Mans), 16.08.1805.

So trust in the Good God. He is our Father. He is so good that he loves and cherishes his poor creatures, as weak as they are. This is what must reassure us all. Love one another very much, and be very docile to the voice of God.

3. BP, 272. Letter to Sister Ursule Roulleau, 10.06.1806.

Therefore, love this holy state, my dear child, even if you find contradictions in it. They are everywhere and the divine heart of Jesus always and everywhere keeps a special share of the bitterness of the chalice for his friends.

¹⁰⁸² This sermon was written around 1791, as we said at Part I, n.1. Writings of Fr. Coudrin.

An initial statement, considered as a point of departure is the “inevitability” of suffering for all people in this world: nobody can escape from suffering. Accepting it is a necessity for anyone who wants to be happy with a happiness compatible with our earthly reality. But when the Gospel says: “Blessed are those who suffer, for they shall be comforted” (Mt 5:5), it does not mean that suffering in itself leads to happiness. Suffering can be vain and meaningless. What matters is to suffer in such a way as “to be consoled”, as the saints did, for whom “this momentary light affliction is producing...an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor 4:17). To achieve this, like them we must contemplate the passion of Christ, who accepted the cup of bitterness that his Father gave him (Jn 18:11, Lk 22:42) and suffer with Christ, for Christ and like Christ.

The second assertion is that for a Christian, suffering is a duty. Christ is “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). He has told us, “Enter through the narrow gate... How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few” (Mt 7:13-14). Elsewhere he says, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24). Basically what he is saying is that we have to let the old man die. He is referring to Ephesians 4:21-24, “assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, that you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.”¹⁰⁸³

The third truth is that the reason that there is suffering is sin, which introduced suffering into the world along with death (Rom 5:12). Since then, the enjoyment of property and wealth, which is a gift of God, has become a breeding ground of evil. It creates a great insensitivity to the suffering of others, as in the case of the rich man (Lk 16:20). Even more so, does it create insensitivity to the glory of God as seen in the story of David and Manasseh (2 Sam 11; 2 Kings 21). In such a way, that prosperity promotes sin, as we read in Psalm (72) 73:4-5, 18: “For they suffer no pain; their bodies are healthy and sleek. They are free of the burdens of life; they are not afflicted like others... You set them, indeed, on a slippery road; you hurl them down to ruin.” Truly “A great anxiety has God allotted, and a heavy yoke, to the sons of men...” (Sir 40:1) and we cannot avoid it. It is “the mercy of God that we have not been destroyed” (Lam III 22). It is just that we

¹⁰⁸³ Here, Father Coudrin simply follows the tradition on the need of the cross, “Creation itself, as fallen, makes the cross inevitable, and makes the cross become salvation in Christ, the only possible salvation of creation”, says Louis Bouyer, in his *Introduction to the Spiritual Life*. (Chapter VII). He adds: “Therefore there are no ‘creative’ vocations that might be opposed to the alleged ‘redemptive’ vocations. Every vocation is both a vocation to the cross and a vocation to the resurrection, to the restoration of what God had created good in the beginning, and must once again make good at the end.”

suffer, because we all are sinners, and we need to expiate our faults.

The fourth truth is that Christ has not only preached the acceptance of suffering, but took it on himself in a such a way that with the liturgy we can apply to him the words of Lamentation 1:12, "Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering..." He has become the "Man of suffering...it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured..." (Is 53:3-4). Thus he was able to "obliterate the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross" (Col 2:14).

4. BP, 452. Letter to a niece, 1812 (?)

Have courage, my good niece. Time passes as a shadow and there is only the immense love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that does not pass at all.

The fifth assertion is that Christ not only saved us by taking on suffering but that he became an example and model of suffering, so that by the very fact of being his disciples, we cannot flee suffering. "No disciple is above his teacher, no slave above his master" (Mt 10:24). "Nor can we be spoiled members of a head crowned with thorns," as St. Bernard said. It is of the utmost importance that we be convinced that "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22) and know well that, "if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom 8:17).

The sixth truth is that for a sinner, the true path to happiness in this world is to suffer “as” Christ. To do so fruitfully, we have to suffer with Him, uniting ourselves to his suffering. We must begin by accepting God’s will, as he did in Gethsemane, “not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42). That union will become “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14). United to Christ we will know that “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted...” (Ps 34:19). We will be able to say “I fear no harm for you are at my side...” (Ps 23:4). We will experience ourselves hidden “in the shadow of (God’s) wings” (Ps 17:8) and we will know that nothing in the world “will be able to separate us from the love of God” (Rom 8:39).

The seventh affirmation is that our hope is born of our participation the cross of the Savior. The Lord himself told us, “By your perseverance you will secure your lives” (Lk 21:19). Moreover, “For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...” (Rom 8:29). So his call to suffering is a guaranty of being chosen by him and we can repeat with the Prophet, “You (are) my refuge in the day of misfortune” (Jer 17:17). Consequently we must have the certitude that God desires our consolation. The words of Isaiah are for us, “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.” (Is 40:1) “Here comes with power the Lord God, who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him” (Is 40:10). “I, it is I who comfort you” (Is 51:12).

The eighth truth is there is nowhere to go for us but to Christ and we can repeat with Saint Peter, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68). “We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves...” (Rom 8:23). “For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven” (2 Cor 5:1).

5. **BP, 512.** *Letter to Sister Hilde Lacoste, 21.08.1816.*

I have reason to believe that the Good God will reward you for all the sacrifices that you have done for the good of the work. Be sure, my daughter, that you will be consoled.

6. **BP, 515.** *To Father Hippolyte Launay, 18.10.1816.*

I feel your sorrow. I unite myself to your suffering. May the divine Heart of our very merciful Jesus have compassion on you all.

The ninth and final truth is that we can say with Saint Paul, “I am overflowing with joy all the more because of all our affliction...” (2 Cor 7:4) in the conviction that “the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing... but to those who are called...Christ (is) the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:18.24). The faith will help us discover how it is possible to say, “blessed are those who suffer.” We will finally see the cross as the true place of salvation and we will say, “But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

b. The Heart of God (du Bon Dieu...of the Good God)

The first meaning that the symbol of the Heart of Christ certainly has for the community is the love that God has for us in His Son. We have seen that “God” for Father Coudrin is always intervening in human history in general, and especially in the history of his community and that “God” has the face of Christ. So when thinking about the Heart of Christ he says, “Heart of the Good God” (Cœur du Bon Dieu) he gives it a meaning that could be translated as the “Heart of Providence.”¹⁰⁸⁴

If the heart symbolizes the whole inner life of Christ, there is no doubt that for the Founder God’s love for humanity is the dominant aspect and the main attribute of his providence, as we have already seen. This love of God for humankind is manifest in Christ. It dwells in and fills his heart. It is the great reason for everything he does, especially his passion and cross and even his Lordship of history today.

The Founder admitted that he had experienced that love, proclaimed in the Gospel. But we know little of the actual experience, as it was not his style to reveal such things. However we do have some lines from a letter of August 4, 1804 to Sister Gabriel de la Barre. They are very eloquent.

Yes, my dear daughter, I only live to strengthen at a great price, the work of the Heart of this kind Master, who fills me with his favors. If I am ungrateful, he loves me all the same and I feel in my heart that he will love me forever, yes, forever. I would have to go on and on if I were to write you of all the strength of his grace in my soul, the great extent of his power in the depth of my being...Love him without limit and I tell you that nothing will separate you from him. If we are persecuted or left alone, let us be children of the cross. May our hearts burn with the desire of immolation that he asks of us or that he allows and everything, yes, everything, will be according

¹⁰⁸⁴ Cf. BP, 45 * 9; 141 * 2; 192 * 2-3; 205 * 4; 452; 512 * 1; 515 * 1; 519 * 5; 533 * 3-4; 897 * 3; 1014 * 2; 1101 * 2; 1386 * 1; 1477 * 2; 1481; 1513 * 2; 1547 * 2; 2197 * 1-2. See what was said about God in Part IV, Chapter I.

to his will, which I feel and I want to feel to death is always adorable.¹⁰⁸⁵

Along with the Founder, the community knows that it is the Heart of Christ that sustains them and is their consolation. The Heart of Jesus is merciful and compassionate toward all. He watches over and blesses his work, preserves it in peace and works within individuals so that they are conformed to his heart, sending trials that bring about Christian perfection and show that he really does love them. From this conviction of the love of the Heart of Christ, apostolic zeal springs spontaneously. “If the tenderness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the salvation of souls really takes root within, how could one not be enflamed by zeal so as to respond to the love of such a good Master?”¹⁰⁸⁶

The Founder senses the presence of that Heart of Christ-Providence in the little boat that is his community. While outside the storm becomes more violent, like the Apostles, at the end of his first Rule in 1797, he writes: “Cor Jesu, salva nos, perimus!” (Heart of Jesus, save us, we are perishing!).¹⁰⁸⁷

This conviction of God’s love, symbolized in the Heart of Christ is not a theory or a kind of pious practice, but the practical confidence that underpins everyday life as its main foundation. It is faith in the Word that allows them to build the house on rock.

c. *The Heart of the Servant*

A second aspect that the community discovers in the symbol of the Heart of Christ is the love that the Savior has for his Father. That is shown in his resolve to obey the Father’s designs. He does this from the moment he enters the world and continues without vacillation to death and death on the cross.¹⁰⁸⁸

Faced with the religious disaster of the revolution, the Founder and his community realized that if, as children of God, they believed in love, they had to follow the example of the Son and accept as he did providential suffering, offer it to God as reparation for so much rebellion against his law and if possible turn aside God’s punishment and preserve the Church from more suffering.¹⁰⁸⁹

This aspect is always cited as an example or taken as a model for the vocation of mediation by providential suffering or as a victim. We will speak about that later especially

¹⁰⁸⁵ BP, 192.

¹⁰⁸⁶ BP, 519.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Mt 8:25.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Heb 10:5-7: For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God.’”

Phil 2:5-8: Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who... taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. (On “the form of a. Servant”): cf. Is 52.13-53.12.

¹⁰⁸⁹ In Chapter V we will see a wider meaning of this acceptance of suffering in the community.

with respect to adoration. Father Coudrin writes to Father Isidore David in November 1803, "My poor children will always be children of the cross, so as to belong perfectly to the Heart of our good Master."¹⁰⁹⁰

d. *The Heart of Jesus, source of grace*

A third aspect of the symbol of the Heart of Christ is that of "source of grace." In his letter to the Bishop of Poitiers, a refugee in Switzerland, the founder described the "Solitaires": as "A small society of persons of the female sex, from all walks of life and who are most comendable by their virtue...who have given themselves to all sorts of good works, especially works of mercy, to turn aside the divine anger by turning especially to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, inexhaustible source of grace and love."¹⁰⁹¹

In all his writings, the Heart of Christ frequently appears as the one who gives grace and peace. In his *Counsels on Adoration*, he has these lines: "We go to the Heart of Jesus, which was not pierced but opened. For there is our place of rest, the source of living waters where the soul takes delight, has its thirst quenched, is strengthened and flooded with graces."¹⁰⁹²

A fourth and final aspect of a symbol of the Heart of Christ is that of "center and refuge" of the community. It is the place of appointment and meeting, which in a certain way takes in all the above because it supposes them.

In the first Rule the Good Father writes, "His divine heart will be our refuge and our exile, the solitary place to which we will withdraw often, where he will deign to speak to our hearts".¹⁰⁹³

Mother Aymer writes in 1801, that among other things the vocation of the community is "to enter into the interior suffering of the Heart of Jesus".¹⁰⁹⁴

"To take refuge in" and "to enter into" the heart of Jesus were expressions that were fairly frequent in the piety of the time. To discover their meaning, considering that we do not find it in the documentation of the Congregation itself, it will be necessary to consult the authors that the community was reading. Among them is the passage from Father Surin that we included above. Commenting on the Imitation of Christ, he deals with the

¹⁰⁹⁰ BP, 140 *6; 141 *2; 159 *2; 192 *3; 223 *3; 272 *4; 474 *5; 512 *2; 533 *14-15; 988 *5; 1008 *5; 2073 *3; 2149 *1; 2197 *1-2; 2302 *1. See also "Counsels on Adoration", Part IV, Chap. V.3 (text 23).

¹⁰⁹¹ BP, 22 bis.

¹⁰⁹² BP, 22 bis *1; 897 *3; 1014 *2; 1163. We could not find texts where Father Coudrin explicitly places the Holy Spirit with the Heart of Christ, but he often spoke of the Holy Spirit, especially as a source of light: 155*6; 587*5; 963*6; 1982*5; 2197*2; 2199*6; 2281; and as the one who guides us to life: 115*8; 1641; 1962; or as the one who dwells in us, fills us, and should always be with us: 115*6; 669*2; 745*1; 869*2; 963*2; 1278*2; 1773*4; 1893; in such a way that we can do nothing without Him: 32*7; 34*3; not even pronounce the name of Jesus: 2327*1.

¹⁰⁹³ BP, 2197.

¹⁰⁹⁴ BM, 33.

question of interest to us. “How can one enter into the Heart of Jesus?” He responds that one must do three things:

1. Making our own, as far as possible, the sentiments of the Heart of Christ both for his Father (depending on his will and desiring to see it accomplished) and for men (love and desire for their salvation).
2. Adopting the teachings of Christ (humility and gentleness, patience and love of the Cross, charity toward others, evangelical poverty, desiring to be despised and humiliated like Him).
3. Lovingly meditating on his sufferings and the sorrow that overwhelmed him (meditating on the passion, trying to “participate” in his sufferings, even physically, by some kind of experience, but especially the his inner suffering, accepting personal experiences as providential, as doors that allow us to enter into his suffering).

Father Surin added a final remark that should have impressed the first members of the community, “that is the way to union of the soul with its divine Spouse.” And he confirms its importance with the examples of St. Bernard and St. Francis of Assisi.

Without claiming that every time they talk of “entering the Heart of Jesus” they had in mind this analysis, we can say that “entering into the heart” of the Savior meant meditating on the Gospel and its inner meaning as something that comes from the human-divine interiority of Jesus and not stopping at the merely external but drinking deeply of its spirit.. At the same time it included attentiveness to the value of “communion” with the rest of the community that was engaged in this same effort.¹⁰⁹⁵

Thus, the Heart of Christ was considered as an “immensity,” as a space that is at the same time a place of solitude and a space of meeting for all the brothers and sisters.

The same Lord is the one who says, “Come to me all,” and once a response has been made, no one wants to leave because we experience that “outside, there is only bitterness.” Inside there is peace and unity in which all have only one heart.

7. BP, 533. Circular Letter announcing the Approval of the Rule, 14.04.1817.

Our number increases every day. Our divine Lord seems to open his Heart to us and say, Come to me all of you or you are all mine. Therefore let us belong to him without reserve, if we want to receive the reward.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Father Coudrin calls the Sacred Heart “Center”: 153*3; 278*1; very frequently he speaks of being “in the Heart of Jesus”: 213*1; 805*4; 854*2; 1008*1; 1012*2; 1133*2; 1254*3; 1410*4; 1534*4; 1629*3; and apart from him all is bitterness. 1386*1.

f. Through Mary and with Mary

So far we have spoken only of the Heart of Jesus, but the Founders, at least in the definitive formulation speak of “Devotion to the Sacred Hearts,” and we are interested in having a historically accurate idea of the role that the Heart of Mary had in it.¹⁰⁹⁶

It is a fact that they did not immediately associate the heart of Mary with the heart of Jesus under the common expression, the “Sacred Hearts.” The first official document that contains it is the official title of the Congregation, in the Petition to the Pope in late 1800.

Up to that time, they were careful to establish the difference, as in the Petition to the Vicars of Poitiers in June of that year, where they say, “We came together six years ago, under the patronage of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ and the special protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary...” Mary’s name is not even mentioned in the title given there, “The Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.” In the draft of the rule edited by Mother Aymer with Bernard de Villemort as scribe, the new community is called the “Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.” Mary is only mentioned in Article 2 to indicate that the Congregation is under her “special protection”.

The reason for this “association” would seem to be the charismatic messages of Mother Aymer during Advent 1800. Later, at the time of the negotiations for the Roman approbation, objection was made to the expression “Devotion to the Sacred Hearts.” It appeared to place on the same level (parregio) the worship due to Christ and his mother. When it came to approving the article of the preliminary chapter of the Constitutions, which says that the purpose of the Congregation is “the propagation of devotion to the Sacred Hearts” the phrase was added “as approved by the Apostolic See,” in order to avoid misunderstanding.¹⁰⁹⁷

However there was never confusion in the faith of the community about this, and the teaching of Father Coudrin on the role of Mary is simple and clear.¹⁰⁹⁸

¹⁰⁹⁶ See the quote from the book by Father Antoine Hulselmans ss.cc. Article VI: *On the Devotion to the Sacred Hearts* pp. 64-72.

¹⁰⁹⁷ When we say that the “cause” of this “association” is - in our opinion - a charismatic communication of Mother Aymer, we not pretend that the expression was found in one of her visions. It can be found in pious books such as the one referred to by Mgr. Albert de Luynes, in the title of the Little Offices, etc., and hinted at in the songs of Grignon de Montfort; particularly in N° 87; so that there is no doubt that it is not original with Mother Aymer. What we believe is that the adoption of this formula in the Congregation, in the very title of the new Institute and in the formula of vows, is due to the communication of Mother Aymer. That overcame some hesitation and a certain reluctance on whether or not to adopt it.

¹⁰⁹⁸ The texts that best preserve the teaching of the founder on this point are mainly three: 1) *Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Mary*, published as an appendix in the book of Father Hulselmans, Appendix 3. 2) *The paragraphs of the Circular Letter* (Announcing the Approval of the Rule) of 14.04.1817 LEBP, 533 (ANN., p. 175). 3) The “*Counsels on Adoration*” Part IV, Chap.V.3 (text 23).

8. BP, 705. To Father Joaquim Deletang, 14.07.1821.

God provides us crosses ... it is a proof that He loves us.

9. BP, 1386. To the Sisters of the Community of Le Mans, 08.07.1821.

Taste, taste God on the journey of life. He alone is good. His will is the only good. Outside his heart, all is bitterness. Tell everyone this. Tell also my brother and his friends (the Superior and community of brothers). I feel it for myself. Everything is nothing, but to love God. So live for him alone and die from the desire to please him. This is true happiness.

10. BP, 1477. To Father Raphael Bonamie, from Rome, 10.04.1829.

May the Good God keep you all in peace, may He conform you all to his divine Heart. May Our Mother, the Blessed Virgin and your holy guardian angel preserve you from all serious harm.

11. BP, 1513. To a Father Superior, 29.11.1829.

If my prayers are answered, you will have but one heart and one soul in the Heart of our divine Master.

12. BP, 1547. To Father Raphael Bonamie, 05.03.1830.

The Heart of the Good Lord, whom I serve, will have pity on his work and on his poor servant, who up until now has counted more on his grace than on the talent or the mind of men.

We must honor the Heart of Mary “after that of Jesus” recognizing the distance that separates them given Christ’s divine nature. But we see her so closely associated in the plan of God, that to make sure that we “reach the heart of Christ” we go to Mary. The Mariology of the Founder is that of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, whom he quotes in his *Counsels on Adoration*. “Once we have found Mary and through Mary Jesus and through Jesus God the Father we have found everything. And when I say everything, I mean everything.”

Thus, the community’s devotion to the Sacred Hearts at the time of the Founders is a devotion to the mystery of the Incarnation-Redemption, as the work of God’s love realized historically in Jesus and inseparably accompanied by Mary. As the shepherd and Magi found him in the arms of Mary; as his disciples believed in him at Cana through Mary’s mediation; as St. John found strength to remain at the foot of the Cross with Mary and as the first Church in Jerusalem prepared to receive the Holy Spirit, Fr. Coudrin’s little community also found Jesus with Mary and has loved her from the very beginning.

6. The Community’s Way of Expressing the Devotion to the Sacred Hearts

The Preliminary Chapter of the Constitutions speaks of the responsibility to “spread” the devotion but says nothing explicitly of how the community intended to practice it. However, there is no doubt that the practice was something important for them. Therefore it seems necessary to give a brief summary of what is found at different places in the legislation and in other documents, even if it seems obvious.

In brief, one can say that the Congregation practices its devotion to the Sacred Hearts in three different and complementary ways:

- a) By religious Consecration, even in the act of profession itself, as we hope to show in the next chapter.
- b) By apostolic zeal, that consecrates the different activities of life to “bringing the Gospel everywhere.” It is a Gospel read and lived as a revelation of God’s love for us and a call to repay with a love like that of the Servant, who kept nothing for himself and gave all and to do that and meditate on it with Mary and under her protection. We spoke specifically about apostolic service in the second part.
- c) By adoration, as a ministry of mediation, as we will explain in the last chapter.

13. BM, 36. Billet, 02.10.1801.

During the “Salve” the good God open his heart to us. He said, “Come, my children,

come my friends, come plunge yourself into my heart, come submerge yourselves in love and sorrow.” The Blessed Virgin was not praying as ordinarily. She was joyful and seemed to show us to her Son. The angels were gathered attentively around her. I fell down in adoration.

14. BM, 21. Billet.

It is not only the Blessed Virgin who wants this order, but it seems to have become a need for the Heart of God, so great is his mercy toward us. It is impossible for me to explain for I have told you nothing in comparison with what I learned or sensed on this matter.



Chapter IV

RELIGIOUS PROFESSION IN THE FAITH OF THE COMMUNITY

One of the most important and critical points for the communion in faith of the community is certainly the conception that it has of profession itself. Although we are fully aware that a comprehensive study on this subject would require broader and more thorough research, we have found in the documentation that we consulted sufficient information to establish the broad lines of the “concept” and its surer assertions.

The first idea of founding a religious institute came to Fr. Coudrin with the “vision of the Motte” in September 1792. This means that he began to feel a responsibility to create a community precisely when the revolution was becoming most violent and two years after the official legal suppression of religious congregations in France.

The Constitution of September 3, 1791, stated in its introduction: “From now on the law does not recognize either religious vows or any other bond contrary to natural rights or the Constitution.” And in Title II, art. 6: “One loses French citizenship: ... 4) by affiliation to any foreign order of knighthood, or to any foreign corporation that would involve titles of nobility, distinctions of birth, or that would require religious vows.”¹⁰⁹⁹

The truth is that the collapse of religious life in France was not just legal. Many things had prepared the way, not only the discredit sown by Voltairian anticlericalism but, especially, the actual decline of the regular life and commitment to Christian perfection. If as a whole women religious had remained faithful to their ideals, the same could not be said of many monasteries and convents of men. Even for many clerics and lay faithful, they were “les malaimés” (the unpopular).¹¹⁰⁰

It does not seem that the founder had an idea of a religious vocation before taking refuge in the Motte. We lack the documentation we need to follow the process of maturation of his idea of becoming religious. We only know that the project of forming an institute of men and women goes back to the “vision” and that five years later, when he wrote the Rule for the “Solitaires,” it was already taking shape.

In the following pages we summarize the information we have.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Godechot. *Les Constitutions de la France depuis 1779*. Paris : Garnier-Flammarion, 1970. pp. 35, 38.

¹¹⁰⁰ B. Plongeron. *La vie Quotidienne du Clergé Français au XVIII^e Siècle*, p. 153.

1. **Striving for perfection and the way of service**

The first element of religious life that appears in the *Rule of the Good Father*, aside from the idea of regular life included in the rules themselves is the decision to aim at Christian perfection as a community. The sentence with which he begins is suggestive on this point, “God brought us to birth in the bosom of the Christian religion, he called us to holiness. Therefore it is in no way a rash thing to tend toward that.”¹¹⁰¹

This statement is interesting as a very appropriate confession. By the fact of being born within the Church, the Christian is called to holiness. This is the same as saying that the idea of creating a religious community is to be considered as a response to that vocation.

He has just expressed this decision, when he no sooner focuses it on Christ. “We need a guide, a model, a protector. In Jesus we find everything: his birth, his life and his death. That is our rule. His divine heart will be our refuge and our exile. It will be the solitary place to which we often withdraw so that he might speak to our hearts.”

Above all, if we look carefully at this first Rule, which is the first time Father Coudrin gives concrete expression to his idea of common life, he who began by dreaming of missionaries, now gives us the impression of allowing himself to get carried away by a contemplative, if not “monastic” model. This Rule describes a very cloistered lifestyle. But we must bear in mind that it is something of a trial run, in which they are making a first attempt as a community in living aspects of the interior life and it was healthy that the plant try to take strong roots. How many times, out of an unwillingness to make concessions to a temporary and perhaps necessary unbalance, we simply deprive the plant of a deeper tradition. And then we are surprised that it withers and fades at the first frost. Fr. Coudrin’s community withstood the brunt of tough times, no doubt because he was always concerned to give it strong and deep roots.

Later we will talk about the vows and about aiming at a more specifically religious perfection. Now we have to note that this is an “apostolic” common life, which included among the means of sanctification the exercise of charity by serving the community of the faithful and men in general, in order to bring the Gospel to all.¹¹⁰²

This was not only the Founder’s original vision and his lifestyle during the Revolution, which encompassed the entire period of the community’s early development. It was in this sense that he formed his first disciples in the men’s branch. As we will see, if he

¹¹⁰¹ BP, 21.97 cf.; Appendix 3.

¹¹⁰² Cf. *Infra*, t. 5 p. 466.

envisioned a “class” among the sisters as well as among the brothers, exclusively dedicated to prayer, it can be said that they would be clearly subordinated to the apostolic life. Just think of the comparison he used several times, Moses with his hands up to heaven, while Joshua was on the plains fighting the Amalekites. These are complementary aspects of one commitment that was, decidedly apostolic. Prayer serves the interests of spreading the Gospel.¹¹⁰³

1. First Rule of the Good Father. (1797), (PAC, 2197, cf. Appendix 3 IV part).

2. Rule of the Good Mother, dictated to Villemort in 1800.

Chapter IV: On the Interior Spirit of the Order.

All the brothers and sisters of the order must with all their might strive toward the perfection of Christian and religious virtues, try with all their might to obtain the perfection of the Christian virtues and religious practices and put all their effort into practicing a great obedience, in imitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, when he accepted the chalice of bitterness in the garden of olives and always remember these words of Jesus Christ, “but not what I will but what you will” (Mk 14:36).

(All the Brothers will aim to do their best to :)

Acquire deep humility and great gentleness, in imitation of those that penetrated the Sacred Heart of Jesus during his mortal life. An ardent charity, in imitation of that burned in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and led him to death on the cross for our sins.

Acquire a deep contempt for the will itself, as St. Bernard teaches us that “our weakness only ends with our will.”

Surrender himself and carrying his cross every day with Jesus Christ in order to continually immolate nature and to achieve that happy interior death with the destruction of the old man, such that each action, made as if it was the last, carries within itself the mark of the life of Jesus Christ, as to be able to say with Saint Paul: “It is not I who lives but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

Have a great love for silence, because it is the solitude where the Spirit of God communicates.

1103 BP, 25 (ANN., 1963, p. 185); BP, To the Bishops of Poitiers (ANN., 1963, p. 187).

Mother Aymer communicated in a charismatic message, which has not been preserved, the primacy of the Christ's apostolic life over His other "Ages." Sister Gabriel de la Barre recorded it in her *Mémoires* of 1802 and in the *General Rule* in 113 articles that is from the same period.¹¹⁰⁴

Moreover, the fact of being called "Zealots and Zealotrices" is a way of saying that apostolic concern is central to our identity. Father Coudrin left us his *Mémoire* defending the title of "Zealots" (December 4, 1816) as eloquent proof of this. The Founder says that the purpose of the Congregation is "to call people back to confidence in the love of Jesus Christ..." and to "... make them understand that they must open their hearts to a divine fire and finally lift their eyes towards heaven, eyes that for too long have been dragged down toward the earth."

3. Gabriel de la Barre. *Mémoires*, 73.

Our Reverend Mother also knew that the missionaries should have the first place in the order because the apostolic Life of Jesus Christ that they must imitate encompasses all the perfections of the other "ages" of His life (ANN., 1962, p. 214).

4. Gabriel de la Barre. *General Rule in 113 articles*.

There will be four classes among the Zealots: that of the missionaries that will always have the first place; because the apostolic life of Our Lord Jesus Christ is the complement of all that His love for men has urged him to do... (ASP - Article 2).

5. The Good Father's Memorandum on the Title "Zealots".

Addressed to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars on December 6, 1816 (LEBP, 519)

The title of Zealots also has great advantages in relation to the end we wish to attain, namely, the sanctification of souls by the propagation of the devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. If the tenderness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the salvation of souls really takes root within, how could one not be enflamed by zeal so as to respond to the love of such a good Master? If one thinks of the maternal tenderness of the Heart of Mary for the men who have become her children in the person of Saint John, would it be possible to not feel one's heart aflame with a holy zeal to honor the Virgin of virgins? Now that is precisely what is contained in the name Zealots.

I could say the same thing considering our Institute in itself and its members. We need a name which will remind our brothers each day of their duties and obligations, which will help them never forget that they must sacrifice themselves out of zeal for the Lord; that they will fail at their most essential vow the moment they want to live for themselves and not work for the salvation of their brothers and sisters; that they must enter into the silence of the cloister only to find new strength to combat more courageously the enemies of religion; that in the final analysis their vocation is zeal and to be enflamed with zeal. That is what the members of our Society must think, that is what they will not be able to forget as long as they bear the title ZEALOTS. Like the stones of the sanctuary, their very name will cry out against them if they do not fulfill the duties it imposes on them. It will be a continual reproach to their conscience. And if God forbid they would one day be

1104 Cf. texts 4 and 5.

overcome by a sort of idle self-indulgence, it would draw them back from such shameful dullness.

The same observations apply to our sisters, and with even more force. Naturally led to give themselves to the sweetness of contemplation, the daughters of Sion would rather try to rid themselves of the tiresome cares involved in the education of youth, if their name of Zealotrices did not ceaselessly call them back to the obligations of a more expansive charity.

It is useless to insist that the true apostle is distinguished from the mere propagandist, who makes his living by distributing something that he himself does not use or in a campaign spreading a slogan that he himself does not believe. The zealot has a flame burning within him and a mission to accomplish. "If the tenderness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the salvation of souls really takes root within, how could one not be enflamed by zeal so as to respond to the love of such a good Master? If one thinks of the maternal tenderness of the Heart of Mary for the men who have become her children in the person of Saint John, would it be possible to not feel one's heart aflame with a holy zeal to honor the Virgin of virgins?"¹¹⁰⁵

Therefore, it is assumed that all members of the Congregation have such zeal and that this zeal should take them out of themselves to be at the service of the Gospel. This applies not only to the priests, but to the Sisters also.

2. The formula of the vows

While not a treatise on the religious life, where everything is necessarily included, the formula of the vows must contain the essential points of the commitment of "profession" and must contain them clearly and unambiguously. Moreover, as it is an official text with juridical character, it is important when it comes to knowing the religious faith of a community. In any case, it cannot be ignored.¹¹⁰⁶

For these reasons we thought it would be best not to proceed farther in our study of religious profession, without making available to the reader the different formulas of profession used in the period under study.

The oldest formula we have found is the one approved by the Vicars of Poitiers in October 1800, and used by Mother Aymer for her first vows on October 20 of that year. We have placed them second, so as to begin with the formula of "resolutions" which appears in the text of the Petition for approval of June 1800. That text has interest as it expresses the commitment that was the immediate preparation for the first vows.¹¹⁰⁷

1. Annual resolutions, June 1800.

I consecrate myself this day in particular, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and I resolve to live for one year in poverty, chastity and obedience in a spirit of acceptance, resignation, immolation and to do in everything I do what seems to me the most perfect, desiring by my

¹¹⁰⁵ ANN., 1963, p. 220; infra t.5.

¹¹⁰⁶ We would not want to overstate the value of the strictly legal formula of the vows, but rather to see it as a formula expressing "communion" which reflects the commitment of each person to the whole community and the profession as a minimum commitment of faith in the common spirit that lives in it.

¹¹⁰⁷ ANN., 1963. p. 177.

fidelity to these resolutions to appease the anger of God and to satisfy his justice; but I do not intend to be guilty of any sin, even venial, if I fail in them (ANN., 1963, p. 177).

2. Annual Vows ... Approved on 14.10.1800.

I... make the vow of chastity and of obedience for one year and I renew with all my heart the firm resolutions that I have ever taken and that can be for the good. I place them into the hands of the Holy Virgin, through your hands, Reverend Mother, so that she might deign to present them to the Sacred Heart of Jesus her divine Son, in whose service I desire to consume myself like this candle, according to the rule established in this house. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen (ANN., 1963, p. 178).

In the absence of legal approval by authority, and therefore of the community itself as a canonical entity, the essential feature of these “resolutions” is their subjective character, although they are personal commitments to be proclaimed publicly. In any case, the use of an identical formula gives external expression to a spiritual communion strengthening the bonds among the members in the hope of being able to eventually make a valid profession.

It is interesting to note that the “consecration,” which they pronounced, is to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and that Mary is not named.

There follows a series of vow formulas properly so called. We can clearly distinguish those from the time of as a diocesan congregation (1800-1816) and those as a congregation of pontifical right (1817-1840).

The first period coincides for the most part with the clandestine period, in which circumstances did not allow them to keep records of religious profession. To substitute they introduced various elements in the formula that would normally be in the records, such as noting the place of profession or birth and the corresponding dates. The discipline of “secrecy” also necessitated an omission. In order to avoid problems, there was no reference to approval by ecclesiastical authority, which was itself in hiding. There was a very discreet allusion to the community itself, recognizable only by the “initiated,” when the formula says “as a zealot,” which indicated no known institution.

We can draw attention to the fact that, after changing the title of the Congregation in the Bull *Pastor Aeternus* of November 17, 1817, the Founder did not introduce an immediate change in the formula of vows and that continued using the former name in documents, a year later.¹¹⁰⁸

The reason seems to be found: 1) in the nature of the change, and 2) in the historical circumstances.

1) The Nature of the change. The formula of the vows expresses, not only the commitment of the individual with God but represents a “profession of faith” in the ideals of the community, and therefore contains in itself the essential elements of the “communion in faith” of the community and proclaims adherence to the spirit of the Congregation. This explains why a change in the formula could easily create problems of division and to do it is always extremely delicate. If new generations began to express their vows with the new name before the older generation was aware of its complete equivalence with the previous name, it could create the impression that something

1108 BP, 540. (27.09.1817); BP, 564. (25.11.1818).

substantially different was beginning. So we understand in part Fr. Coudrin's prudence in introducing the change, waiting to do so until the Chapter of 1819.

2a. First Vows of the Good Mother, October 20, 1800.

v.s.c.j I, Louise, Victoire, Catherine, Henriette, Monique Aymer, born the 11th of the month of August in the year of grace, diocese de Poitiers make the vow of chastity and of obedience for one year and I renew with all my heart the firm resolutions that I have ever taken and that can be for the good. I put them into the hands of the Holy Virgin so that she might deign to present them to the Sacred Heart of Jesus her divine Son, in whose service I desire to consume myself like this candle, according to the rule established in this house. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

At Poitiers, the 20th of the month of October, in the year of Grace 1800 (ANN., 1963, p. 178).

2) The historical circumstances. The non-publication of the Bull, which we already spoke about, brought with it the impossibility of printing it and the Constitutions that it contained. As a result the Founder had difficulty in making the change known even within the Congregation and in fact had to wait until the General Chapter of 1819 to do so. This explains why the vow formula was not changed before the vast majority of the Congregation was aware of the legitimacy of the new one.

The definitive formula was prepared for the General Chapter of 1824. It was overdone with its reference to Roman approbation, with mention of the Bull of 1817 and the decree of 1825. The Chapter of 1840 came to the clearer and more sober expression, “according to the Constitutions approved and confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See,” which has remained until the present time.

Taking as the basic text the one adopted in 1825, we can distinguish eight elements in the vow formula:

1. The name of the professed, which expresses the acceptance of personal responsibility.
2. The mention of the Constitutions and the approval of them by the Holy See, to indicate the juridical status of the vows with regards to the Church.
3. The duration of the commitment, which normally is “forever.” At the time they did not make temporary vows but after eighteen months of Novitiate they professed perpetual vows

3. Vows of the Good Father, Christmas 1800.

On the 24th day of December at eleven forty-five in the evening in the year one thousand eight hundred, I brother Marie Joseph make the vow of chastity, poverty, obedience, following the lights of the Holy Spirit for the good of the work as a Zealot of the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in whose service I will to live and to die. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

4. Vows of Brother Bruno (Father Isidore David), 02.02.1801.

On February 2, 1801 at eight o'clock in the evening, I, Pierre David, born in Montsoreau, diocese of Angers, on April 13 1771, make the vow of chastity, poverty and obedience, in your hands Very Reverend Father, as a Zealot of the Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in whose service I will to live and die. In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Brother Bruno (PAC, 1168).

5. Temporary Vows of Hilarion Lucas.

On February 2, 1801 at eight o'clock in the evening, I brother, Joseph Gregoire-Hilarion Lucas, born the fifth of seven children in 1782 in Montbazou in the Diocese of Tours, make for one year the vow of chastity, poverty and obedience, Reverend Father into your hands as a Zealot of the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in whose service I will to live and die. In the name of the Father and the Son, and Holy Spirit. H. Joseph Hilarion (PAC, 1169).

4. The reference to the supreme authority of the Congregation, in whose hands the vows were made, because it alone represents the totality of the Congregation. The commitment is to the whole Congregation as such, and not to a part of it. If the Superior General is not present the vows will be received by his delegate.
5. The wording of the vows themselves, of poverty, chastity and obedience.
6. "As a brother of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts ..." to express the full meaning of the vows, which are not only legally valid by reason of the legal approval of the Constitutions which govern them, but also in "a communion of spirit" with the community that has accepted him as a member.
7. "In whose service (of the Sacred Hearts) I will to live and die." This is an expression of the definitive decision to be faithful to the surrender of one's whole life and to the manner of living and working apostolically, which is seen in the community as a "service" to the Sacred Hearts.
8. "In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" This is all a continuation of one's baptism. It is the development of the life born on the day of Baptism. In the Son it is offered to the Father, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Of all these elements, we can say that other than 2), implicit in the clandestine period for reasons already explained and 4) omitted in the vows of the Founders themselves, all are practical identical beginning with the vows of the Good Father on December 24, 1800. There is clear continuity.

6. BP, 258. Circular to the Superiors, 25.02.1817.

BP, 540. Faculties to Father Regis, 27.11.1817.

BP, 564. Faculties to Father Antonin, 25.11.1818.

I ... professed brother of the house of ... I make forever into the hands of our Reverend Father Superior General, according to the special powers delegated by him to the Superior of this house of Poitiers, the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience as a Zealot of the Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in whose service I will to live and die.

7. Constitutions of 1825, Cap. VII. Art 2.

I ... in accordance with the Constitutions, Statutes and Rules approved by the Holy Apostolic See the seventeenth of November 1817, and confirmed by the Apostolic Decree of the sixth day of August 1825, make forever into your hands Very Reverend Father vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, as a brother of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in whose service I will to live and die. In the name of the Father and the Son, and Holy Spirit.

8. Constitutions of 1840, Article 239.

I ... in accordance with the Constitutions, Statutes and Rules approved and confirmed by the authority of the Holy Apostolic See, make forever in your hands Very Reverend Father, vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, as a brother of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in whose service I will to live and die. In the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

3. The Sacred Hearts in the formula of the vows

As we have seen, in all the formulas beginning with the one used by the Founder, the Sacred Hearts appear in the title of the Congregation, as a way of expressing that the vows are made as a member of the Congregation. At the end of the formula, one says that he/she is ready and resolved to “live and die in their service.”¹¹⁰⁹

Let us recall that before 1817, the Congregation’s title was “Zealots of the Love of the Sacred Hearts.” The religious congregation was seen as having been seized by zeal to make known the love of God in the heart of Jesus united to the heart of his Mother. At the same time they were called to respond in love to God with the Sacred Hearts and learning from them. This was also the content of the later title of the Congregation even if it was not expressed in the same dynamic way as the former title. Under either title, the meaning of the Sacred Hearts in the formula is not changed.

This invocation of the Sacred Hearts is an expression of a desire to be in communion with the community’s spirit, which commits the professed to it and manifests his/her decision to be one with the destiny and the mission of the Congregation in the Church.

We have already said something about what “Sacred Hearts” meant in the mind of the community and what it meant by “devotion.” Now we have to see how all this applies to the formula of religious profession.

Today there is a certain resistance, not only to the use of the Word “heart” as it can seem romantic and sentimental, but also to putting Jesus and Mary together in the same name.

1. BM, Rule (draft) first months of 1800.

Art. 1. The Order of the Sacred Heart is instituted principally to make perpetual adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and by this means to make reparation publicly and continuously to that same Heart for all the insults he has received and continues to receive.

Art. 2. This Order is under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Brothers and Sisters will have a great devotion toward her and will endeavor, by the exercise of the virtues that made her worthy to be the Mother of the Savior, to obtain the sure help of this powerful refuge of sinners.

¹¹⁰⁹ We share much of the resistance that is experienced today with all the terminology of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Sacred Hearts, and especially by the relevant iconography, but we believe at the same time that in the symbol of the heart as applied to Christ and to Mary, there is something permanent. Maybe it is possibly too early to expect a serious and thorough review of all this spiritual language, but we believe that in the end the substance will remain, and this for several reasons: First because of the importance of the heart for the person, both for the life of the body and the life of the soul. Second, its importance in world literature and the popular imagination, but as everything in this area, it is subject to distortions and ambiguities. Third, because of the importance that it has in the Bible, Old and New Testaments. We say it, not so much because the Bible, records the importance of the heart in man, but above all by its rightful place in God’s plan, when He says that He intends “to give the man a new heart” (Ez 36.) and when the piercing of the side of Christ is presented by St. John as a highlight of the new Passover of the Lamb (Jn 19: 31-37). Fourth and finally, it represents a symbol that belongs to the spiritual language of the Catholic tradition, since the Fathers and Doctors, which has shown such consistency over the centuries, that it cannot be said to be a passing fashion.

If the first resistance was not experienced in the first community of the Congregation, we believe that it was difficult to overcome the second, as we suspect from the first formulations of the vows, and the documents previous to the Advent 1800. If the problem was overcome within the Congregation due to the charismatic messages of Mother Aymer, it reappeared with new strength in the Roman Curia during the negotiations for approbation. (1814-1817). Cardinal Scotti did not like the idea of putting Jesus and Mary on the same level (“pareggio”). In order to prevent possible errors, he made them add “as approved by the Holy Apostolic See” when the Constitutions referred to the purpose being “to propagate devotion to the Sacred Hearts.”¹¹¹⁰

For this reason, we believe it would be good to remember the reasons that caused the first brothers/sisters to overcome this resistance and to adopt the expression “Sacred Hearts” as the title for the Congregation and consequently to use it in the vow formula.

The Heart of Jesus

The appeal to God as master of history, which arose spontaneously from the faith of the Founder and his first disciples, had particular significance in the circumstances of the Terror and the persecution and above all it provided considerable strength, as it inspired heroic activity.

This “appeal” came from an intuition of faith, not just of God’s providential power, his mysterious wisdom and his justice in governing human history, but especially his kindness and his love. So much that when they talk about God, using the French expression: “Bon Dieu” they put so much emphasis on “bon”, that it is more accurately translated into English by “God of Goodness.”

We have also noted how the concept of God was “Christomorphic.” The term “le bon Dieu” comes to refer to Jesus Christ. However the relationship that the Founder and his first disciples had with God in these difficult times was an experience of being loved in an extraordinary way and of being chosen by God. In the midst of the upheaval of the revolution, God fixed his eyes on them and having already called them in baptism, now called them in the midst of disaster to create a new religious family at the very time that all the existing communities had been swept away by the winds of history. Having called them with such predilection, he led them “by the hand,” accomplishing one wonder after another for them.

¹¹¹⁰ On this point, see A. Hulselmans, *Historical Study of the Preliminary Chapter of the Rule of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts*, art. VI.

This experience of God's love created a very personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They felt especially loved by Him. A strong and intimate friendship was born, which led them to read the Gospel as a manifestation of the interiority of Jesus, as a word coming from his heart, as the very person of Jesus living and functioning in the daily life of the community and each member. He seemed so active, that his presence was felt and he was seen as the "center" of the community and of the church. It was as if the interior of Jesus was opened to welcome them so that they could dwell there. He was a spiritual refuge for the weak and the little ones and for those who felt forgotten in the midst of the upheaval of the revolution. The heart of Christ gathers them, consoles them, gives them courage and hope and, at the level of faith, gives a sense of security that seemed impossible. All this is synthesized for them in the symbol of the heart. There are no texts that give evidence of a cult of "the heart of flesh" as such.¹¹¹¹

The Heart of Mary

We are convinced that in the faith of the community, there was never a danger of putting the heart of Mary on the same level as the heart of Jesus, "le coeur du bon Dieu." In an effort to appropriate "the sentiments of Christ Jesus", Mary was for them the one who goes ahead. The Church's faith was born in her heart, so that we can repeat with Saint Elizabeth: "happy are you, because you have believed." She was the first who believed in the love God has for us, "in Christ." The Eudist and Montfortian traditions emphasized that oneness between the heart of Mary and the heart of her Son, saying they had but "one heart."

The community noted that deep inner harmony between Jesus and Mary and discovered in it an important element in God's salvific design. In the Gospel, Mary is not only "with Jesus" nor does she just give birth to him. Mary has a mission, which will then be extended in some way to the Church: to give Jesus. She is the one who presented him to the shepherds and the Magi, the one who tells the servants at Cana, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2.5) and sees that "His disciples believe in Him." She remained at the foot of the cross with John and she was with the frightened apostles until the Holy Spirit came. Having given birth to the Christ, she also gave birth to his mystical body. Father Coudrin and his disciples believed that the only way one can really encounter Jesus is with Mary and through Mary. The only way to enter within Jesus, to have "a heart like his" was to go through Mary, with the heart of Mary.

1111 Cf. Part IV, Chapter III, n.5.

2. BP. Prayer to the most Pure Heart of Mary.

Oh Mary! Oh, Sacred Heart of Mary, the most generous and the most compassionate of all hearts after that of Jesus; look upon us, your little plants, at this moment and following the example of one of your dearest and most loving children (Saint Bernard) we humbly offer you an act of atonement

Pardon Oh Mary, a thousand times pardon, for all the excesses of violence and anger committed by France in recent times. Forgive all the horrors carried out against you in all places on earth and in the course of many centuries.

Alas, many shrines and temples erected in your honor, oh Mary! have been demolished, your miraculous images destroyed, mutilated, or desecrated by hatred for your immaculate maternity! Innumerable virgins hidden in the solitude of the cloister and, whose queen you are, have been expelled! These same, who formed your court in this land, have been sacrificed. Have they not been like you, O Mary, the refuse and the opprobrium of your worst enemies? Have not many pious associations erected in your honor, been ravaged by the impure and scorching breath of the followers of Satan?

Oh Mary! Oh sorrowful Heart of Mary! After so many crimes committed against you, after so many abominations, after the almost total desertion of so many Catholics, a few faithful souls still remain faithful to you. They are not many yet, O Mother of Sorrows! For these last ten years, are there not many who with a heart pierced by the same dart that pierced yours on Calvary feel themselves afflicted like you? Are there not others, who forgetting their own interests, think only of your outraged glory?

Therefore, here we are humbly today, to pay you tribute with an act of atonement for our own ingratitude and for the ingratitude of the entire universe. We do not think of ourselves or our personal needs. We see that your glory is extinguished, and we therefore want to make it shine again. To obtain this, we urge the angels and saints to join us. With all the fervor of our hearts we ask the righteous not to have any other wish than to devote themselves to you. Speechless before you, we consecrate to you even those children that are your own in spite of themselves, those who are your most cruel enemies.

Take revenge, O Mary, in a way worthy of you and your greatness, showing the wounds of your bleeding Heart, and receive us all with the sword in hand to sacrifice us with yourself for the greater glory of your divine Son.

Through your intercession, good and tender Mary, through your Immaculate Heart, we hope to arrive at the adorable Heart of your Divine Son Jesus. Prepare the way for us, or still better, place us in it yourself, so we might find a home there during our life and a place of rest for all eternity. Amen.

3. Counsels of the Good Father on Adoration.

Cf. Infra. Chapter V: PERPETUAL ADORATION IN THE FAITH OF THE COMMUNITY. 3. Our choice of texts on Adoration (Doc. 23).

4. Profession as Consecration to the Sacred Hearts

“Consecration” is a word difficult to use and prone to misunderstandings, because of the variety of ways in which it is applied, sometimes not expressing clearly the meaning intended.

The Latin word that it translates indicates the act of setting aside a thing or a person for worship. In the Church’s liturgy, beside the Eucharistic Consecration, the word is reserved for solemn blessings celebrated by a bishop, such as the ordination of a bishop, the blessing of virgins, churches or sacred vessels.

In a language that we could call “devotional” the word is applied to a “solemn proclamation of belonging to God or an act of surrender to Jesus or to Mary.” These are usually made in an official manner by the authorities of the ecclesial community or civil society on behalf of all those present or even absent. Today it is realized that many times the ritual does not correspond to the real attitude of the members of the community or society, and that it does not have the spiritual affect that the good intentions aimed at. So people prefer not to do it.

In religious language, it has a different meaning. The Second Vatican Council, in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium No. 44*, said: “The faithful of Christ bind themselves to the three aforesaid counsels either by vows, or by other sacred bonds, which are like vows in their purpose. By such a bond, a person is totally dedicated to God, loved beyond all things. In this way, that person is ordained to the honor and service of God under a new and special title.” It is in this sense that the founder said that profession is a “consecration to the Sacred Hearts.”

Thus, the word “consecration,” is equivalent to a “total dedication of the person to the Sacred Hearts and their service”: “in whose service I will live and die.” The consecration is to God in Christ through the hands of Mary. The expression “Sacred Hearts” adds to this commitment to Jesus through Mary, a connotation of their interiority, their deepest intentions and of the design of God that they incarnate and the love of God that they reveal and communicate.

The professed is the one who “makes” this consecration. He is at once consecrated and consecrator. He “consecrates himself”, but it is the Church through the community and its superior that presides at the ceremony. After the “Te Deum” the superior declares him, “consecrated to the most Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ and the most Holy Heart of Mary” in such a way that his “consecration” is recognized officially and formally accepted by the community, and through it, by the Church.

1. BP, – BM. *Petition to the Holy Father*, 25.10.1814.

This Congregation is consecrated to the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. It recognizes as its patron Saint Joseph and it has adopted the Rule of Saint Benedict with Constitutions proper to the institute.

2. BP, 519. *Mémoire about the title of “Zealots”*, 06.12.1816.

The consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary is the foundation of our Institute. We would really like to preserve a remembrance of that Consecration in the very name of our religious Society. (ANN., 1963, p. 223).

This “consecration” is undoubtedly an act of “devotion” to the Sacred Hearts in the fullest sense of a “definitive surrender” to the person of Jesus through Mary. That “consecration” implies a commitment to what the community calls the “Work of God,” in which the Sacred Hearts are the main actors. That “work” takes place on two different levels: a) the ongoing building of the community, which is a realization on a smaller level of the Church, and b) with the community, which is apostolic, in the work of the Redemption through love in the Church and in the world.

The roots of this “consecration” must be sought in the effort toward perfection that we discussed in the first article of this chapter, and in the subsequent victory of love within the person, which opens the way to real self-dominance in everyday life.

It is in this sense that we must understand that the Consecration to the Sacred Hearts is the “foundation” of the Congregation, to use the expression of Father Coudrin. It is the same as when we say that profession, by binding each person to the common vocation, not only creates a juridical bond with the community as institution but, and especially, also becomes the primary basis for “communion” within in the community an on the level of the practical movement toward the perfection of charity, which is the Christian perfection.

3. BP, 805. To Father Dumonteil (later Father Simeon), 27.12.1822.

I am of the opinion, Sir and dear Brother, that if you feel you have a vocation to our holy state, M. Courbon’s letter must not prevent you from entering the novitiate. The Congregation, having been approved by the Holy See, you can in conscience do what is better and following the sacred canons, is to do the better. You can really believe well that we would never have had Saints Bernard, Dominic, Francis Xavier, if they had to wait for the consent of the ordinaries.

Consider the good that will come from your religious consecration. You will assure your sanctification. You will procure the salvation of a great number of souls. Other will do the work that you could do and the number of those who follow the evangelical counsels is so small, especially among priests, that no one will replace you among the poor of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, I can say to you confidently, “Be diligent in these matters, be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to everyone.” (1 Tim 4:15).

Goodbye my dear friend. May Our Lord give you the strength and courage to leave all, so as to once more find all in his divine Heart. Your affectionate servant:

Father Coudrin, Superior General.

(“the one who had also reclined upon his chest...” Jn 21:20)

4. BP. Mémoire about the Ceremonial of the Congregation.

We have selected these prayers, with a preference for those that favor the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most Sweet Heart of Mary ... adding only what suggests that we are especially and perpetually devoted to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most Holy Heart of Mary (ANN., 1963, p. 278).

5. Profession as Sacrifice

It is relatively frequent in the writings of the Founder and generally in those of the community at his time to call profession a “sacrifice.” During the time in hiding, it was unwise to write the word “profession” in letters. For example, Father Coudrin writes in 1806 of the future Father Hippolyte Launay that “he is ready to make his sacrifice,” thus indicating that he is prepared to make his perpetual vows.¹¹¹²

This lets us see better how the three vows were seen as linked by an identical desire, often also referred to as “immolation”, which is another sacrificial term.

In the Ritual of the Profession, which according to the law of the time was perpetual made after eighteen months of novitiate, the ceremony of the funeral pall, in use since 1801, was the expression of death and immolation. Speaking of Mother Aymer’s paralysis, the Founder wrote in November 1830: “... I was hoping that the sacrifice of the funeral pall of so many victims would have triumphed over the paralysis...”¹¹¹³

That ceremony was a rite of death and resurrection, which evoked the death of “old man” and resurrection in Christ in baptism, once again accepted by the newly professed. “Almighty and everlasting God,” read the prayer sung by the Superior while the professed lay prostrate, “who commands us that dead to the world we live for Christ, guide your servant by the path of eternal salvation ... etc.”¹¹¹⁴

Indeed, as we saw in the Rule of the Good Father; for the community the call to perfection came from baptism, from the desire for perfection came the following of Christ and from the following of Christ came the religious life with its requirements of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Mother Aymer, in the passage that we have quoted from her 1800 draft of a rule, not speaking of the ceremony of profession but of the life of the religious, said that it consisted in “...deny(ing) himself and take(ing) up his cross daily” with Jesus Christ, which are literally the words of the Gospel of Luke 9:23.¹¹¹⁵

1. HL, VBP, 90. *Prayer of the Good Father to the Heart of Jesus, 1800-1801.*

1112 BP, 275 *3. See 38 *6; 59 *1-2; 192 *7 (this last text refers to a commitment that, because it is the period at Rue des Olérons, cannot be later than February 1795, the date at which the Association moved to rue du Moulin-a-Vent, so it can not be a religious vow. Perhaps it refers to the vow of Marian servitude of Grignon de Montfort); 1315 *2; 1593 *1. One possible source is the teaching of Father de Saint-Jure: “The religious becomes, by his vows, a victim of praise to God; and to practice them, he has to live in a spirit of victim, following the example of our Lord ...”). And he quotes Heb 9.14 and Eph 5.2 (*L’Homme Religieux*, I, p. 144).

1113 BP, 1598.

1114 Cf. Appendix 12.

1115 Cf. *supra*, Part IV, Chapter IV, n. 3. (text 2).

“Oh Jesus, behold the children of your divine heart, here at your feet confounded by the sight of their sins and the innumerable iniquities that have flooded France and the universe. As unworthy as we are, behold us here as victims. Pierce us with your sword of sacrifice, so that buried in your hidden life, zeal for your divine house might consume us and we might live and suffer with you, who are our center and our life.”

This prayer has been preserved by Hilarion Lucas in his “Life of Father Coudrin” as a footnote to the following paragraph:

“After his vows, the Good Father, (because I’ve already said that I would often call him that) saw himself to be a victim consecrated to the glory of the Lord. This need for immolation and sacrifice was always present in his thoughts. Before going up to the Altar, as also during the Chapter of Faults, he often said a prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, full of the same feelings, convinced by his own experience, that you can find happiness only on the cross. The love of the cross was what he recommended us with most insistence”.

In the Gospel, the acceptance of the cross is seen as a condition of following Christ, and is at the forefront of the consciousness of the founders and their disciples, who had to confront a historical period so full of suffering.

In addition, acceptance of the cross, as we have seen in his sermon on the blessedness of those who suffer, was for Father Coudrin an attitude that was ancient and carefully founded on meditation of Scripture. At no point can it be said that he suffered from an obsession with suffering, a cruel fascination with purposeless suffering. Though, as a contemporary of Chateaubriand, he was immersed in a clearly romantic context. His acceptance of suffering is fruit a clear sighted belief that truly following Christ and giving authentic witness to his love meant accepting and loving the cross, which is an essential proof of validity.¹¹¹⁶

Embracing the cross certainly has a personal aspect of perfection in the following of Christ, of response to his grace, of purification and identification with him. However in the community, the cross and suffering mean following Christ not only suffering like him but accepting the same intention and mission as Christ. As Saint Paul says, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church..." (Col 1:24). As we saw in the prayer to the Heart of Mary, it is as if the end of personal perfection is exceeded and the needs of the Church became part of the reason for suffering. Suffering is then offered for men and in that we find the true glory of God.¹¹¹⁷

Our hedonistic world shivers with horror just thinking of death and suffering, which prepares for death, and refuses to enter into that perspective because to its eyes it amounts to the definitive destruction of the person and to the frustration of his happiness. However, for the Christian, suffering and death is a participation in the suffering of Christ and a prolongation of his physical suffering. As such it is the beginning of resurrection for oneself and for others. For the Christian suffering and death are never synonymous with annihilation and destruction but rather the cost of achieving something. Suffering and

¹¹¹⁶ The cross is a condition of following Christ. (Mt 16.24); Christians must die to the world, (Mt 10, 33-39. For Paul, the cross is the only wisdom (I Cor 15.17); he is crucified with Christ, (Gal 2.19); the old man has died, and is crucified, (Rom 6.6); we need to enter into the sentiments of Christ, obedient unto death (Phil 2, 1-8). That is why the Apostle said: "But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal 6:14). The Epistle to the Hebrews summed it up in the admonition, "So let us let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross..." (Heb 12, 1-2), and Saint Peter, "For whenever anyone bears the pain of unjust suffering because of consciousness of God, that is a grace. But what credit is there if you are patient when beaten for doing wrong? But if you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps." (I Peter 2, 19-21).

¹¹¹⁷ *Prayer to the Heart of Mary*, Part IV, Chapter IV, n. 3 (text 2); BM, 26 (text 4); BP, 131 (text 6).

death are the guarantee of life on a higher level and sure evidence of being particularly loved by God, who treats us as he did his own Son.

2. BP, 135. Gabriel de la Barre, 20.10.1803.

“... I feel strongly that we must always be sacrificed and more and more ready for all the sacrifices that the good God asks or demands of us, whatever kind they might be.

... Three years ago today you made your first sacrifice (the profession of 20.10.1800) and we (Father Coudrin and his disciples), less courageous undoubtedly, only made resolutions to do the do that...”

3. BM, 13. Billet to the Good Father, 1800-1801.

“Nature repressed in its tastes and its tendencies. Repugnance and rebellion sacrificed to duty. Caprice subjected and enslaved by the rule, the senses under constraint and the most austere modesty, the body reduced in servitude and under the yoke of penance, the spirit annihilated and no longer thinking of itself, the will captive and only moved by an outside force. Exact vigilance, sustained regularity, constant fidelity, continual death: that is what a spouse of Jesus Christ undertakes in giving herself to Him.”

In the midst of the great tribulation of the Terror and the Revolution, when the threat of death was an imminent and daily reality, the previous acceptance of sacrifice was a requirement of fidelity, a guarantee of perseverance, and we could even say, of optimism. Only in that way was the menace of death overcome and conquered.

It is remarkable the importance that the acceptance of suffering and death had in the lives of the founders and their first disciples. Father Coudrin would tell his first novices: "When I finally left Maumin's (La Motte), I prostrated myself at the foot of an oak tree that was not far from the house and I offered myself until death. For I had become a priest with the intention of suffering everything, of sacrificing myself for the Good God and of dying in his service, if necessary"¹¹¹⁸ Later, profession will but confirm this sense of his life.

It can be said that something similar happened to Mother Aymer, who offers her life to God for the salvation of the world in her "vow of crucifixion." In her spiritual experience, participation in suffering occupies an important place.

Gabriel de la Barre, speaking of the "Immensité" in 1795, says that its members were happy to live only for Christ "and to hope to have the freedom to shed all their blood, if necessary, drop by drop for Him...and to consume themselves out of love in the immensity of Love."

In this devotion to the Cross, the Founder and his disciples simply realized in their day an ancient aspect of the piety of the city of Poitiers, which preserved the tradition of Saint Radegonde, Queen of France (520-587). A tragic victim of violence, she separated from Clotar II and came to Poitiers. There she founded a monastery that in 569 received a "Lignum crucis" from Emperor Justin II and took the name of "Monastery of the Holy Cross," a name it kept until the Revolution. Shortly after the arrival of the relic Venantius Fortunatus came to Poitiers. From contact with the holy queen he was converted to a fervent Christian life and decided to become a priest. During those years he composed the *Vexilla Regis* and *Pane Lingua*, adopted later by the Church in its liturgy. The illustrious poet died shortly after 600 as bishop of Poitiers. Ruins of his house can still be seen on the street that bears his name, Saint Fortunat.

4. BM, 26. Billet to the Good Father, 1801.

"...I reproached the good God for not giving you enough courage to put up with me and for leaving me without help, without support, not wanting to have recourse to anyone but experiencing such a great abandonment that the bottom seems to be falling out. At that

¹¹¹⁸ HL, Qq.R.I., 64.

moment, Our Lord Jesus Christ showed himself on the cross but without his side pierced. He said to me, 'This how it was for me on the cross.' Then he disappeared. What struck me was that this morning, you said that to me when I went to confession. I could not or I did not dare to tell you what had happened to me. After Holy Communion Our Lord again showed himself to my soul in the same way and it was as if I received in my heart the wound his was lacking. That pain remained with me until evening. It came back from time to time so strongly that I was close to becoming sick."

5. BM, 36. Billet to the Good Father, 1801.

During the "Salve" the good God open his heart to us. He said, "Come, my children, come my friends, come plunge yourself into my heart, come submerge yourselves in love and sorrow." The Blessed Virgin was not praying as ordinarily. She was joyful and seemed to show us to her Son. The angels were gathered attentively around her. I fell down in adoration... When I came back, the good God again opened his heart to me. He told me that ...I would have peace but always suffering... that He was supporting my soul in its weakness.

Our Founders were not the only example of the ancient devotion. Father Coudrin's friend, Saint Andre Fournet, founded a Congregation known as the "Daughters of the Cross."

Although we do not have explicit references in the documents, at least we have not found them as of yet, there is no doubt about the existence of these spiritual roots. But the Founders always felt that the cross has its roots deep in the heart of Christ, who "For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2). And so, Father Coudrin, referring to the choice made in profession with its consequences for life would say, "My poor children will always be children of the cross, in order to belong perfectly to the Heart of our Good Master,"¹¹¹⁹

The vows in themselves, then, have the meaning of sacrifice. But there is a sentence at the end of the formula, which somehow makes more explicit that willingness "in whose service (i.e. the service of the Sacred Hearts) I wish to live and die." On the one hand it is like the knife of sacrifice and on the other, it is like the breaking of chains that opens the way to a new kind of freedom. Our life does not happen all at once but moment by moment. It extends through time and the only way to really surrender it, is to surrender it "forever."

6. BP, 131* 1. To Gabriel de la Barre, 14.10.1803.

I hope that your courage, and that of all the children whom my heart loves, will make you offer and accept everything (the suffering caused by the departure of the Good Mother to Mende) uniting to these different sacrifices that which our Good Master was obliged to make so as to give us new life in his Father.

7. BP, 141. To the Brothers and Sisters in Poitiers, 1803.

My dear friends, we received your letter where you describe in detail the suffering and death of our blessed Abre, since she remained in purgatory only 24 hours and appeared to our beloved PP to thank her for having "bleached" her (having given her the white habit) and she promised her assistance..

My poor children will, therefore, always be children of the cross, in order to belong perfectly to the heart of our good Master!

So all of you be good, my dear friends. May nothing ever separate you from the love of Jesus Christ. More than ever, we must belong to God, more than ever, we must only live for him.

8. BP, 192. To Miss Helene de la Barre - Rue des Hautes-Treilles, No. 221. Cf. Appendix 4.

9. BP, 272. To Father Hyppolite Launay, 10.06.1806.

... So, my dear child, love this holy state, even if you find contradictions in it. They are everywhere and the divine Heart reserves for his friends, always and everywhere, a

1119 BP, 142.

special share in in the bitterness of his chalice. Strengthen poor Ursule {Roulleau, Superior of Cahors), encourage all your children and tell them insistently that their poor father thinks of them, so that they be holy in heart, body and spirit.

10. BP, 1008. To Sister Anastasie Chesne, Troyes, 13.01.1825.

Have courage, my dear daughter, and you will continue to do well...We are so happy to share in the cross of our divine Master. It is at his feet and in the divine Heart of Jesus that I am always, my poor child, your very loving father.

Father Alexander said that if the sacrifice is great, God is not surpassed in generosity. The community knew the teachings of the Fathers, especially of St. Bernard, who says that profession is like a second baptism. Even in the early days at different times Mother Aymer saw a small book in heaven with the names of the professed and everyone thought they were “inscribed in heaven.”¹¹²⁰

The Founder, writing in 1827, to Sr. Adélaïde Prieur-Chauveau, makes this reflection: “The Good God, who made use of you when you were so young to do his work, will know well how to reward you one day for all your sacrifices...nothing will be lost, my dear child. The book of life is there to encourage the poor adorers of the divine Heart.”¹¹²¹

11. BP, 2302. To Sister Justine Charret, Sees, 20.03.1828.

I ask you my dear daughter, Justine, and all the Sisters of Sees, not to be too saddened by the departure of M. Antonin, we are all children of the suffering Heart of our good Master, so it is just that we have a small share (in his sufferings).

12. Father Alexandre Sorieul. Conferences ... 1845.

By profession a man offers to God the greatest sacrifice that he can possibly offer but God is not surpassed in generosity and he gives him, in this life, one hundred times what he gave.

1. *By his profession, the religious is grounded in the freedom of the children of God, on other words freed from all the passions, from everything that is an obstacle to the service of God....*
2. *The religious has the advantage of giving God all that can be given. Because, what things could he have, either interiorly or exteriorly that are not sacrificed? By poverty, he sacrifices all external goods; by chastity; his whole body and everything that can flatter it; by obedience, his entire being, his will, which is the greatest sacrifice. ... This is the vow that brings spiritual death to the soul. It is what our Lord meant when he said: “He who does not hate his soul, will lose it.” (Luke 14.26). It is a great grace that God gives to religious. He gives them the strength to make this sacrifice, because without a very special grace, it is impossible for a man to do it. ...*
3. *The religious, by profession, moves away from sin as far as possible, which is a great grace of God. Indeed, the religious counters the three concupiscences with the three vows of religion ...*
4. *The religious accepts the joyful need, and the most absolute, so as to serve God all his life, to practice faith, hope and charity.*

He should therefore place himself in dispositions worthy of such a great act when he prepares himself to make his vows... These dispositions can be gained by the exercise of the tree theological virtues practiced by the religious. Charity, especially, is the one to stir within him. It is therefore good to take Jesus Christ as model. According to some authors, our Lord himself made the vows, in order to elevate all his actions to the virtue of religion. They base themselves on the words of the Psalm, “Vota mea reddam” (my vows I will fulfill) (Psalm 21:26) He made his vows when he said “Holocaustomata...non tibi

1120 PAC, 3364. *Infra* (text 12); BM, 22, 28, 34.

1121 BP, 1211.

placuerunt, tunc dixi: ecce venio.” (Holocausts... you took no delight in. Then I said... I come to do your will.) (Heb 10:6-7)

We must take Jesus Christ as our model. “Haec sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Iesu...factus oboediens usque ad mortem...crucis.” (Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus... becoming obedient to death...on a cross.) (Phil 2:5,8) “Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde.” (Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart) (Mt 11:29).

The more conformed the religious is to Jesus Christ, the better disposed he will be. (PAC, 3364, pp. 152).

It is interesting to note how in Father Coudrin's ordinary correspondence with his religious, brothers and sisters, he often reveals a deep joy of belonging "forever" to the community, of being "entirely consecrated" (BP, 96): "My heart, my cares and my vigils are dedicated to you forever, during my life and beyond this life, I mean in the true life, where I will never forget you, if God grants me his mercy" (BP, 113). "Tell my friends that I will not forget anybody, that all of my poor being is given to them both in life and in death."

It is the joy of the servant, who is able to serve a good Lord and is convinced that he is spending his life in the most noble of undertakings: the work of God. That joy was widely shared in the community and was the secret of the daily self-denial of the brothers and sisters.

6. The Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience

We found no systematic exposition of the vows in general earlier than the novitiate conferences of Father Alexandre, who follows quite faithfully Father Saint-Jure, in his book *L'Homme Religieux*, an excellent treatise on the religious life.

What we find in the drafts of the rule, in the Constitutions themselves and in petitions addressed to ecclesiastical authorities are formulations in which the canonical aspect of the vows is more to the fore. The inspiration of faith that moved the community is always taken for granted.

We find the thoughts of the community on this aspect very diffused in the correspondence of the Founders and their disciples. We will try to bring that together in what follows.

Although the conferences of Father Alexandre are relatively late (from 1824) it seems very plausible that the use of Father St. Jure's book is much older, even going back to the very early years, because it is likely that the Founder himself had used it in the novitiate at Picpus. If so, his conferences fill a vacuum as they inform us of what is taken for granted in the documents.¹¹²²

Beyond what we have already advanced on the meaning of the profession of vows as "consecration" and "sacrifice," we have to remember the two motives that lead the religious to service, to give himself to the "work of God." The first is the following of Christ and the second is the requirement of the love of God.

¹¹²² In our Library in Rome I found a collection of Father Saint-Jure. *L'Homme Religieux* was published in Paris (Perisse, Frères), in 1857, but Father Alexandre quotes and follows him much earlier, using an edition published before the Revolution.

So as not to take too much time on simply general considerations, we will now try to summarize what we can say on each of the vows.

The Vow of Poverty

“(Jesus) was born poor, we want to live poor.” And so the Founder expresses the first reason for the community’s poverty: the example of Christ. It is curious that he does not cite the words of the Master to the young man who wanted to be perfect, in Matthew 19:21: “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to (the) poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” It was as if the mysterious design of God that caused Jesus to be born among the poor was much more decisive for him. It was probably a consequence of the primacy of the heart of Christ and his sentiments in the spiritual outlook of the community.¹¹²³

A second motivation for the poverty of the community was real confidence in the love of the heart of Christ-Providence, which was completely consistent with the Sermon on the Mount, “...Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness and all these things will be given you besides” (Mt 6:32-33). This is certainly the most frequent motivation mentioned in the writings of that generation.

Especially the Founder, who saw the hand of Providence in the life of the community even to the point of multiplying food miraculously, observed, “This comforts me in the belief that we are his children.” During the time of the Ordinances, when at the stroke of a pen all the schools were closed (1828-1829) and the community’s finances and even recruitment were shaky, Father Coudrin recalled that we must “seek the reign of God and his justice and everything else will be given.” Mother Aymer insisted on the same point.¹¹²⁴

1. Early Rule of BP, 1797 (cf. Appendix IV part b).

2. GB. Project of Rule, 1798 (?)

Introduction

The reason that the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus exists is charity in all its aspects, the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the reparation of the outrages that Jesus Christ receives and will receive there. Charity toward neighbor by almsgiving and instruction will be the basis of their works and the spirit of immolation will inspire all.

¹¹²³ Fr. Alexandre Sorieul ss.cc., *to the Novices*.

¹¹²⁴ Good Father 138*5; BP, 1456, *Providence and Poverty*: BP, 64*6; 140*3; 144*2; 172 ps. 6, 291*1; 339*4; 368*1; 449*6; 526*4, and so on.

Simplicity and humility will be the fundamental virtues of the Society. Profound detachment from all things, especially from one's will, made possible by the gentle dominion of God's love in the soul, will be the way that leads to these virtues. Each action of the members, guided by the motivations that we have just spoken about, should form a link in the chain that binds them together and at the same time leads them to do the holy will of God. The voice of obedience will be the only one they will need to know their destination and to arrive at it.

This obedience must be in the heart, and must enter into action only because it is first in the heart. We will take as our model in this the love that led Jesus Christ to be obedient to death on the cross. Indifferent to everything, without any other purpose than procuring the greater glory of God, and after renouncing in a spirit of immolation, abandonment and obedience the desire to judge for oneself the means to achieve it, each member of the Society, under the authority of the Church and her Superiors, will conform themselves to the Rule and the following Constitutions:...

(Second Series) Art. 30: *There shall be no silver objects in the house, except those for the Church. The Sisters will eat from clay dishes, use cutlery of clay or tin. They will use the most ordinary tablecloths. Normally in the house there will be only what is strictly necessary. Any furniture that can be dispensed with, even of little value, will be given to the poor.*

Art. 31: *The sisters, under no circumstances, will receive any gifts, but only for the Church or the poor, unless they themselves are in extreme poverty.*

Particularly rich on this point is the testimony of Sister Gabriel de la Barre, who apparently had a special sensitivity in all matters relating to poverty. Since her first draft of the Rule of 1798, she desired that provision would not be made for more than a year so that the main resource is Providence. She also recalls that the danger of greed exists also for religious and implies that it was the cause of the collapse of more than one religious society before the Revolution.¹¹²⁵

Art. 32: *Whatever may be the income of the Society, the sisters will find their greatest resource and hope in the care of Providence. They will make provisions only for one year. They will never keep funds for the following year. What is left over from their income will always be used for the relief of the poor or for works useful to the Church. They will remember that it is possible to practice poverty in appearance without merit, when one is too concerned with means that one never lacks what is necessary and it is easy to sin by avarice, even though one has nothing of one's own, when one is too concerned with the worldly goods of the Society of which one is a member. May this abuse, which has caused the decadence of more than one religious community, never be present in that of the Sacred Heart! No care is too excessive to prevent it.*

Art. 33: *Care should be taken to keep the house as clean as possible.*

Art. 34: *The sisters will take particular care of the Church and all things necessary for the adornment of the altar and the exercise of worship. It is to be desired that the church consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus be, if not the most beautiful, at least the most respectable and best decorated.*

3. BP, 22a. To the Bishop of Poitiers in Switzerland, 1797 (?)

But this society, founded on obedience and governed by legitimate authority, nevertheless lacks the seal of your approval...

4. BP, 25. Appeal to the Vicars of Poitiers, May 1801.

... Besides those obligations, each member of the society has their own duties to fulfill, which are determined by obedience and which are in accord with the purpose they have chosen. ... (ANN., 1963 p. 184)

5. BP, 144 *2. To Sister of Gabriel Barre, 05.12.1803.

We have great need that divine Providence helps us. Here we have 57 people on our shoulders and we have almost no money. Consider our predicament if we have to take a loan at fifty percent!

6. BP, 172.ps.6. To Sister Ludovine de la Marsoniere, May 1804.

He (the Founder) has to go through the same as all parents (founders of orders), who had many children on their shoulders and no resources other than divine Providence, the innocence of their conduct and their strong desire to be firm and steadfast in doing good, until the very end which is known only to God.

7. BP, 292 * 1. To Mr. Fillatreau, former pastor of Saint-Ustre, 1806.

It is true that the undertakings that Divine Providence has entrusted me with are considerable: eight houses in France where there are more than two hundred persons is a big burden. But God is so good that until now we lack nothing.

1125 GB, Regulations (t. 2), especially art. 30-32.

Here it must be remembered that the community's poverty was not purely "spiritual" or theoretical nor exclusively canonical. Poverty was real and lived, especially in the time when the community was clandestine, when their poverty was almost misery, being frequently without what was really necessary.¹¹²⁶

The constant concern of the Founders appears everywhere in their correspondence and our chroniclers relate and describe in detail the real picture of everyday life.

8. BP, 339 * 4. To Father Isidore David, 22.01.1808.

Please receive the reimbursement from the income of Mme. Lamirault (Laval) and take good care of the money, because here I have to feed 66 people, and there are many small sums being drawn from my account in the different places where I have business. Providence really has a very special place in money box. I must really give thanks to the Lord for all he does for me.

9. BP, 533 * 22. Circular of 14.04.1817.

We must honor particularly the sweet Heart of Mary ... She deserved this great favor (the Divine Motherhood), first of all by total fidelity to the graces of God, then by the practice of three virtues in an eminent degree at the moment when the angel came to announce this great news. The first is her love of virginity. The second is her humility; the third is her perfect abandonment to the will of God out of pure love for him...

10. BP, 908 * 2. To Sister Roseline, 26.01.1824.

... I good heartedly ask you that you obey to the letter, according to the will of your superiors, and that you continue to be one of the five wise virgins, whose lamp is not extinguished at the wedding of the Spouse.

11. BP, 972 * 2. To Sister Gabriel de la Barre, 25.07.1824.

We live in a time when any kind of constraint is found revolting and no one wants to obey God...What can we expect from being subordinate, we who are so far from what we should be!...

12. BP, 981. Circular Closing of the Chapter, 20.09.1824.

... We recommend especially that feeling of obedience, which alone makes the true religious, that spirit of poverty and detachment, which readies the soul for all kinds of sacrifice, that humility, which puts away all complaint... (ANN., 1960, p.208).

13. BP, 1104 * 4-5. Circular promulgating the Constitutions, 11.02.1826.

Our brothers and sisters who have preceded us to a better life ... They have edified you by their virtue, by their regularity, by their obedience, by their spirit of detachment and sacrifice and we have the sweet confidence that their death was precious in the eyes of the Lord. Make every effort to imitate them. The same crown awaits you...

You know ... that the Rule of St. Benedict is the foundation of ours ... It is there that you will learn to love and to practice that holy virtue of obedience, which must be such that the voice of the Superior, who commands, and the act of the disciple, who carries out his orders, are as joined together at the very same moment (RSB.V) ... submission of mind and heart, founded on trust in God, which makes the religious, relying on divine assistance, obey from a feeling of love and finds nothing impossible in obedience (RSB. LXVIII) (ANN., 1960, P.224).

¹¹²⁶ GB, Regulations (t. 17).

A third reason for the adoption of poverty, which appears with some frequency in the documentation, is involved with the community's apostolic zeal. The community lives poorly in order to have greater means of serving the faithful, especially through the formation of the clergy, the education of the poor and diocesan missions.¹¹²⁷

A fourth reason is the "community of goods," i.e. nobody has anything of his own and everything is held in common. The fact of not having legal recognition meant that it was impossible for the community to civilly register ownership or administration of property. In terms of the law, the community did not exist, not only under the revolution and then Napoleon but during the whole period being studied. That is why at a juridical level each religious kept the goods he had on entering the Congregation or those he inherited after. In fact, these goods were made available to the Founders who used them for the common good of all without distinction of houses or brothers or sisters. The most significant donations came from two or three sisters with large fortunes, who gave them up entirely, following the example of the Foundress herself, who was one of them.¹¹²⁸

The community of goods was a sign of the unity of spirit and a guarantee of fraternity that was real, not only apparent. That is why they wanted all the houses to have a similar lifestyle, and insisted that the Superior Generals did not intend for themselves or for their house anything that would be exceptional. This was especially so at the beginning. There was one article of the Constitutions, which has its origin in a communication from Mother Aymer, "when you see one house, you have seen them all."¹¹²⁹

The fifth motive for poverty is love for the poor, the desire to "be like them," to consider themselves among "the poor of Jesus Christ," as the Father Coudrin said to Father Dumonteil, a priest of the diocese of Lyon in the letter we already cited and in order to help them and proclaim the Word to them.¹¹³⁰

Finally there is a sixth reason, which is to enable the community to remain independent in relationship to those in power. It is important for them "not to owe anything to anyone." They wanted this without becoming "mendicants," because the community always wanted to live from its work or the possessions of its members, without being a burden on anybody. This option resulted in a particularly hard life, because most of the members were poor and because most of the services to which the community committed its efforts and resources were free.¹¹³¹

1127 GB, Regulations art. 32 (t. 2).

1128 GB, Mem. II, 133-134 and 313.

1129 Constitutions of 1825, Cap. Article VII. 17-18 - BM, 41.

1130 BP, 805, cf. (text 3).

1131 GB, Mem. II, 196; HL, Mem. 612. Cf Part II: *East Oceania Missions: Preparing the 1st trip.*

14. BP, 1241 * 2. To Sister Tomaide (Vigroux) at Saint Maure, 13.04.1827.

Tell the sisters that I recommend especially love of the cross and then obedience will cost them nothing.

15. BP, 1341. To the Sisters of Le Mans, 07.03.1828.

The good God, who allows Father Robert (Gibrat) to be replaced by another Superior of your house, will certainly recompense the loss you experience. Anyway, you know that we all have to submit to His holy will. It is manifested now, by your Superior General. You all must love the plan of divine Providence and not murmur. I consider those who would offend the good God on this occasion, to be unworthy of being called daughters of the divine Heart....

16. BP, 1732 * 3. To Father Benigne MacCahill, 28.09.1832.

... My dear Benigne, remember always that you are a child of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who was obedient unto death, and death on the cross. ...

17. GB. Unpublished Mémoires, 1824.

99. The life that was lived then, (at Poitiers) was hard, and we were so poor that it would have been very difficult to live better: coarse bread, water, some common vegetables without any dressing were all the food we had, and still we ate only once a day . Breakfast and supper were only a piece of dry bread. We slept in litters or on straw; we were not rich enough as to have beds.

108. Life was as hard in Mende as in Poitiers and the poverty was extreme. The brothers only had what was strictly necessary, they lacked blankets, and one whole winter the brothers, who slept on planks without a mattress, had to cover themselves with pieces of cloth folded several times.

120. Sister Ludovine de la Marsoniere and Brother Antoine (Astier) were saints. Along with being well educated, they had a boundless spirit and devotion for God's work. They put great demands on their health, supplying all the occupations that could not be filled otherwise, watching by night, working all day. They did much because they hoped much. Their perfect submission to the Superior General was also one of the causes of the prosperity of the establishment confided to them. However in Poitiers and in Mende, the greatest poverty reigned everywhere. The city (Cahors) had given the house, but had little concern to furnish it, and for a long time the sisters had no table to eat on and almost no chairs to sit on.

210. The years 1811 and 1812 were notable for all that had to be suffered; the shortage of wheat was felt throughout France, and weighed heavily on the Congregation who did not have any and was overburdened with a large number of children to be educated for little or nothing. Nevertheless, no one was sent away. We had to go into debt, the costs had doubled and even tripled, and our income had not increased. In many houses we had to eat great amounts of ordinary vegetables to save bread. Brothers and sisters denied themselves bread so that the boarders would have enough. Providence, who watched over the Congregation from its birth, did not abandon us in this crisis. Bakers provided significant amounts of bread, accepting to be paid afterwards. Other people lent us money. At all times there was evidence that no one trusts in God in vain.

211. Sister Ludovine found herself one day in Cahors and there was a bill she had to pay. She was did not have even a cent to do it. She placed her empty purse on the altar and commended herself to the Blessed Virgin. On the same day, two boarders that were not expected, presented themselves and paid their whole boarding expenses, giving the exact amount that was needed.

212. Later, Brother Hipolyte (Launay), still in Cahors, and in similar circumstances, said the Mass exposing to God the anguish that had befallen him and the home entrusted to his care. Upon returning to the sacristy, he found someone who gave him the money he needed, and only asked for a few Masses to be said.

18. Constitutions of 1825, Chapter VII.

Concerning the vows and fulfilling them

The brothers of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary make perpetual but simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

(Formula of profession, previously cited)

(Modification of formula if the Superior General is not present.)

The vow of chastity has no need of explanation, but it is very important that the brothers be convinced of the perfection with which this vow is to be observed and how much effort each one must make to achieve angelic purity of spirit and body.

By the vow of obedience, we are obliged to do what the Superior commands and to do nothing that he forbids.

In order to more perfectly fulfill their vow of obedience, the brothers will do nothing, no matter how insignificant it might seem, without asking permission.

By the vow of poverty, the brothers are obliged not to dispose of anything without the consent of the Superior. They may retain the goods they owned at the time they entered the Congregation and they may receive goods by inheritance or gift, but they cannot receive the income, or sell or dispose of them at will, except with the express permission of the Superior General.

To observe their vow of poverty, the professed brothers cannot give, lend or borrow, in other words, dispose of absolutely nothing and in any manner whatsoever, without the permission of the Superior General or the local Superior. They can receive, but with the rigorous and non-dispensable obligation of placing in the hands and at the disposition of the Superior all that they have received.

Right after profession, the professed must immediately place in the "mensa communis" any money that might belong to him. He will do the same the money that comes to him subsequently through inheritance, gift will or in any other way. He will also do the same with the personal effects he has at the time of profession or any that he obtains later.

Brothers will have no ownership of anything. Everything will be common, so that the things which they have, they do not have exclusive use of.

Each brother will have the use of everything that he will need either for his studies or for the work entrusted to him. Brothers will not have the right to take for their own use, what has been given for the use of another Brother.

When brothers leave the house, they may only take the money that is necessary and the effects that are for their personal use and always with permission of the local Superior.

Article 12 applies to the Superiors that leave their charge.

The real estate of a brother is administered by the Superior of the house nearest to the property.

No real estate, belonging to houses or to Brothers, can be sold without written permission from the Superior General. Upcoming General Chapters may regulate and restrict powers of the Superior General.

No purchase or exchange of houses, no construction costing more than 300 Francs can be done without written permission from the Superior General. Except in cases of an unexpected collapse, that should always be communicated within twenty-four hours, giving reasons for the repair.

There will be the same uniformity as far as possible, in the houses of Congregation not in the distribution of spaces but in everything that relates to decoration, vestments, clothing, furniture, in short everything that is necessary in a house, so that anyone who has seen one house, has seen all. Donations given for the church or house are exempted from this rule.

The principal house, to be called "Mother House" because it will be the Superior General's residence, will have nothing more beautiful or elaborate, whether in ornaments, vestments or otherwise, than the other houses. The Superior General must always think that he is only the treasurer and trustee of the income of the Congregation, and has no right to appropriate it for himself or his house.

To practice more perfectly the poverty recommended by our Lord Jesus Christ, it is necessary that each house have no ownership of anything but only the use of what they need.

Professed Brothers who for legitimate reasons, and with the necessary permissions, have to stay some time outside the houses of the Congregation should remember that they have made a vow of poverty. Therefore they will make only necessary expenditures without anything superfluous. They will also remember that they should always give others an example of piety and religious modesty, of recollection and separation from the world. They will especially be vigilant, because they are deprived of the example of their Brothers, and because they are more exposed to the contagion of the world. Immediately after their return, they shall report to the Superior their expenses, and return the money they have left over.

19. Father Alexandre Sorieul. Novitiate Conferences.

Of the perfection of Poverty

One can distinguish five grades of poverty: the first is the act by which all goods and all control are surrendered for the love of God. This first grade is not enough to fulfill the vow of poverty. The second is to place this act of renunciation "in the heart." These two levels are sufficient to fulfill the vow. This second grade is required because Our Lord said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit", so that is by affection. The vow of poverty is not a vow of indigence. A necessary condition is to add to that interior renunciation. It is good to ask God for this renunciation often. We must be able to say: "I love this state of poverty, and I do not want to be attached to anything." God looks at the heart. It is good to occasionally make a review of what we have. If you find an object to which you are attached, it is good to take it and bring it to the Superior. We are not speaking of a natural affection in this love of poverty. You can have natural affection for something, but if you feel that grace dominates, there is nothing to fear.

The other three grades concern the perfection of poverty. The third grade consists in being happy with what is necessary and rejecting the superfluous. There are different classes of superfluous. What is needed to live on bread and water is not normally understood as superfluous. We talk about what the good religious in the community in which you live understand as "necessary". There will always be those who are identified, as the good ones, but they do not make the law. Neither do more lax religious make the law. "Necessary" is generally understood as what is needed in order to live "reasonably" and fulfill one's responsibilities. Thus, whenever it is reasonably possible to do without a thing, it can be considered superfluous. Superfluity touches the essence of the vow, because the word "poverty" has to have a meaning. A poor person is someone who does not have all his comforts and the one who has all his comforts has more than what is necessary. He has what is superfluous. So the theologians say that a religious cannot keep what is superfluous without sinning, even with permission.

One is at the fourth grade of poverty, when after getting to the third, he/she is attached only to what is absolutely necessary. That attachment is not rightly understood if the person is not willing to be detached from even that if the Superior asks. But if a religious understands that even though disposed to obey the Superior, he loves said object, he loves what is necessary. He sins against the perfection of poverty, but not against the essence of poverty. The end of the vows is to detach the human heart from everything that

is not God. The religious therefore has to use the things of the world, as not using them (1 Cor 7:31) and possess, as not possessing in such a way that he is deprived of the change or its effects, etc. And he is to be indifferent. Then the religious will practice poverty of spirit. Our heart is so inclined to be attached to the things of the world, that a little nothing can hold it back.. Being stripped of all, the religious finds that there is an emptiness and that if it not filled by God, he will become attached to everything, even to trifles.

....

The fifth grade consists in willingly be deprived of what is needed. This grade touches the perfection of the vow of poverty. Because in the other grades poverty is not felt, but lacking what is necessary one feels poverty. It may happen that often you might have to suffer, despite having what is necessary, because the food is badly seasoned, because you are awfully dressed ... The imperfect religious will murmur, the other kind will suffer gladly. It is especially in the missions where even the necessary is lacking. Therefore it is a good practice to practice this beforehand, because everything that we can impose on ourselves, will be nothing compared to reality.

....

The Vow of Chastity

There is very little written documentation on the vow of chastity. So in fact we have very little by way of a clear explanation.

The Constitutions of 1825 simply require the resolve to arrive at angelic purity of spirit and body.

Father Alexandre's Conferences, follow the same evasive line: "We shall say nothing about the vow of chastity, everyone knows enough about this issue." In his early Rule the Founder simply said, "Jesus was born of a virgin, his preference for virginity causes us to embrace it." (The Rule was for the "Solitaires").

This sobriety seems excessive, given that the aforementioned book of Father St. Jure, which was most likely consulted, dedicates 291 pages to chastity. It is possible that they preferred to give formation in this very important area through personal spiritual direction but this is just an assumption.

The Vow of Obedience

The vow of obedience was always considered not only "very important" but "the most important of all".

The Founder proclaimed obedience to be the "foundation" of the community. Fr. Alexandre would say that it was "the foundation of the other vows and of the whole religious life." All the duties of religious are "governed" by obedience. Only obedience makes the true religious.¹¹³²

Father Alexandre defined it: as "a promise made to God to obey the men that He has given to us as superiors, in all things provided that they (the things commanded) are not, evil but good and in conformity with the rule and the institute."¹¹³³

But as about poverty, we believe that with obedience, the spirit of the community is best expressed in the reasons ascribed for it.

(Continues: **Father Alexandre Sorieul: Novitiate Conferences**)

The vow of Obedience.

It is the foundation of all the others and the religious, because by this vow one sacrifices his "ego", which is most precious. And this vow is all the more precious, the more what is sacrificed is important.

There are two kinds of obedience: the general kind, which is due to God, one's parents, civic authorities and the other is particular, by which one does not commit oneself to obey

1132 BP, 22bis (t. 3); PAC, 3364, p. 490; BP, 25 (t. 4).

1133 PAC, 3364, p. 163.

some person by force but because one has promised to obey. And so if God would send an angel to a man, he would be obligated to obey him, but not in virtue of the vow.

Degrees of the vow of Obedience: 1. Obedience of body 2. of will 3. of judgment

1. Obedience of the body consists in doing physically the thing commanded. We are obliged to this obedience by our vow, but it is not enough to fulfill it. It is a purely animal (instinctive) act that alone cannot please God.

The first reason is the “sequela Christi” at the level of his Heart, that is, his inner life. Fr. Sorieul reminds us that upon entering the world Jesus already had the secret intention within him of “doing the will” of the Father (Heb 10:6-7). Mother Aymer presents the scene in Gethsemane: “All the brothers and sisters of the Order must seek with all their might the perfection of the Christian and religious virtues, and will strive especially to practice a great obedience in imitation of the Sacred Heart when He accepted the cup of bitterness in the Garden of the Olives, and they will always remember these words of Jesus, ‘but not what I will but what you will’” (Mk 14:36). Father Coudrin recalls Philippians 2, noting that, as children of the Heart of Jesus, we must like Jesus obey to the point of death and death on the cross.¹¹³⁴

A second reason is practical trust and real abandonment into the hands of God’s Providence, which is inspired by the love God has for us. In true obedience we are docile to the designs of God and his will, which are not some tyrannical whim, but the will of the Father that includes what the Founder with Saint Benedict called “the divine assistance.” The weakness of our life is supported by this divine assistance and not only become stronger with this support but also come under the purview of Providence and participates in God’s wisdom.¹¹³⁵

A third reason is the love that as his gift, we have for God, and that drives us to give Him the best we have and are, and to work for his glory, in short, to be available for His service in carrying out His work with complete detachment from personal desires. The Founder said that we must obey “out of charity.” Sister Gabriel de la Barre observes, with much acuteness, that obedience must not be just in acts but in the heart, that is, that it should not be faked or just apparent. And she writes that it is not so difficult if it really comes from the dominion of love over our deeper “ego.”¹¹³⁶

Either way, nothing can take from obedience its sacrificial character. In every sacrifice something dies. In submission to the true will of God, what dies is all that is selfish in our own desire and that always hurts. We have been identified too much with ourselves and nothing saves us from the impression of self-destruction than when we feel like our skin is being stripped off. Only the certainty of faith can guide this sacrifice and only love can provide the strength to do it.

2. Obedience of will is the one that constitutes the merit of the vow. It subjects the body and, even more, the will. I obey, because I want to do an act of virtue pleasing to

1134 PAC, 3364; BM, Rules, (text 2); BP, 1732*3 (text 16).

1135 GB, (text 2); BP, 1104*5 (text 13).

1136 GB, (text 2); BP, 1104*5, (text 13); BP, 1241*2 (text 14).

God, not by fear. I sacrifice my own will. This obedience is necessary to fulfill the vow, and strictly speaking is sufficient. And as it is in the will that sin is present, it is also in the will where there is merit.

3. The obedience of judgment, or blind obedience, is the perfection of obedience. With it, we sacrifice our body, our will and our judgment.

Usually this Obedience is not actually necessary for the fulfillment of the vow, but if it becomes a practice to discuss the orders of the Superior, a failing will be nourished in the depth of the heart and it will be difficult to obey. There will be contempt of the Superior, and then obedience will be impossible. Therefore it is very good to practice this third level of obedience.

A fourth and final reason, perhaps less explicit in all the documentation, but strongly indicated by everyday conduct, and of which Sr. Gabriel de la Barre writes with insight is that obedience creates a chain that binds the members of the community to each other, and gives consistency, not only to their lives but also to their common apostolic action. It is the same as what the Founder wanted to say when he stated that the various duties in the Congregation are governed by obedience.¹¹³⁷

As for the Constitutions of 1825, they are extremely concise on this point, and naturally very juridical. In fact they were never claimed to be a “Rule of Life,” a document transmitting the spirit. Only two articles are directly devoted to the vow of Obedience: 5 and 6 of Chapter VII (which in the Constitutions of the Sisters are numbers 6 and 7), and that the Constitutions of 1840, leaving them intact, put them together in one article, 241.¹¹³⁸

Father Alexandre, in his “Novitiate Conferences”, is the only one who developed the topic a little more as it is reflected in the passages quoted.

(Continues: Fr. Alexandre’s Conferences)

More perfect dispositions in order to make your vows...

Religious life is nothing but a life of sacrifice. Our Lord teaches us that when he says, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself” (Mt 16:24), is to make us understand that the sacrifice of religious life must be a holocaust. The one who keeps something for himself, would be similar to the one who going against what is forbidden by the law, keeps a part of the sacrifice for himself.

The vows of religion are a triple sacrifice ... This willingness for sacrifice is the most perfect disposition for making the vow. It is not necessary that the novice has the habit of surrendering everything, but he should strive to acquire the most sincere disposition to work all their lives to arrive at a total surrender.

It means opening the soul to enter the state of victimhood. After the vows we must live in a state of immolation, as our Lord did on earth. Therefore we must make an effort to live in that state. The more immolated is the will by intention, the more perfect will be its dispositions.

Need for this self-denial, sacrifice ... and we must always prefer God’s will to ours.

God, in creating man, necessarily created him for His glory, according to his means. One sees in the Bible that God, having created each thing, saw that it was good, (Gen 1). He does not say so after creating man. Why? This does not mean that man is not good, but God said that all things were good because they had absolute goodness, that is they had all the qualities that they were capable of having. Man had but relative goodness capable of perfection. If man had persevered in goodness, all his actions would have made him move toward a greater perfection by the use of his free will. But man abused his free will. If it is true to say that in his first state he would have had the need to perfect himself, with much greater reason that is so after sin.

1137 GB, (t. 2) p. 483 y BP, 25 (t. 4).

1138 Cf. Part III, Chapter V.

God created man as upright. In other words, his will was conformed to the will of God in everything. So perfection consists in doing only what God wants, all that he wants and as he wants it.

In this life, man naturally wants nothing but his own satisfaction. As a result he is completely off the right path, for everything tells us that we should prefer God to everything else. As a result the most perfect state will be the one that gives us the most means to reestablish our conduct in the uprightness that we must have. Then it is the religious state in which one sacrifices everything interiorly or exteriorly opposed to the will of God. Because all the obstacles are the three concupiscences that are combated by the three vows. Thus the end of the religious state is to reestablish man in his state of conformity with the will of God. To achieve that, one must sacrifice everything; one must sacrifice that “ego” that always seeks its self will. As a result there is always something to sacrifice and it is this state of sacrifice that constitutes the best disposition. This is the great merit of the religious life. It is for this reason that the saints call it a “continual martyrdom.”

Therefore the work of the religious throughout his life is this renunciation of his self, tainted by sin. There is a love of oneself that is not bad, because our Lord said that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. But the love that we are allowed to have for ourselves is the love that leads us to salvation.

We are like children without the use of reason, who do not want to undergo a painful operation in order to be healed. We do not understand that our good is found in conforming our will to the will of God. Only through faith will we see that. All Christians are bound to such conformity, but more particularly the religious. But our state gives us more security, because the more one moves away from danger, one is less exposed to get lost in it. The religious may fall, but will not break. He will rise again. Frequently the contrary happens in the world.

All the teaching of the Gospel is summed up in the surrendering one's self and in hating one's soul. (Lk 14:26).

St. Paul says to Timothy (2 Tim 3:2) “People will be self-centered and lovers of money, proud...” The apostle enumerates all the vices that come from self-love. From that Saint Thomas concludes that self-love is the source of all vice. Therefore never should we seek ourselves in anything but do everything for God. This is the end toward which we have to aim.

“I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). This is the state toward which we have to strive as religious. If we like it or we do not, it matters little. It is the will of God. Few reach this sublime state, but all should aim at it because we must always aim the highest possible order. This will keep us humble and make us strive to advance.

Our Lord has taught us this doctrine by his example. A Father of the Church represents Christ to us “as totus in nostros usus impensus” (completely consecrated to our needs).

Our Lord had as his aim to do the will of his Father (Heb 10:7; Jn 4:34; Jn 5:30) but He also spent his entire life in a state of immolation to give us an example. Between Jesus Christ and us it must be everything for everything. He gave himself entirely; let us give ourselves without reserve. He wants this sacrifice from us, but He was the first to give us an example. “Coepit Jesus facere et docere.” Jesus began “to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). He acted before he taught. There is no better thing to do than to see Jesus as a model. He has been the victim without reserve; we must follow his example (PAC, 3364 pp. 160-172).



Chapter V

PERPETUAL ADORATION IN THE FAITH OF THE COMMUNITY

We have already spoken of adoration in the third part, when we looked at the “observances” of the community. We saw that it was chronologically the first and we noted what was said of it in the Constitutions.¹¹³⁹

If it were only a religious observance, as characteristic of the congregation as it might have been, we would be exempted from writing a chapter about it in a study of the faith of the religious family founded by Father Coudrin and Mother Aymer. However the reality is that on the one hand adoration was regarded as a ministry of the Church and on the other as the best expression of the vocation itself, the cornerstone, both the fruit and nourishment of apostolic activity and the very breath of the spiritual life. In short, it was a treasure that went beyond the limits of just an external communal observance.

From the beginning it was considered so important that it was included in the very title of the Congregation. That suggests that it was considered a characteristic element. All this obliges us to study it carefully and try to see, as clearly as possible, the role it really had in the faith life of the community.

But before we focus our attention on the documents that the Congregation of that time left us, we have to take a brief glance at the historical context, especially at the period before the Revolution.

1. Adoration in France before the Revolution

Adoration, as “recognition of the highest sovereignty in God and the deepest dependency in us...” (Bossuet) is among the most elementary aspects of all religion. The act of prostrating before someone to kiss their feet or putting the hand to ones lips as a gesture of sending a kiss (from which comes the Latin “ad os”... “adorare”) comes from an oriental custom, not clearly religious, that only explains the origin of the word. But rather than dwell on generalities, we will look at France in the period before the Revolution.¹¹⁴⁰

¹¹³⁹ Cf. Part III, Chapter II.

¹¹⁴⁰ A. Molien. *Adoration du Très-Saint Sacrement*, in the Encyclopédie «Catholicisme» de G. Jacquemet, Letouzey, Paris, 1948.

The spirituality of the seventeenth century had been particularly rich and full of creativity. One aspect of Christianity that received much attention, both intellectually and experientially, was “religion” as everything having to do with relations between humanity and God.¹¹⁴¹

Cardinal de Berulle, of whom we have already spoken and who later was such a determining influence both in his time and after, emphasized the profound meaning of the adoration of Christ and consequently of the Christian and contributed to creating an atmosphere especially sensible to adoration.¹¹⁴²

On the other hand, the protestant dispute, with their denial of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, brought about in the Catholic community a reaffirmation in aspects of worship. There were also rumors of diabolic desecrations, which in spite of having little foundation, made an impression on the popular imagination and the more pious and added the sense of “reparation” to this reaffirmation.

Thus it was that in just a short time, several institutes appeared dedicated to the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.¹¹⁴³

The first one is the “Institute of the Perpetual Adoration”, (Institut de l’Adoration Perpétuelle) founded in 1633, by Zamet, Bishop of Langres, and headed by Mother Angélique Arnauld. In 1634, Authier de Sigsau founded the “Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament”. (Missionnaires du Saint-Sacrement). In 1639, Father Antoine Le Quien OP, founded the “Institute of the Perpetual Adoration” in Marseille. Finally, in 1652 Catherine Bar, (Sister Mechtilde of the Blessed Sacrament), Benedictine) founded the most important institute of this group, the “Daughters of the Blessed Sacrament” (Filles du Saint Sacrement) as victims of expiation in order to make reparation for the desecrations committed against this mystery.

It is this last institute that interests us as it had a great impact on the society of its time, as the following fact shows. On March 24, 1654, the Queen of France, Ann of Austria, came to preside over the establishment of the cloister in the monastery. In the afternoon there was solemn Blessing of the Blessed Sacrament, during which to the surprise of all and as those present watch silently, the Queen rose from her seat of honor, went to the center of the choir, where a column with a burning torch had been placed and on her knees, she pronounced a long act of amendment.¹¹⁴⁴

1141 Henri Bremond. *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France*, Vol III.

L. Cagnet. *La Spiritualité Moderne*, in «Histoire de la Spiritualité Chrétienne» de L. Bouyer-Leclercq, Aubier, 1966.

1142 M. Dupuy, Bérulle. *Une Spiritualité de l’Adoration*. Tournai, Desclée, 1964.

1143 A. Molien, *op.cit.*

1144 H. Bremond, *op. cit.* vol IX, p. 210.

However, our interest arises from the fact that the writings of Sister Mechtilde of the Blessed Sacrament were known by the Father Coudrin's community. Rereading them today, we can easily imagine the attention with which they were read and meditated.

1. Mecthilde du Saint Sacrement. *Le véritable Esprit des Religieuses Adoratrices du Très Saint Sacrement (The True Spirit of the Religious Adorers of the Most Blessed Sacrament).*

When a young girl enters religious life, she may have as her motivation her salvation and eternal happiness as object. However in the institute...one must have no other intention that the most pure desire to give glory to this mystery. For that reason the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament are called its victims... (Ch. I, p. 1).

The reasons for our joy are the lowliness, poverty, contempt, suffering and death of a God. Jesus comes to the world and takes our flesh to be the victim of divine justice and holiness. He comes to sacrifice and lose his life and this is our joy. Oh the depth of it all! Oh abyss full of mysteries! The misery, suffering, deprivation, humiliation of a God, all that is the source of our happiness. ... Let us cease to seek our own interests, to continue our moods, to love vanity and creatures, to always cater to our senses and to rely on ourselves. God becomes a child to teach us littleness, simplicity, docility, disengagement, abandonment, destitution, etc.. Let us take to him, our poverty, our weaknesses, our darkness, our infirmities, our ignorance, our sorrows, our temptations, our sufferings, our abjection. All that will be a pleasure for Him. A child always receives whatever is given to him. God does not expect heavenly gifts from us. He knows that we are in the land of sinners, which only produces thorns and thistles. It is arrogance on our part to want to give Him what we do not have. He comes to take our miseries and bear our infirmities. He says through a Prophet: that we can only give Him that; and He comes to bear them all. Let us remain at his feet, adoring Him with his Blessed Mother, and with her, let us offer our poverty, as long as we give it with all our heart. He will be satisfied with that, and in return he will give us the graces, the virtues, the mercies that are contained in his littleness. Let us not withdraw from Him, let us contemplate Him without ceasing, and when in order to honor Him, we will only be able to look at Him, He will be greatly satisfied and our souls will be strengthened (Ch. X).

The Founder does not mention any of these institutes in his memo on the title of *Perpetual Adorers*, which he requested of the Holy See for his Congregation. The likely reason is that devotion to the Sacred Heart was not practiced in them.

The only institute that he mentions is the “Sisters of Sainte-Aure”, established in Paris, in Neuve-Sainte-Genevieve Street, and founded in 1723, under the protection of Archbishop Christopher de Beaumont, with the title of “Adorers of the Sacred Heart.”¹¹⁴⁵

We have not found writings of that community. We know of them only from what Father Coudrin says in his *Mémoire* and what Father Hammon SJ in his *Histoire de la Dévotion au Sacré Cœur*. In brief, that they had Perpetual Adoration, and they directed it to the Sacred Heart in a spirit of reparation. This foundation, like all the others, disappeared with the revolution. The date and the spirit of the foundation suggest an influence of Paray-le-Monial, which was not present in previous ones.

2. Adoration in the writings of Father Coudrin

We found some one hundred places in the writings of Father Coudrin where the word “adoration” appears. Nine of them use it to express the submission which is due to the designs of Providence, the “will of God,” which certainly is an idea dear to the Founder and to his way of seeing things in which providence plays such a major role.¹¹⁴⁶

In 1809, when everything was becoming so unstable, Father Isidore, Superior of Poitiers, asked for help with personnel for the house. The Founder feels the pain of not being able to promise anything, of only being able to send someone going through a crisis, which would most likely increase the problems. But in the midst of darkness, one thing is certain: “I believe that we should put all this at the feet of the Lord and adore His designs” (BP, 396).

In the circular announcing the death of the Foundress, which wounded him so deeply, he observes: “... The Lord wants to prove us. Let us adore his mighty hand ...”¹¹⁴⁷

2. Act of atonement of Ann of Austria. *Fragments.*

... *My God and my Savior..., worthy Victim of the Almighty ... I adore you with all my heart in your divine Sacrament, with the intention of making reparation for all the disrespect, desecration and impiety that have been committed against You in this formidable Mystery. I prostrate myself before your holy Majesty, to adore You on behalf*

¹¹⁴⁵ ANN., 1963, p. 224: A. Hammon, s.j. *Histoire de la Dévotion au Sacré Cœur*. Paris, Beauchesne, 1939.

¹¹⁴⁶ See also: BP, 192, 216, 1256, 1341, 2246.

¹¹⁴⁷ BP, 1978*2.

of all those who never have paid tribute to You in it and that maybe be so unfortunate as to never surrender to You...

My God, I would like to be able to give you as much glory as all of them together could offer You , if they would faithfully submit to You their homage ... And I wish I could express in my faith, in my love, and in the sacrifice of my heart, all that they would have been able to render You in honor, love, glory until the end of the ages. I wish also, with all the ardor of my soul, to offer you as many blessings and praise, as insults the condemned will vomit against you, throughout the duration of their sufferings.

And in order to sanctify this adoration and make it more pleasing to you, I unite it, Oh my Savior, to all that of your universal Church in heaven and on earth.

Behold the sentiments of my heart, rather than the words of my mouth. I intend to say everything that your spirit will inspire in me, to honor You, your Holy Mother, and your saints; and to say, everything you say yourself, to God your Father, in this glorious and august Sacrament, in which you are His perpetual holocaust, in his blessed bosom where He generates You from all eternity, where You are one with Him by the divine essence ... (Bremond, IX, p.211)

In many of the writings contained in the collection gathered for the beatification process, the word only appears in the title of the Congregation (50 documents), but there are other documents that speak of Eucharistic Adoration as a practice of the community.¹¹⁴⁸ Other than the *Counsels on Adoration*, preserved by Sister Justine Charret and which we will discuss later and that are not in the collection of writings, all these texts speak of Adoration in passing. They say what must be said but without ever stopping to explain its contents. Nevertheless, they are useful because they show us now one and now another aspect of Adoration.

There are about 26 texts in which Father Coudrin speaks of adoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. And so it is clear that this is what he was thinking when he says only “to the Blessed Sacrament” (58 texts) or simply “the Divine Majesty” (5 texts). Almost always when the Founder speaks of Eucharistic Adoration, he mentions “perpetuity.” In other words, he is referring to Adoration as an observance of the community.¹¹⁴⁹

He rarely spoke of Adoration as “personal prayer”, but in a letter to Father Regis Rouchouze, he reveals something of his personal practice, which says much about what the spirit of adoration meant for him. Father Regis, Superior of Mende, devoted much of his effort and activity to the formation of religious and priestly vocations and was greatly appreciated by the Founder. On December 23, 1823, the Founder sends him New Year greetings for 1824: “I pray every day to God to give you the strength and courage needed to form the many young people entrusted to you in virtue more than in knowledge. My dear Regis, tell this to all our brothers. For I love them all and I do not forget even one in my wishes for the New Year. Tell them to think often at Adoration that I am with them and that hardly a midnight goes by without my being transported toward you all and toward all the houses, so that the Divine Heart of our Good Master will guard you all and bless each one of us and grant us his grace and his peace”.¹¹⁵⁰

Father Coudrin uses the word “reparation” very little. We have only found it in ten official documents, to which must be added some other equivalent expressions: “to expiate,” “to make amendment,” “to appease the God’s anger” or “to satisfy his justice”, expressions that are even less frequent.¹¹⁵¹

In addition, the religious experience of the Founder, from very early on was very sensitive to the Eucharistic Mystery from the example of his father, who spent hours

¹¹⁴⁸ See also: BP.

¹¹⁴⁹ Sacred Heart: BP, 205; 216; 474*5; 520*5,16; 528; 533; 537; 897;*3; 1025; 1211; 1604; 2149; 2181; 2242; 2251; 2261; 2280; 2287. Cf. texts 4, 5, 6, 9. Divine Majesty: BP, 532*3; 985*1,5; 988*5; 1053; 2261.

¹¹⁵⁰ BP, 897.

¹¹⁵¹ Reparation: BP, 475*4; 520*5; 532*1,3; 533*14; 739; 798; 985; 988*5;1053; 2261; Cf. texts 4, 6, 9.

before the Blessed Sacrament. Later, he was more deeply affected by adoration, by which he prolonged his daily Mass during his time hiding in the Motte, where he discovered his definitive calling as religious, missionary and founder. For two years during the adventures of the Terror, he carried on his person, night and day, a pyx containing the consecrated bread. The story goes that one night during one of his many journeys in the midst of a forest, he saw a light coming from the pyx. It is a good symbol of what the Eucharist was for him: a sign of love of Emmanuel for us and a light in the darkness of human history that shines as in a dark forest, where you can only find the way of life by accepting Christ's sacrifice in union with him.¹¹⁵²

In time, he became the Superior General of a Congregation having twelve houses in France and in full expansion. Burdened with a campaign of parish missions in l'Aube and the office of Vicar General of the diocese of Troyes, he never neglected Adoration. In January 1824, he wrote to the Superior of Rennes, "You are all with me when I pray to the good God and as I pray a bit while the others sleep, I give you all my blessing in giving it to the sister adoring after midnight" (BP, 903). It is a tradition in the Congregation, which was included in the process of beatification that he never neglected his adoration, despite the demands of his work.¹¹⁵³

3. Our choice of texts on Adoration

We have assembled a series of 24 texts that seem most relevant to the study of the history of adoration in the faith of the community. We have arranged them chronologically in order to situate them in the context of the history studied in the first part.

The first text, does not belong properly to the community, but comes from the "Immensité." In spite of that, we believe that it is useful, especially for two reasons - because it is very likely that even if Father Coudrin did not have the original idea, at least it was his initiative to turn it into a permanent institution whose durability in time was assured, shortly after by the Congregation. The group that formed the initial nucleus of the Congregation, belonged to the "Immensité" at the time and before becoming autonomous lived and developed under its rules. This undoubtedly helped prepare for the birth of the Congregation.¹¹⁵⁴

1152 HL, VBP, 3; Qq.R.I: 60-63; 67-68.

1153 BP, 903, to Sister Hilde Lacoste (13.01.1824) *Articles pour la construction du Procès informatif Ordinaire en la cause de la Béatification du Serviteur de Dieu le R.P. Marie-Joseph Coudrin...* (Louvain, Imprimerie des Pères des Sacrés-Cœurs), N° 245.

1154 III. Part III: Chapter, n.2.

1. Statutes of the *Immensité*, 1795.

(... After giving a picture of the disorder caused by the revolution, as we have copied it, Father, ..., continues...) It was therefore necessary to raise a mighty dam in that devastating flood, it became necessary to appease the justice of the Lord, so justly angry, to repair many outrages made to Jesus Christ in the sacrament of his Love, and to offer to his adorable Heart a perpetual reparation for the perpetual insults that are thrown at Him. These and many others are the reasons that have prompted a number of priests in this city (Poitiers), to meet with a group of pious people to agree on the most appropriate means to remedy all these evils... ..

Why would these same ecclesiastics not try to move the loving Heart of Jesus as to their state and that of their fellow citizens, perpetuating among themselves a devotion so legitimate, established in so many dioceses in the Kingdom, authorized by such a large number of prelates, by various Supreme Pontiffs and confirmed by an uninterrupted series of briefs granted by various Popes one after another; finally a devotion, eagerly welcomed and pursued by great numbers of pious and prominent faithful? Therefore these are the reasons that have caused these priests to decide to come together with various pious individuals to form a society in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, under the authorization of the first pastor that has already approved it and to whose judgment we submit this rule, conceived as follows....

The Society shall have the Perpetual Adoration, because it has been established primarily to render to Jesus Christ the adoration due to Him in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and to repair the outrages committed daily against his Divine Heart.... .. (PAC, 1160).

2. Rule of Gabriel de la Barre, Draft, 1797-98.

The reasons for which the Society of the Sacred Heart (the Solitaires), was instituted are: for charity in all its aspects, perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, repairing the outrages that Jesus Christ has received there and continues to receive and charity practiced toward the neighbor by alms, education. These will be the basis of their works and the spirit of sacrifice will inspire them all.

All these texts allow us to affirm the importance that adoration had in the faith life of the community but, except for the last two, they do not satisfy our curiosity to know the meaning that the Congregation attached to this observance. They are brief accounts on the Congregation as a whole, which cannot give particular attention to any particular point.

3. Rule of Mother Aymer and Br. de Villemort, 1800.

Art. 1. The Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is founded primarily for the perpetual adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and by this means to offer public and continuous reparation to this same Heart, for all the outrages that he has received and receives continuously.

... Art. 3. The purpose of this institution is: 1° To make the Perpetual Adoration...

4. Petition to the Vicars of Poitiers, June 1800.

Knowing your desire for the glory of God and your fatherly goodness toward the flock the Lord has confided to your pastoral care, at this time we dare to ask that you look favorably upon one small part of that very flock and on the feeble efforts we have made to immolate ourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ so as to satisfy the divine justice, as far as it is in our power, for the excesses committed in recent times and to appease the very just punishments with which God has wanted to afflict France.

We came together six years ago, under the patronage of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ and the special protection of the blessed Virgin Mary, to make perpetual adoration of that divine Heart in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and we have always continued doing so since then... (ANN., 1963, p. 175).

4a. Annual resolutions, June 1800.

I consecrate myself today in a special way to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ and I make the resolution to live for one year in poverty, chastity and obedience in spirit of acceptance, resignation, immolation and in all that I do to do what seems the most perfect, desiring by my fidelity to these resolutions to appease the anger of God and to satisfy his justice. But I have no intention of rendering myself guilty of any sin, even venial, should I not keep them (ANN., 1963, p. 177).

5. Petition to the Pope, 1800.

Humbly prostrate at your feet, we dare to petition Your Holiness to grant approval to the establishment of an order practicing the Rule of Saint Benedict with particular Constitutions which facilitate perpetual adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, under the title of zealots and zelatrices of the love of the divine Hearts of Jesus and Mary, perpetual adorers of the divine Heart of Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, under the special protection of the most Blessed Virgin Mary... Perpetual adoration day and night has never been interrupted in the women's branch... (ANN., 1963, p. 182).

6. Petition of the Brothers to the Vicars of Poitiers, 1801.

Besides those obligations (of the regular life), each member of the society has their own duties to fulfill, which are determined by obedience and which are in accord with the purpose they have chosen. Some are sent to the countryside to give missions, to instruct the people and to spread devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Others are involved in teaching children with the idea of raising them to be either Christians living in

the world or priests or religious, according to their vocations or their gifts. Finally, others like new Moses are destined to ceaselessly lift their hands toward heaven to obtain the Lord's blessing on the work of their brothers and to repair the outrages that the Heart of Jesus has received, receives and unfortunately will receive from bad Christians... (ANN., 1963, p. 184-185).

A good portion of those writings (14), most published in *Annales*, is taken from official documents. The others (10) are from writings that have particular value either by reason of the author or their antiquity. Other than the reports submitted by Hilarion Lucas to the Holy See during negotiations for approbation, and a very old one from Sister Gabriel de la Barre, the rest are all from the Founders.

7. BM, 33. Billet to the Good Father.

The good God let me know that he showed himself bodily to Sister Marie Alacoque, so that she would make known the devotion to his Sacred Heart. He granted that grace to the daughters of the Visitation, because their rule is mild, adapted to all, even though it demands a great interior spirit. He poured forth a certain loving kindness on them in order to extend this devotion and to make it loved. Now that it has been adopted, he wants an order destined to adore his Heart, to repair the outrages that he receives, (an order) that will enter into the interior suffering of this Heart and that will retrace the four ages of his life. He wants the rule to be a bit austere, so as to imitate his crucified life but he wants the members to enter especially into the interior crucifixion of his Heart.

8. Petition to the Pope, 02.10.1801.

For the last eight years in the diocese of Poitiers there have existed two fraternities, free of any Gallican influence, constantly useful and devoted to the divided church. One is made up of priests and clerics and the other of women. Under the title of Zealots of the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, perpetual adorers, going to the Heart of Jesus through the Heart of Mary and under the patronage of Saint Joseph, they desire to reproduce in their life the different ages of the life of Christ, his childhood, his adolescence, his apostolic life and his crucified life according to what is proper to each of the societies (ANN., 1963, p.186).

9. Petition to the Bishop of Poitiers, 22.05.1802.

Others still are like other Moses destined to ceaselessly lift their hands to heaven to obtain the benediction of the Lord on the work of their brothers and to repair the outrages the Sacred Heart of Jesus has received, receives and unfortunately will receive from wicked Christians. And for the last nine years this reparation has never been interrupted in the women's association during either night or day, despite storms and persecutions (ANN., 1963, p. 188).

10. Note of Father Coudrin about the Congregation, 1804-1805.

Our resolutions have as their beginning and their end the four ages of Jesus Christ: his infancy, by bringing up children in virtue; his adolescence, by forming them to be good Christians in the world or if they have a good vocation in another state; his crucified life, by forming a society of perpetual adorers of his divine Heart in the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; his apostolic life, by beginning a society of missionaries who would be available to bishops to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. Everything which either directly or indirectly could tend to weaken or destroy this spirit and purpose in the society as a whole or among the members making it up, is not worthy of it and must be banished forever.

If it would be necessary to use other means to establish ourselves than those that the Lord must give us to arrive at this goal, we cannot adopt them. There would be no surer way to cause the complete collapse of an edifice which could only have been begun and should only have been begun for God's glory and the salvation of souls (ANN., 1963, p. 189).

As for the time of their composition, the first two are prior to 1800, and the next six, no later than 1801. We have ten texts (9-18) from the time as a diocesan congregation (1801-1817). From the next period (1817-1826) there are four (19-22). The last two, for which we cannot fix a precise date of composition, we believe belong to the last period studied (1826-1840).

Clearly, the most decisive is text 23, because of its length, its nature, and especially its author, so we wanted to bring it to the attention of the readers in a particular way. Indeed, it is the only explanation that we have about the meaning of adoration given by the Founder.

11. BP, 474. Letter to Hilarion Lucas in Rome, 6.10.1914.

... Therefore try for approbation under the title of "Adorers" (Adorateurs et Adoratrices), if you cannot (obtain it) as Zealots ...

The Bishops with whom I have spoken about this, think that His Holiness could by letter or some other form write to the head of this society or to the society itself, to console, bless and support the efforts being made in one way or another to stop the torrent of wickedness etc. and to make Our Lord Jesus Christ loved and adored in his divine Heart etc. ...

12. BP/(BM) 474. Petition of the Founders to the Pope, 25.10.1814.

This Congregation is consecrated to the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

...Its main goal is to recall the four ages of our divine Savior: his childhood, by instructing poor boys and girls and forming young students for the sacred ministry; his hidden life, by repairing through perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament the outrages made to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; the Most Blessed sacrament of the altar is adored without interruption, day and night, especially in the houses of the Sisters, who are more numerous; his apostolic life, by preaching the Gospel and Missions; finally his crucified life, by practicing mortification of the flesh and spirit, as far as our human weakness allows. All, brothers as well as sisters, make perpetual vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. ...

13. Hilarion Lucas. First Mémoire, 07.12.1814.

In 1794, when a bloody persecution weighed on the Church of France, some pious ladies gathered in the city of Poitiers to implore the mercy of the Lord in silence and tears... Ecclesiastical superiors had allowed them to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their home. Weeping at the foot of the altar over on the misfortunes of the Church and state, calling on the Divine Heart of Jesus, seeking by fervent prayer the protection of the Sacred Heart of Mary, this was their constant occupation. ...

Perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was established, in reparation for the insults made to the Heart of Jesus by the malice of men.

It was resolved to establish a Congregation dedicated to spreading the faith, propagating devotion of the Divine Heart of Jesus and the Sacred Heart of Mary, repairing by perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar the injuries made to the divine majesty

We are surely not as numerous as our sisters. So perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament has not yet been established in the houses of men. Giving themselves more to

education and charged with the ministry of the Gospel, they were unable to do what has been consistently practiced in the houses of our sisters. However they have made efforts to get as close to the practice of the sisters as possible and when the house of brothers in Mende was numerous, a time of adoration was established there, from five o'clock in the morning until midnight, that is, during nine hours of the day but it was impossible to continue (ANN., 1963, pp. 193-202).

14. Hilarion Lucas. Second Mémoire, 26.12.1814.

The primary and fundamental goal of our institution is the glory of God and the salvation of souls. We are convinced that one of the best ways to achieve this is to spread devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. We regard this holy devotion as one of the greatest graces granted by the Lord in recent times. Worshiping the Divine Heart of Jesus and honoring the Sacred Heart of Mary, is to offer a tribute of homage, recognition and love to the Savior's infinite love for men and to the ineffable tenderness of Mary for the adoptive brothers of the Man-God, his divine Son. This is the true spirit of the devotion to the spread of which we have devoted all our efforts. ...

... For all that concerns the missions and the other tasks of the sacred ministry, our sisters have only one obligation to fulfill, that is, to pray that the Lord bless our apostolic work. They lift their arms towards heaven, like Moses, while like Joshua we are fighting the Amalekites. ...

The choir brothers are dedicated especially to singing the praises of God and, in a spirit of recollection and sacrifice, to making amendment for the sins of men. Adoring at the feet of the Blessed Sacrament, they should see themselves as victims offered to the Lord, in union with the spotless Lamb, appeasing God's wrath and bringing his graces on us and others. This is the ministry that our sisters have fulfilled for more than fifteen years. ... (ANN., 1963, pp. 204-210).

15. BP.479. Letter to Hilarion Lucas, in Rome, 29.12.1814.

... Couldn't we be happy with our little offices and our breviaries, night and day adoration making up for everything? At a time such as ours and in France where everything is horrendous, where nothing can succeed, where the smallest meeting is suspect, consider, my friend and see, if the work of education, the missions and everything having to do with adoration cannot supply for many very long vocal prayers, which are not even understood by half of the society.

16. Hilarion Lucas. Third Mémoire, 24.01.1815.

... When under the Terror in 1794 ... our Sisters, prostrate at the foot of the altar in a secret oratory, dedicated themselves to repair so many outrages by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament which was soon to become perpetual. Like the prophet Jeremiah, they wept over the ruins of Sion. At the same time, our Superior General was exposed to death daily in fulfilling the duties of his sacred ministry. ...

... According to what I just outlined, it is easy to grasp the goal of our Institute. This goal is designated by the very name that we want to adopt, the Zealots and Zelatrices of the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, perpetual adorers of the most Blessed Sacrament. ...

... We could have, as some ancient religious orders, devoted ourselves only to meditation and prayer in the silence of the cloister, limit ourselves simply to the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and to the regular exercises, but in the present circumstances it is particularly important to contribute to the salvation of souls. Convinced of this truth, we thought that in general the perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament could replace many other exercises. ... (ANN., 1963, pp. 210-213).

17. BP, 483. Letter to Hilarion Lucas, in Rome, 15.02.1815.

... Everything here is affected by indifference in matters of religion ... Judge for yourself, how simple our habits can be, etc... I have the great office of Sacred Heart of Mary, so for the whole year, I would only want the two great offices of the SS.CC. Jesus and Mary for our sisters. The other prayers, Adoration, etc., work, the education of youth must be enough...

18. BP, 520. Mémoire to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, 27.12.1816.

Lately, it is as Zelatrices that our Sisters have recently invited all Christians to unite in prayer with them to appease the anger of God and call down his mercy on the Church and State. However it should not be surprising that we have not added our name to that of our sisters in the material published on that occasion. Up to this point the many occupations of the Zealots have not allowed them to establish perpetual adoration...

I do not think that the title Perpetual Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar could present the least difficulty. It explains in a special way both our consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the homage rendered him day and night in the august Sacrament of the Eucharist to expiate the ingratitude and malice of men.

Even before the Revolution, there was a religious community dedicated to the perpetual adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

(After speaking of the history of the religious of saint Aure, in Paris, approved by the archbishops of the city, and by a Brief of Pius VI, he continues speaking of the Congregation as follows:)

... For the last twenty-two years our sisters have practiced what was done at Ste. Aure for only thirteen years. They practice it, not only in one house, but in eighteen different houses. They hope to extend this pious exercise to other places, as they have already been asked to make six new foundations. Their number is always increasing.

We ourselves are confident that very soon we will also be able to join Perpetual Adoration of the Heart of Jesus to our apostolic work. At present only the house in Paris has 21 professed brothers and 17 novices. Several postulants will soon be moving on to the novitiate... (ANN., 1963 pp. 224-226).

19. Constitutions of 1817 (cf. Part III, V., n. 2).

20. BP, 532. Letter to the Grand Chaplain of France (Bishop Alexandre de Périgord-Tayllerand) 14.04.1817.

...In the time when France was suffering the greatest misfortunes, in 1794 ... some pious ladies of the city of Poitiers, prostrated at the foot of the altar in a secret oratory, devoted to repair so many outrages by the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Gradually their number increased. ... From the beginning of this new institution, I formed the project of founding a congregation to spread the faith, spread the devotion to the Divine Heart of Jesus and the Sacred Heart of Mary, repair the insults made to the Divine Majesty by perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, , etc.

21. BP, 689. Notice submitted to the Nuncio of His Holiness in Paris, 16 May 1821.

The Congregation was founded in 1793 ... It seeks to repair by perpetual Adoration the insults made to the Heart of Jesus by the malice of men. So perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, day and night, is established in twelve houses of the Congregation ... (ANN., 1963, 16.05.1817).

22. Constitutions of 1825 (cf. Part III, V n. 4).

Counsels on Adoration (Text 23)

This text has come to us from a notebook of Sister Justine Charret (1790-1877), who calls it Father Coudrin's *Counsels (Avis) on Adoration*, which were sent by the Founder to "a person" who asked him for it. That person is probably a religious of the community of Sees, where Sister Justine was the Superior, and was most likely Sr. Justine herself.

It does not appear to have been written by anyone but Father Coudrin. Its vocabulary is too technical and doctrinally precise. Sister Justine or any other sister of that community can be excluded as author, as the sisters had no theological training. Indeed, as Father Jean Kerrien notes in his comments written in 1976, that we follow in these notes – this is what Sister Justine herself was suggesting when she writes, "A person requested the advice of the Good Father on Adoration; and in a few words he gave her these: ..." ¹¹⁵⁵

As the same Father Kerrien notes, most likely the text was originally written by the Founder, even though it is not cataloged among his writings. Sister Justine would have copied it, reading it incorrectly two points, as we shall see.

23. The Good Father's Counsels on Adoration. Extract from a notebook of Sr. Justine Charret (1790-1877).

A person asked the Good Father for his counsel on adoration. In a few words he said the following:

1. *The adorer is deputized and delegated by the Church to adore, praise, give thanks and repair.*
2. *When you put on the mantle, remember that it is a symbol of the ardor with which you must present yourself before God, like Jesus Christ before his Father, covered with a mantle of derision and with all the crimes of the world that he bore.*
3. *The adorer must adore with Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ. She must make reparation first for herself and for all the sins committed in the whole universe. She must ask for the conversion of sinners and the spread of the faith and pray for the church militant and for the church suffering. But above all she must make a complete gift of herself to the Heart of Jesus.*
4. *This devotion, born on Calvary, comes from the very Heart of Jesus, pierced on the cross after his death. It is always open so that at every moment of our life, it might be a place of refuge and of forgiveness for our faults, of consolation in our suffering, of encouragement in our weakness, a refuge of peace in the midst of problems and fears, finally our hope at the hour of death.*
5. *The Heart of Mary was pierced. It is the path by which we go to the Heart of Jesus, which was not pierced but opened. For there is our place of rest, the source of living waters where the soul takes delight, has its thirst quenched, is strengthened and flooded with graces.*

¹¹⁵⁵ Father Jean Kerrien wrote these notes in 1976, after studying a copy of the original, at the request of a General Counsellor (of the Sisters).

6. *To make up for the insufficiency of our own, the adorer offers God the sentiments of adoration in the Heart of Jesus, who in this august sacrament offers his Father day and night honor worthy of him by his victimhood.*
7. *When we are in his presence let us be penetrated by a respect like that of the Angels who surround him. He is the tenderest of friends with souls who try to please him. His goodness is able to adapt itself to the smallest of creatures as well as to the greatest. Therefore do not fear in these solitary conversations to entrust to him your miseries, your fears, your problems, all those who are dear to you, your plans and your hopes. Do it confidently and open heartedly. My child, see how the holy man Job opened his heart. In the midst of his great trials he cried out, "Only joy and heavenly consolation when God was in secret in my house, when the Almighty was with me!" (Job 29,5).*

Also very wise is the observation of Father Kerrien referring to paragraphs 4 and 5: that they form a kind of parenthesis, or digression about the “Devotion to the Sacred Hearts,” which shed much light on what is being expressed.

Hence the word “elle” (she), in paragraph 6, after the parenthesis, refers to the adorer, when he says “offers to God....” Father Kerrien - and with him, Fathers Hulselmans and De Becker, - thinks that in paragraph 5, Sister Justine misread the original text of the Good Father, who had written, “is fortified, is flooded by graces” (“se fortifie, *est* inondée de graces,” and not “se fortifie, *et* inondée de graces”). The paragraph ending with a period after “graces”, instead of being joined to the following phrase, gives a much clearer sense. He also corrects the order of the sentence in paragraph 6, clearly incorrect. We followed that in the establishment of the text. We will discuss its content later.¹¹⁵⁶

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8. *The remote dispositions for making adoration better are:*
- a) *Speaking little to people and often to God, withdrawing one's spirit from all created things. Being too much in their presence deprives us of God's presence.*
 - b) *Uprooting from the heart all affections which can take the place of God in one's heart, bind us, attach us to sensible things and prevent us from lifting our spirits to invisible things and our soul from taking flight toward God.*
9. *We must have recourse to Mary our good Mother and to our guardian Angel in order to obtain these graces. Once we have found Mary and through Mary Jesus and through Jesus God the Father we have found everything. And when I say everything, I mean everything.*
10. *It is not that someone who has found Mary through true devotion is exempt from the cross and suffering. Far from it, she is assailed as no one else because Mary, being the Mother of sorrows, gives her children fragments of her good cross and obtains for them the grace to bear it patiently after the example of her Son. She also helps them understand that in order to be a friend of God they must drink from the chalice of bitterness as did Jesus.*
11. *What's more, my child, it is God who teaches us how to pray. It is useless to say to a poor person “When you ask for alms, use this or that expression.” The poor beggar shows up at the rich man's house, knocks on the door and just says, “I'm naked...I'm hungry...I'm thirsty...” He forgets your lesson. Someone stretches out a helping hand. He takes from it and he blesses God and promises to love him because he fed him and gave him to drink. This is also how we should pray (PAC, 1988).*

¹¹⁵⁶ Father Jean Kerrien, *op.cit.*; F. A. Hulselmans. *Historical Study of the Preliminary Chapter*; F. Gerald de Becker. *Our Vocation as Adorers* (Fairhaven, 1961; first edition: Braine-le-Comte, Belgium, 1950).

The Conferences of Father Alexandre (Sourieul)

We know about the conferences of Father Alexandre Sourieul, (birth: 1798; profession: 1817; ordination: 1823; death: 1862) from the notes of his novices. We do not know exactly when they were composed but they are not much later than his first appointment as novice master in September 1824. As an immediate disciple of the Founder, and one especially trusted by him, we can suppose that he transited teaching that was faithful to the Founder's. However he did not know the "Counsels" preserved by Sr. Justine and he does not depend on them.

24. Father Alexandre Sourieul. Conference on "The fundamental goal of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts", 16.10.1845 (cf. Part IV. Ch II.3. Text 21).

Hidden Life of our Lord Jesus Christ: *Et erat subditus illis (And he was subject to them.) From this we see that our Lord simply limited himself to living the life of his parents, working, obeying and giving no sign of his divinity. Thus he gave example of great humiliation. But during all that time he also adored his Father, striving to render him the homage due him that men did not render. He also desired to repair their offenses, already committed and to be committed, by giving himself to Him as a victim and looking forward to his passion in order to redeem men.*

We must imitate him in these two ways... 2) By adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. We must do what our divine Savior did during his hidden life, with the intention of making up by our own adoration, the adoration that so many men owe and do not render. We offer ourselves like him as a victim, so as to repair all the outrages of sinners. But these dispositions must not be limited to the time of adoration. We must continue them and maintain them in our hearts during the whole day. That was what Our Lord did, but much more perfectly than we could ever do ourselves, because of his intimate union with God.

But what prayers can we use in this circumstance? I would say that all are good, both vocal and mental, provided that they are directed by intention to the double object of adoration. In order to imitate this hidden life of Our Lord that continues in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, we may also offer to God everything that we are, all we have, everything we do and suffer for the fulfillment of his divine will and thus repair the outrages made to his name. But we must always remember that the greatest mortification consists in the fulfillment of all of one's obligations. It was to be perpetual in the Congregation, in order to imitate the conduct of Our Lord who made it perpetually. This does not mean that all the members are obligated to follow the continuous prayer of our Lord. That is not possible, only in the sense that all can, by intention, transform all their actions into so many other acts of reparation according to the adage: the one who works prays. Doing continually the will of God as indicated by the Rule, the religious prays continuously. And in each exercise he performs, he can lift himself to God, whose precepts he fulfills faithfully. And so we see Our Lord himself interrupt his prayer to give himself to the needs of nature, without interrupting the reparation he has begun, because all that he did was in conformity with the holy will of his Father. Quae placita sunt ei facio semper (What is pleasing to him, I do always.)

Regarding perpetual adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament, there is always someone there without interruption. In the name of the house they represent, they adore,

repair and atone for all the bloody outrages made to the Heart of Jesus. This is a perpetual adoration: 1) to thank God for his graces and his benefits which are perpetual; 2) to repair the offenses, omissions and coldness of men, which are repeated endlessly against God (PAC. 3364).

4. Eucharist and Adoration

In the last thirty years people have repeatedly asked: who is adored in Adoration? And the response has not always been the same among the authors in the community who have treated its spirituality. Some say that the Adoration is directed to Christ in the Eucharist. Others say that we adore the Father with Christ.

If we study the texts from the time of the foundation that speak in one way or another about adoration, we find some support for both opinions. However the first thing we have to ask ourselves is whether they are addressing the same problematic that is being discussed today. One thing we can say off the bat, the idea underlying many positions, that spirituality should be more specific and must choose between the “objects” indicated (the Eucharistic presence or the Trinity), was an approach that would have been completely foreign to the period we are studying.

Leaving aside polemics, we will try to reconstruct the intention of Father Coudrin and his disciples, beginning with Mother Aymer, from the body of documentation that we believe well represented in the texts that we have gathered.

First of all, let us remember that from all the evidence neither the Founder nor his disciples were theologians Even though Father Coudrin had studied at a certain level, providential circumstances caused him to minister at a level far removed from academic pretension.

The creation of the community’s own spirit did not aim to distinguish them from others but rather to enrich common life based in Gospel values and in the life of Christ. Adoration, as the other elements of the spirit, was not the fruit of intellectual alchemy but came from a school of Christian life begun in the midst of the storm that was the revolution and under the threat of persecution. It was precisely from such circumstances, and drawing on the values of communion in the faith that we have already looked at, that adoration comes with a style all its own.

The documents as a whole are in fact a testimony to the authors’ utter lack of academic pretense. They are not concerned for the rigor of their vocabulary or the definition of “the material or formal objects” of adoration.

What they try to recreate is a common spirit, a communal commitment, a practice that expresses the community’s communion in the faith. This is homemade without a lot of theorizing.

For our current needs, it would have been helpful if the Founder or the Foundress, at least at a later date, had stopped to think and reflect and had left let some small manual.

But that is not the case and the only exposition we have from the Founders is that given in the "Counsels."

Knowing this, we will consider the texts we have collected. Of the 24 we have selected, 3 do not mention the "object"; 6 say the Blessed Sacrament is adored; 13 say that the Sacred Heart is adored, 5 of them note that He is adored "in the Blessed Sacrament". Only the last two speak of adoring the Father with Christ. It is noteworthy that these texts are later and also the longest.

It is indisputable that the first 22 texts are so summary as regards adoration, that we cannot say that they are intended to explain its meaning to the community. They are just meant to refer to the institution, leaving aside any attempt to speak of it more adequately.

The diversity of expression seems to be explained by a kind of carelessness that comes from the peaceful possession of something and that joined to the complexity and richness of the same thing. In any case, the diversity does not seem to come from different positions, as they are given by the same person and at times fairly close.

In any case, there are indications that behind the formulations that we could call "short", the ideas found in the more "extensive" ones (i.e. 23 and 24) are hidden. Indeed, since the early days, there was the conviction that perpetual Adoration was meant to "evoke" the "hidden life" of Christ, in other words, his existence turned entirely to the Father. We will also see shortly that adoration is "reparation" so that by its very nature it refers to Christ who has as a fundamental intention in his heart, to repair the sin of men before his Father.

To all this must be added the fact that the presence of the "heart" of Christ is contemplated in the Eucharist. This means that the adorer must necessarily end up at the Father. The interior of Christ, his heart, is presented in all the literature read by the community as entirely turned toward the Father.

In short, to "evoke" or "imitate" the hidden life of Christ, or simply his "Heart," means taking on the attitudes of Christ, "turned toward the Father," and so in him we turn to the Father.

Reading and rereading all these texts with this conviction, we see that the community did not consider the two formulations as opposed but, on the contrary, as complimentary.

Someone could say that the idea of going to the Father with Christ belonged to a latter period, that of the "Counsels" and it was subsequently, somewhat incoherently, combined with elements from the foundational period that were not all that clear.

A very short, but very explicit sentence of Father Coudrin, in his *Rule* of 1797 suggests exactly the contrary. In paragraph 5, when describing the dispositions with which each member of the community should start the day, he sums them up saying, “On awaking we will enter our usual refuge (the heart of Christ) to adore him and to ask him to present us to his Father.” That would show that the Founder saw no difficulty in uniting the two attitudes in adoration and this comes from the very earliest days of the Congregation. In conclusion, from this perspective on adoration, the two aspects go together: adoration of Christ and adoration “with Him and in Him” to the Father.

We are convinced that of the two attitudes, the first was the most obvious and most easily understood by all. For that reason, it was used when it was simply a matter of talking about the communal practice, without getting into long explanations. However in reality, when they wanted to experience or explain the meaning of adoration, greater importance was given to the second, through which they “evoked” the hidden life of Christ and translated into prayer and life, the “sacrificial” aspect of the community’s vocation. It is similar to what they did when they said that they adored the Heart of Christ in the Eucharist. Many times they merely took it for granted, simply saying that they were adoring the Eucharist.¹¹⁵⁷

For those who are interested in studying the question in detail, we refer to the authors, whose positions we summarize very briefly:

Some starting with Father Bernard Garric, in *The Religious of the Sacred Hearts*, consider that adoration as the Founder proposed is a cult that is consumed and exhausted in the adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist. This is also the opinion of Father Gerard de Becker in the book already quoted, and of Father Antonius van Bruggen.¹¹⁵⁸

Others, like Father Prosper Malige, Father Antonius Hulselmans, and Father Jean Kerrien think that adoration as taught by Father Coudrin includes not only the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus present in the sacred species, but it also participates in the sacrifice that Christ presents to His Father.¹¹⁵⁹

1157 This is true for the title of the Congregation, which reads: “Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.” It was preferable not to repeat “and of the Perpetual Adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.” Which does not mean that it was not thought.

1158 F. Bernard Garric: *The Religious of the Sacred Hearts*, first published in French in 1898, with editions in 1906, 1922 and 1938 (translated in English). Father Gerald de Becker: *Our Vocation as Adorers*, published in “Etudes Picpuciennes” Braine-le-Compte, in 1950 (translated in English). Father A. Van Bruggen: *Reflexion sur l’Adoration Eucharistique* in «Etudes Picpuciennes», Rome, 1968.

1159 Father P. Malige : *La Vie Spirituelle*. Paris, Lethielleux, 1911, vol. III, p. 254 ff. Father A. Hulselmans: *Historical Study of the Preliminary Chapter ...*; “Etudes Picpuciennes”, Braine-le-Compte, 1948. Father Jean Kerrien: *Notre Spiritualité*.

Regarding observations by theologians today concerning adoration of the Eucharist, and that Father Van Bruggen summarizes in his book, (p. 130), there are three that seem quite valid:

- It accentuates secondary aspects of the Eucharist (the presence as such), while leaving aside important ones: (the assembly of God's people - Sacrifice of Christ);
- That the intention of the "institution" is to allow communion not adoration;
- That liturgical prayer is addressed to the Father through Christ, while adoration is directed to Christ under the species.

1. Father Prosper Malige ss.cc. *La Vie Spirituelle, Paris, 1911, Vol. III p. 260.*

After the Mass and during the Mass, with the sacrifice, is the sacrament. Strictly speaking, the sacrifice really takes place at the consecration or immolation. However it will not come to its fullness without at least the participation of the priest in the sacrifice through communion. The Mass obtains its full effect when the faithful, who are united to the priest in the oblation, also are one with him in communion.

We know that in sacrifice, the immolation of a victim and the offering of something that has been destroyed, the one sacrificing, in his own name and in the name of the one for whom he offers the sacrifice, proclaims that God is the one whom he adores, the principle and sovereign of life that has been given to him. In a certain sense, this is what he pours out before God's majesty, through the victim that is substituted.

But he does not immolate or annihilate himself before God in testimony of his absolute dependence. He is in communion with the victim that is offered, he eats a part of it, and the sacrifice is accomplished.

In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the faithful who assist at Mass, also eat of the victim that is offered and communicate in the body of the Savior and thus in his immolation, through all the purposes of the sacrifice. Jesus who was slain and the faithful who communicate are only one. Two in one, by Mass and communion, they offer together adoration, thanksgiving, propitiation and impetration to God.

Everything is not over yet. By sacramental communion, Jesus gives himself to the Christian in body, soul and divinity. He comes down entirely to the heart of the one who communicates. It is He to who has the greatest part in this "action of both." The faithful does very little, he is only asked, that he not be unworthy, ill-disposed and not to place an insurmountable obstacle to the union that takes place at the holy mass.

As in a meal, all is not over when the guest takes the food, which after he has to digest, in order to transform it into his own substance. This will require from him some work, at times laborious. It is the same in Holy Communion the faithful, who withdraws from the holy table, will have to digest the divine food that he has taken. The end of this spiritual digestion is not, as in bodily digestion to transform food into its own substance, but rather to transform him into the living bread that he has been fed with. The spiritual digestion will consist of the transformation of the faithful that communicates into the Christ that he has received. As Bossuet said, communion is not only of the flesh with the body of Jesus, but with His spirit, his emotions, his will, his works. But this is what many Christians that go to communion fail to achieve. And until they get to that point, the goal of Mass and of

communion has not been achieved. What is needed for this? This is the quiet, slow and, at times, laborious work of adoration.

Communing with the spirit, the soul, the divinity of our Lord, is equivalent to taking on his mind, his thoughts, feelings, the Heart of our Lord. It is equivalent to allowing the spiritual life of Christ reach the depth of our soul, so that the faithful may from then on say with Saint Paul: “yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me ...” (Gal 2:20).

We believe that these affect the institution of adoration of Congregation, only if adoration is understood in the first way. By contrast, if it is understood in the second way, these ideas purify it and give it new value.¹¹⁶⁰

Before concluding this section, it would be interesting to mention the teaching of Father Malige, concerning the relationship of adoration to the Eucharist:

- In sacrifice, the immolation of a victim or the destruction of something in order to proclaim the sovereignty of God, the one sacrificing does not destroy himself but rather eats of the victim and places himself in communion with it and thus the sacrifice is consummated .
- In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which the faithful communicate at Mass, he eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ- Victim, but everything does not end there. As at a banquet, once the guest has eaten, he has to digest what he has eaten. This is so with Eucharistic Communion. It is only that in this “spiritual digestion”, what is consumed is not transformed into one’s flesh, but the reverse, the one who communicates is transformed into Christ.
- To communicate with the spirit, soul and divinity of Christ, is to adopt his thoughts, his heart and affections until it is possible to say, “I no longer live but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

This effort to be assimilated to Christ and to open ourselves to his life within us is what takes place during adoration.

But to complete the thought of the Founders, let us look at the next section, on reparation.

5. Adoration and the Ministry of the Servant

Taking into account all the documents, seen again in their original historical context, and taking as a basis, the *Counsels on Adoration*, we will try to make a summary of its main characteristics in the faith of the community.

a) A Ministry of Church

Father Coudrin’s first phrase in his *Counsels* is clear and definitive: “The adorer is deputized and delegated by the Church...”

¹¹⁶⁰ Personally we believe that this difference of interpretation of the thought of the Founders is almost exclusively due to a lack of information about the history of the Congregation, of the biography of the Founders, and an inadequate review of documents by those who assert the first view; all defects are not attributable to the authors.

Adoration was never considered what is commonly called a “spiritual exercise,” in other words, a practice designed to develop certain virtues in a person in order to lead him/her to greater Christian perfection as an individual. We do not want to suggest by that that the practice of adoration does not have a great impact on personal spiritual growth, because it has all the potential to do that and perhaps more than many “exercises.” However, we must note that of its nature it is entirely ecclesial and communal and has no hint of ascetic discipline.

The adorer (woman or man) is at the “prie-dieu” at a particular time. She is there, first of all, representing the community, but she knows that behind the community is the whole Congregation and beyond it all the Church, which wants and needs her there at that moment.

But when did the Church give her that mandate? She was given it immediately, when she was assigned an hour according to the organization of the house; however, ultimately on the day of profession, when the Church accepted her religious consecration and her sacrifice in union with that of Christ. That was possible because the Church, by its approbation, had made its own the Congregation, with its institutions, laws and mission.

b) The Mediation of the Servant

“When you put on the mantle, (that is the red mantle) remember that it is a symbol of the ardor with which you must present yourself before God, like Jesus Christ before his Father, covered with a mantle of derision and with all the crimes of the world that he bore...”

“She must make reparation first for herself and for all the sins committed in the whole universe...”

Consequently, adoration is accepted as clothing oneself with Christ, precisely in his mediation as servant, obedient unto death on the cross. In this identification with Christ, she finds true solidarity with all sinners, all men, beginning with herself and she presents herself before the Father, with Christ, through Christ and as Christ.

Naturally, such an attitude cannot be merely ritual and cannot be improvised, without becoming hollow formality. It must be the result of a life choice. Adoration has its source in religious profession, in which one accepts the sacrifice of Christ, and bears the cross, in order to follow Him, as we have already seen.

If we say that profession is a sacrifice, adoration is a daily offering of that sacrifice, a constant effort to be coherent, striving to do the Father’s will in all of life and all our

apostolic action. It is a daily renewal and confirmation of profession, which becomes constantly more powerful, as the day of our first profession fades farther into the past.

As we have already seen, the community discovered this vocation in the context of the Terror and persecution. The members were convinced that there were entering deeply into the Heart of Christ and of his Mother, that is, that it was sharing intimately in their feelings, designs and their love.

On the other hand, while it was experiencing at first hand the force of a historic cataclysm that demonstrated the powerlessness of humanity before the flood of evil, the community saw how the attitude of Jesus' heart, prophesied in Isaiah and adopted by the Savior himself from the "ecce venio" right to the consummation on the cross, was the one total response to the true needs of humanity, the church and the world. In sacrifice, love reaches its redemptive power.¹¹⁶¹

This mediation was presented by Father Coudrin as a very vast mission that embraces the four classic goals of sacrifice:

- It is *praise and adoration*, and from there it took its name, but it is also an *act of thanksgiving* for all God's benefits and gifts.
- Perhaps the aspect that was grasped first and with greater intensity was that of *reparation*, in other words, its value as satisfaction. The profanations and scandals, which in the seventeenth century had been inflated by legend and popular imagination, during the Revolution became starkly frightening reality, which made all the literature on reparation produced during almost two centuries take on new relevance.
- Finally, it is an *impetration*, a petition for all personal needs and especially for the needs of the community and the Church. Here all the "intentions" continually recommended for adoration come into play. We remember the most noteworthy: the release of Pius VII, prisoner of Napoleon, 1809 to 1814, the approval of the Congregation, 1814 to 1817, the missions in Troyes and Rouen, 1820 to 1830 and from 1826 on, the foreign missions.

This aspect of "intercessory" mediation led to the use in various texts of the image of Moses praying to God, with his arms raised to heaven, for the success of the battle Joshua is fighting on the plaine. Those fighting on the plaine counted on that support, as can be seen particularly in the correspondence of the missionaries.¹¹⁶²

¹¹⁶¹ Is 52:13; 53:12; Fil 2:15; Heb 10:7.

¹¹⁶² Cf. Texts 6 and 9.

c) *Exercise of the baptismal priesthood*

“To make up for the insufficiency of our own (sentiments), the adorer offers God the sentiments of adoration in the Heart of Jesus, who in this august sacrament offers his Father day and night honor worthy of him by his victimhood.”¹¹⁶³

From the beginning adoration has been considered a way of “evoking” (retracing), the hidden life of Christ, that is, the life of the “Son turned towards the Father.” Since his “*ecce venio*” (behold I come) his decision to offer himself in sacrifice has been present in his heart and in glory he does not cease his mediation as “he always lives to intercede for us.”

This mediation, of which we have spoken, becomes possible in virtue of the baptismal priesthood, of which Saint Peter speaks in his first epistle: “Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 2:5). This is the affirmation taken up by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium 10*.

This identification with Christ, precisely his mediating action, leads the adorer to exercise his baptismal priesthood, to be a ‘co-offerer’ of the sacrifice of Christ through the Eucharist, and leads him to give himself also with Christ, to the work of God.

d) *Through Mary and with Mary*

We have seen how the profession was conceived as an act of devotion to the Sacred Hearts. Something similar must be said of adoration. We have already explained how it can be considered an act of surrender to the Heart of Christ, a renewal of profession. As the “consecration” to the Heart of Jesus was done through the Heart of Mary, adoration also must be seen as with Mary and through Mary. It is the mention that Father Coudrin makes of “Devotion to the Sacred Hearts,” in the parentheses that he dedicates to it in his *Avis (Counsels)*.

6. Adoration in personal life

Following the *Counsels*, Father Coudrin devotes several paragraphs to the personal aspects of the Adoration.

The first point is that the adorer must feel touched by the presence of God in the Eucharist and penetrated by a reverence that associates him with the angels. The

¹¹⁶³ This life of Christ in the Eucharist, “as different from the one He lived at the side of his Father, is a frequent topic in the books of piety of the XVII and XVIII centuries. For example: Jacques Biroat, osb. *La vie de Jésus-Christ dans le Saint Sacrement de l’Autel*, Couterot, Paris, 1668. Gerarde de Ville-Thierry, *La vie de Jésus dans l’Eucharistie et la vie des chrétiens qui se nourrissent de l’Eucharistie*, Damonneville, Paris, 1752.

mediating mission, which prolongs the sacrifice of Christ, instinctively seeks out the Eucharistic presence so that it might be accomplished.

A second point is the consciousness of being loved by God and by Christ, the reawakening of this deep theological core of faith, which gives us a heart like that of Christ, the heart of a son.

Thirdly, the awareness of God's love must give way to living trust, which opens the heart to the Father in Christ. "Therefore do not fear in these solitary conversations to entrust to him your miseries, your fears, your problems, all those who are dear to you, your plans and your hopes..." All of human reality, without any pretense, should be brought to adoration.

Fourthly, open your life to the joy of having God in your life and of knowing as holy Job that he is the "Almighty."

The fifth aspect is to attend to remote dispositions. It's a way of saying that that adoration cannot be improvised. It has to come from everyday life, from a life of faith, cultivated continually. Interesting are the criteria the Good Father gives when speaking of "remote" dispositions. They can be summarized in two: a) "Speaking little to people and often to God, withdrawing one's spirit from all created things. Being too much in their presence deprives us of God's presence." It is noteworthy that it is "excess" we are to avoid for it deprives us of the presence of God. At the level of consciousness and intelligence, creatures tend to replace God, until He becomes a stranger. But for the Christian He should be "Father." b) "Uprooting from the heart all affections which can take the place of God in one's heart..." The emotional life also requires balance. To be able to truly adore God we have to uproot everything that tends to be a substitute for God and that can take over as absolute master of our heart.

The sixth point: is to turn to Mary, as a guarantee of having found all.

The seventh point is in the last paragraph of the *Counsels*, a warning that seems so in keeping with the spirit of Father Coudrin, "my child, it is God who teaches us how to pray." Therefore it is useless to look for complicated techniques and methods of prayer. The important thing is to remain on the level of faith and to present ourselves, in all the humble reality of our life, as beggars before God.

7. Perpetuity

Adoration can be "perpetual" in the personal life of each religious, as their profession is perpetual, and because, when all is said and done, adoration is but the respiration of a

vocation of mediation with Christ, born in profession. In this sense, we can understand what is said in the Ritual of the Profession, “Look upon your servant ... (the newly professed), may he be a perpetual adorer of the Heart of Christ ...”

Father Alexandre speaks along the same lines in the text already quoted, when recalling that we are to imitate the hidden life of Christ in our interior life, he ends saying, “But these dispositions must not be limited to the time of adoration. One must continue them and maintain them in his heart throughout the day.”

But when “perpetual adoration” is mentioned in most texts, this personal aspect is not referred to but rather the communal practice.

So far we have been speaking of the spirit of adoration, but we have not studied the motivations of faith that the community had in initiating perpetual adoration, precisely as “perpetual,” in other words, succeeding one another at the prie-dieu night and day without interruption.

The oldest motivation that we find in the documents is from the period of the “Immensité”, and is in the *Response to my Brother* by Gabriel de la Barre. “It consists of an evocation of the lives of “the Saints in Paradise”, who “perpetually sing the song of the Lamb.”

From that first motivation comes a second, which appears in many documents. It is a kind of “consecration of time” and of all time, by the delegation of one member, who by remaining at adoration continues the prayer, which is a clear statement of the sense of faith from which everyone works.

A last one is the need experienced in the apostolate, beginning in the time of the Terror, for an intervention by God, so that things can go forward. There is a need for “unceasing intercession” that will not seem fulfilled, if there is not some who like Moses is lifting his arms to heaven.

* * *

It is not easy to get an exact idea of what the Founders actually did as regards the establishment of “perpetual adoration” in the daily life of the different houses.

There is no doubt that the faithful observance of adoration, involved not only the self-denial of community members, but also certain conditions of peoples’ availability that involved limiting other responsibilities

So, in the early dreams concerning the foundation, where things were imagined before they became reality, it was thought that perpetual adoration would be taken care

of by having a special “class”, both among the sisters and the brothers (Choir Sisters and Brothers). They would lead a life more characterized by penance and contemplation. That would free other members for the apostolate of education, the priestly ministry, or household chores.

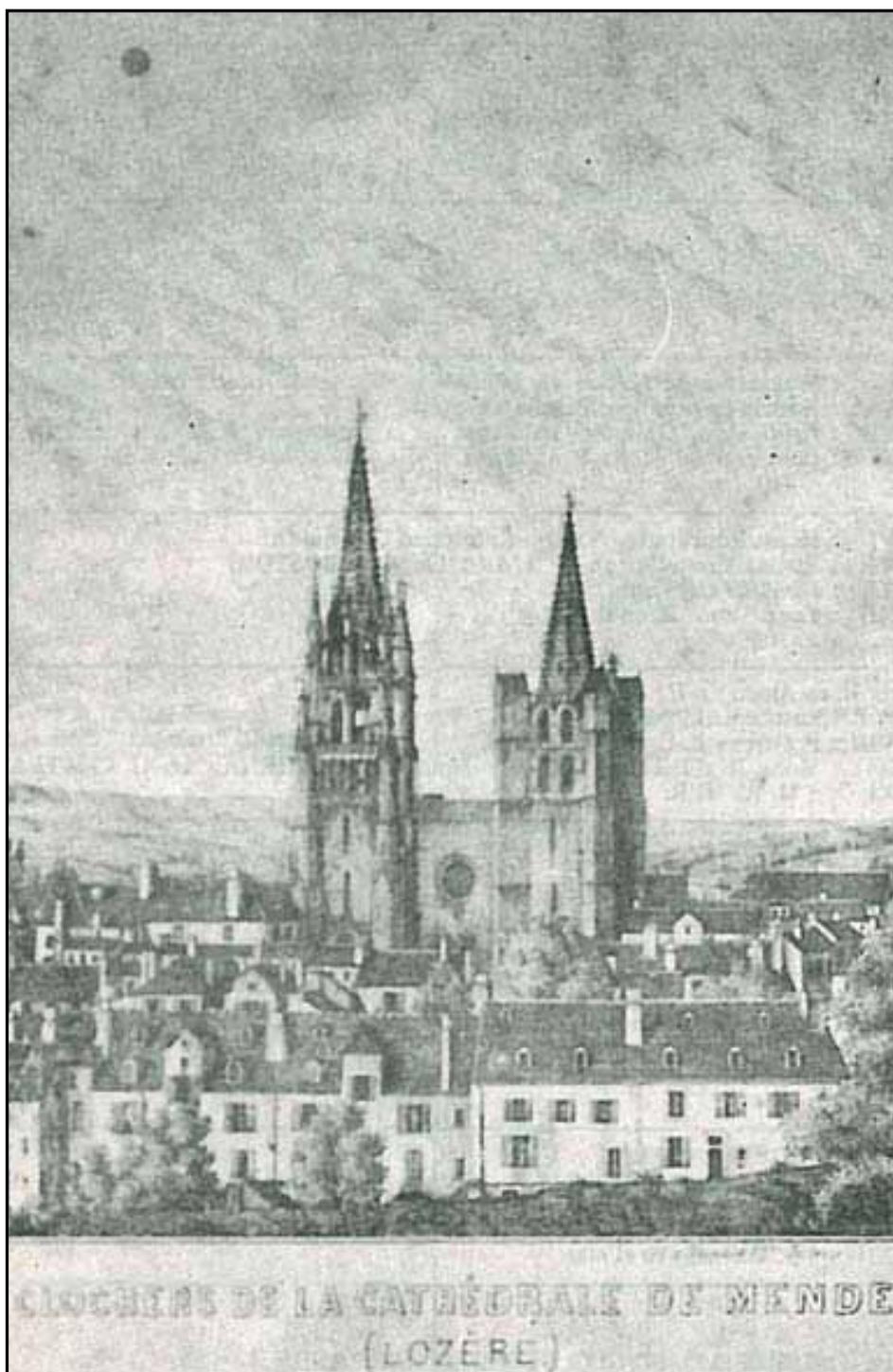
Reality later altered the dream. There were never sufficient vocations to the choir brothers to enable them to assume the communal mission by themselves. During the first nineteen years it was impossible to organize perpetual adoration in any house. When it was established in Picpus in 1819, it was an exception because the other houses had an excess of apostolic responsibilities and very limited personnel.

In the houses of the Sisters, things were different. First of all from the beginning they were far more numerous than the brothers despite deaths. That is why the responsibility of “ensuring adoration” fell entirely to the sisters in the Constitutions of 1825.

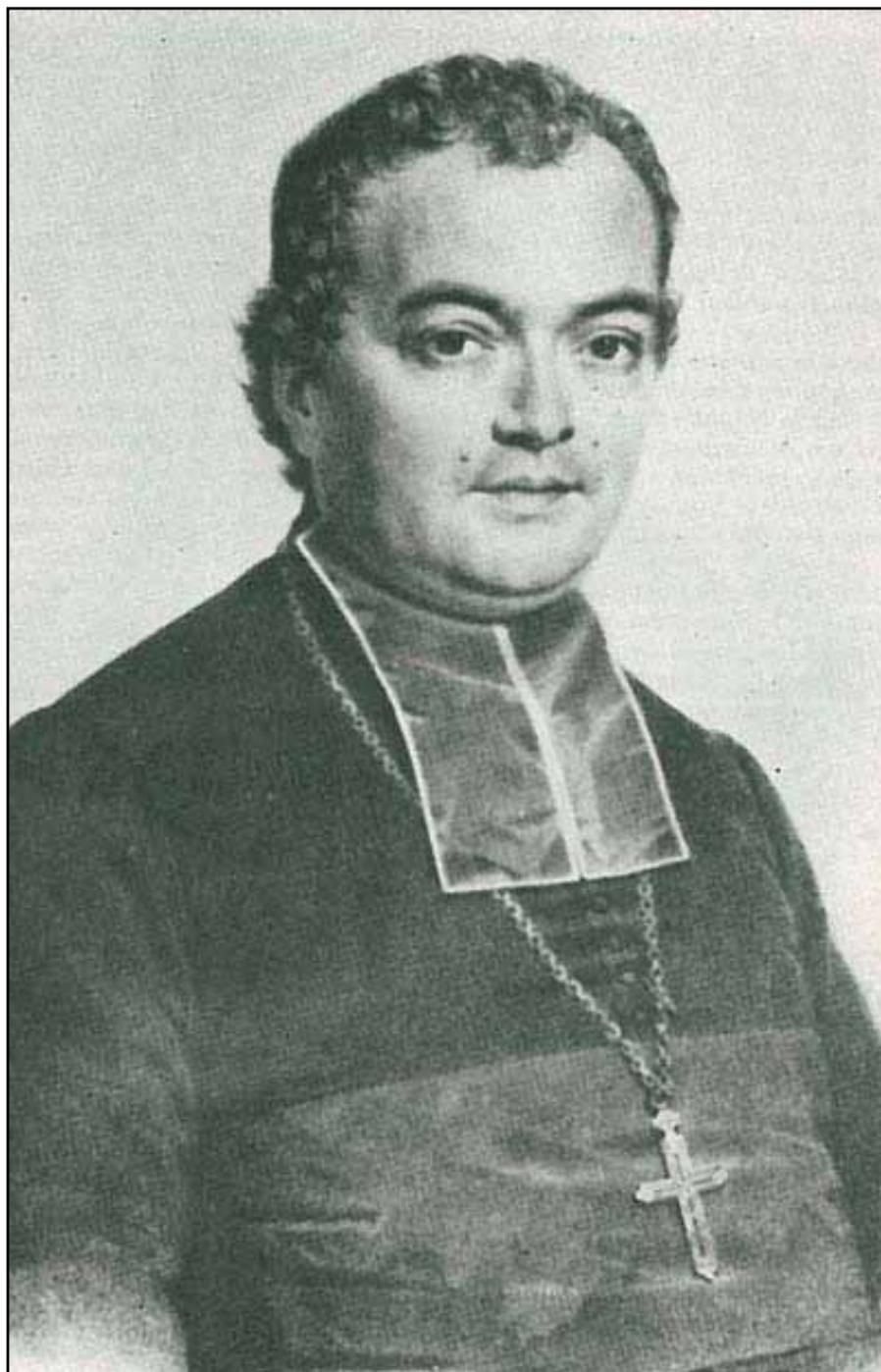
This does not mean that it is done without major sacrifices. Indeed, as the work of education and the boarding schools developed, they had to designate a whole group for adoration. That meant they were much less available. But given that they always remained in the house, they could at least cover the day hours.

In any case, the problem of restricting adoration never came up among the sisters, and it was never interrupted in any house during the period we have been studying.





Cathedral of Mende



Mgr. Pierre Dominique Bonamie



Françoise de Viart



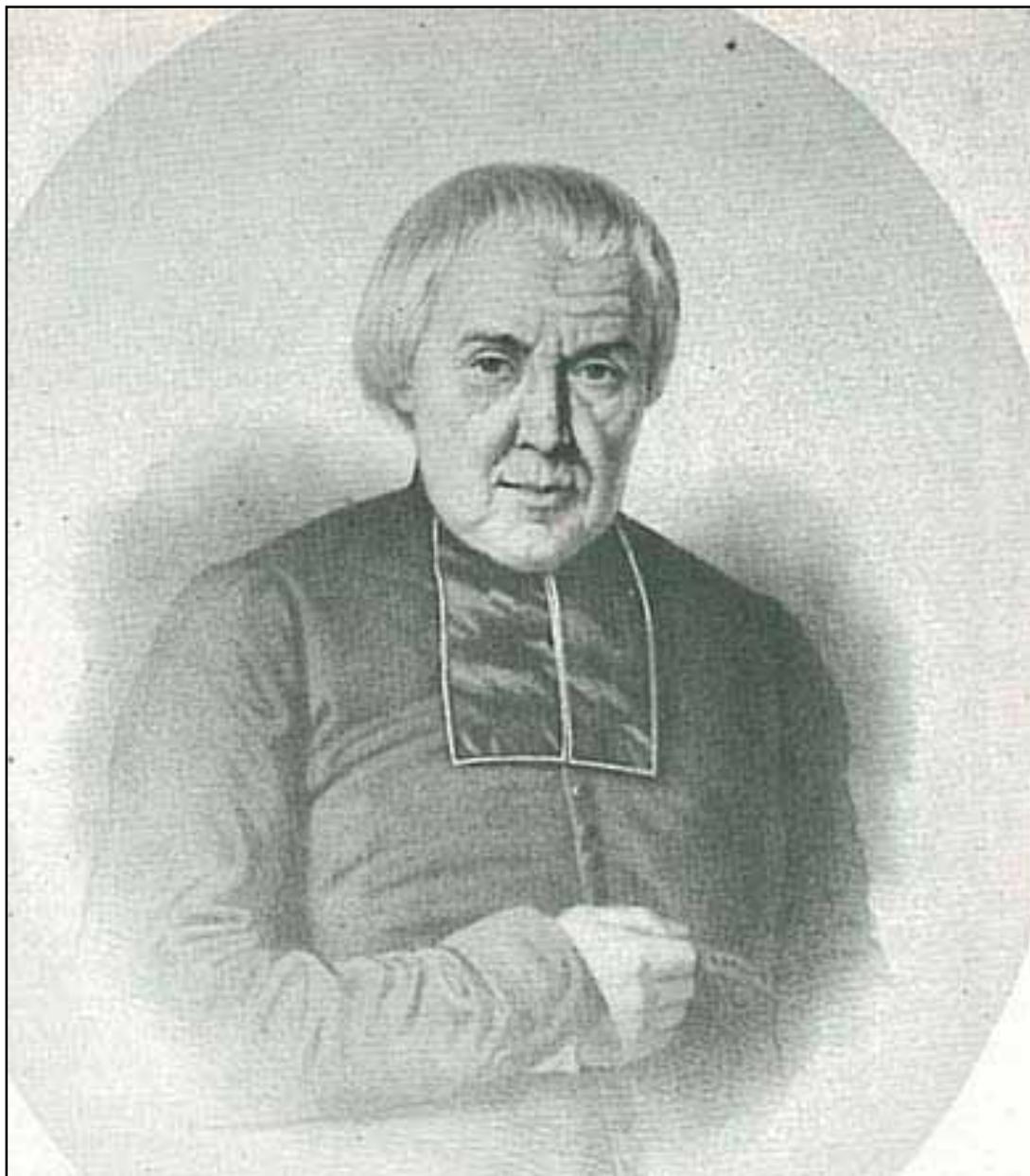
ETIENNE ROUCHOUZE

Né à Charost, Diocèse de la Loire.

Membre de la Société de Clergé, d'après les Mémoires de l'abbé F. de...

Spécialiste de l'histoire ecclésiastique à Paris, le 25 Mars 1832.

Mgr. Etienne Rouchouze



Fr. Martin Calmet

CHRONOLOGY

CRONOLOGY 1790 – 1840			
CHURCH	FRANCE		CONGREGATION
Pius VI: Pope since 1775.	Louis XVI King since 1774 CONSTITUYENT since 05.V.1789 Civil Constitution of the lergy: 12.VII Suppression of all Religious	1790	03.IV GF is ordained sub-deacon 05.IX Homily of GF in Coussay les Bois 18.XII GF is ordained Deacon in Angers
18.II Schismatic Bishop in Poitiers 22.IV Death of Schismatic Bishop VI Brief published in Poitiers X New Schismatic Bishop in Poitiers	20-22.VI The King flees. is caught at Varennes 14.IX Constitution of 1791 01.X LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY	1791	15.VI GF in Saint Ustre VIII The Lazarists leave the Seminary X GF does not return to the Seminary
30.XI Churches are closed	20.IV War with Ostrich 11.VII The Motherland is at danger .VIII The King is detained 2-5.IX Killing of 20: Valmy 21 REPUBLIC/ CONVENTION	1792	04.III Paris: GF is ordained Priest. 27 Retreat 08.IV Easter: GF celebrates Mass at Coussay: Clandestinity 16.IV GF blesses wedding of his brother V GF goes to LA MOTTE D'USSEAU 20.X GF goes out to Poitiers
04.I M Bruneval is jailed in the Seminary 11.XI Planier abjures his priesthood 10.XII Feast of goddess “Reason” in Poitiers	19-21.I The King is condemned and executed. III Insurrection in Vendee. VI TERROR in Paris	1793	II GF at the “Incurables” (Marche-à-Terre) IV GF accuses a false Bishop. 22 Luis Hayer dies 22.IX GM to prison. 25: GF leaves the “Incurables” 07.XI GF is condemned to death in absentia FIRST CONTACTS FOR THE FOUNDATION
Miss Geoffroy: Rue des Olérons . II Churches are closed in Poitiers	09 Termidor (27.VII) Fall of Robespierre	1794	28.III Daudin is arrested 13.IV Modesta Babin and two Deschartes GF goes to Poitiers: Rue des Olérons 01.VIII News: Death of Robespierre is known in Poitiers 11.IX GM leaves the prison. X: F. Soyer in Anjou
	27.X Directory	1795	II The Society of the Sacred Heart goes to Molin a Vent III GM is received in the Society of the Sacred Heart

	.III Bonaparte invades Italy	1796	Towards the end of the year: The "Solitaries"
	X Peace Treaty of Campoformio	1797	II GM Superior of the "Solitaries" III Society of SH to Saint Pierre: DECISION TO FOUND IV F. Pruel returns. VII Solitaries use wool VIII Resolutions. IX La GRAND' MAISON
06.I Bishop of Poitiers dies in Switzerland Perrin is named Capitular Vicar .X Perrin renounces	19.V Bonaparte in Egypt	1798	VIII GM Superior of the whole Society
29.VIII Pius VI dies in Valence 29.XI Departs of priests are suppressed 30.XI Conclave of Venice 07.XII Churches are re-opened on Sundays	09.X Bonaparte in Frejus 10.XI CONSULATE	1799	01.I The "Solitaries" adopt the Trappist Rule 31.V First Communion of Hilarion Lucas 25.XII Exterior white habit
14.III Election of Pius VII in Venice 03.VII The Pope enters Rome XI Negotiations and Concordate: (Spina)	II Bonaparte arrives at the Tulleries 12.VIII Commission for the Civil Law	1800	GM and Villemort: Project of Rule: 1.VI Three Solitaires leave 17.VI DIOCESAN APPROVAL. VII GF Superior 14.X Approval for Vows. GM Superior for life 20.X First Vows of GM 24.XII PERPETUAL VOWS OF BOTH FOUNDERS
Consalvi is in Paris 15.VII Signature of the Concordate		1801	02.II Perpetual Vows of 5 Sisters and 2 Brothers 10.II Separation from the Society of the Sacred Heart 04.IV Priestly ordination of Isidore David 20.05 APPROVAL OF THE BROTHERS 22.VIII Francoise de Viart enters the Noviciate 10.XII Mgr. De Chabot arrives in Poitiers
19.IV The Concordate is promulgated 24.IV "The Genie of Christianisme" by Chateaubriand	2.VIII Bonaparte is named Consul for life	1802	03.V GF in Paris 24.V GF in MENDE 19.VII GM in MENDE 31.VII Adoration begins in Mende
		1803	15.VII CAHORS

2.XI Pius VII leaves for France	4.V EMPIRE 2.XII Napoleon's Coronation	1804	23.IV Mgr. de Chabot + GF to Paris: Apostolate in St. Roch VIII House in Rue de Vendome PARIS 12.X LAVAL 30.XII Pious VII in Saint Roch
.IV Pius VII enters Rome	26.V Coronation of Napoleon in Milan 21.X Trafalgar 02.XII Austerlitz.	1805	13.III Move to PICPUS 31.V GF General Vicar in Sees 03.VI Pontlieu – LE MANS
04.IV Imperial Catechism	10.V University of France	1806	I GF with HL go to SEES. Minor Seminary 06.VI Image of Our Lady of Peace in Picpus
		1807	30.V GM arrives in SEES
	10.IV Spain is invaded	1808	
06.VII The Pope leaves Rome 23 Grenoble 16.VIII The Pope in Savona .XI Dissolution of Congregations	14.X Treaty of Vienna	1809	
24.I The cardinals arrive in Rome 17.II Rome is annexed to France 05.XI Brief of Pious VII to cardinal Maury 02.XII Brief to Cap. of Florence	12.I Napoleon's wedding to Josephine is annulled 11.III Wedding of Napoleon with Maria Luisa	1810	
15.III Napoleon orders a National Council 17.VII The national Council is opened 20.X The national Council is dispersed		1811	Papal Brief displayed at Picpus Seminary
9-19.VII Pious VII is in Fontainebleau	24.VII Invasion of Russia 15.X Retreat from Russia	1812	
	16-18.X Leipzig	1813	
21.I Pius VII goes to Savona 24.V Pius VII returns to Rome Restauration of Company of Jesus	11.IV First Abdication of Napoleon 3.V Louis XVIII enters Paris	1814	7-21.VII HL goes to Rome 04.VIII HL has Audience with Pious VII 25.VIII Sisters receive the habit in Picpus 25.X Suplique of the Founders to the Pope 27.XI HL has audience with the pope

	20.III Napoleon returns: 100 Days 18.VI Waterloo 28.VI Second Abdication 08.VII Return of Louis XVIII	1815	04.VII SARLAT
		1816	28.III GF Sends the Constitutions to Rome. 24.V HL presents the Constitutions in Latin. 20.VI HL leaves Rome. 20.XII The Sacra Congregation approves the Congregation.
		1817	10.I Pious VII APPROVES the Decree 14.IV Circular Letter of GF. (Approval of the Congregation) Presentation to Mgr. de Tayllerand Lemerancier is Parish Priest at Sainte Marguerite 17.XI Bule "Pastor Aeternus"
		1818	22.III Bule arrives in Picpus 11.X RENNES
J. de Maistre writes "Du Pape" (Of the Pope)		1819	28.IV Mgr. de Chabot 1-30 DOUBLE GENERAL CHAPTERS (First) 24.X TOURS 15.XI Memoirs of Lemerancier to the Archbishop
	17.IX The Duke of Berry is killed	1820	3-10.IV GF takes the Bule to the Curia 30.V Ordinance of Cardinal Talleyrand 2.VI GF is called to the Curia: receives ordinance and Bule 28.IX GF to Troyes. 31.X GF Vicar General in Troyes 11.XI Missionaries in TROYES. 16.XII Sisters in TROYES
	05.V Napoleon Bonaparte dies	1821	06.I The Red Mantle is used for the first time (Troyes) 19.VIII MORTAGNE
		1822	
20.VIII Pious VII dies 23.IX Election of Leo XII		1823	

	17.IX Louis XVIII dies	1824	24.VI VINCENNES 1.IX DOUBLE GENERAL CHAPTERS (Second)
13.V Mgr. de Boulogne dies	20.IV Law about Sacrilege 24.V Coronation of Charles X	1825	19.V GF goes to Rome. ID is Vicar General of Rouen 08.VIII GF arrives in Rome. 26.VIII Pope confirms approval of Constitutions 06.X GF accepts Missions on Sandwich Islands
		1826	01.II Alexis Bachelot is named Apostolic Prefect 11.II Circular Letter of GF: Constitutions and Missions 15.IX GF in Rouen 20.XI Alexis Bachelot sails from Bordeaux to Sandwich I. 28.X SAINTE MAURE
		1827	08.II Missionaries arrive at Valparaíso (Chile) 29.III Missionaries arrive at El Callao (Peru) 12.VII Alexis Bachelot arrives to HAWAII
	16.VI Ordinances about Schools	1828	01.II ALENÇON. 15.XII The Brothers' School in Poitiers is closed 26.XII Cahors is closed (Brothers)
10.II Leo XII dies 31.III Election of Pious VIII		1829	26.II GF goes to Rome. (Conclave) 04.III ROUEN 02.VII YVETOT 12.IX GF in Rouen – Major Seminary in Rouen 04.X GM has an attack of apoplexies .XII Persecutions in Hawaii get worse
16.I Mgr de Solanges AP. of Oceania Our Lady appears to Cataline Laboure Newspaper: "L'Avenir" 30.XI Pious VIII dies		1830	28.VII Revolutionaries enter Picpus 30.VII Republican Guards in Picpus 05.VIII Search for weapons in Picpus 4.IX Felix Cummings goes to USA

02.II Election of Gregory XVI. 13.II The Archbishopric of Paris is destroyed.	13.II Revolts at Saint German d'Auxerre 21.XI Insurrection of Lyon	1831	16.II Picpus is searched and pillaged 24.XII Alexis Bachelot and Patrick Short in California
15.VIII Enciclical "Mirari Vos" (La Mennais) 17.IX Lemerces, Bishop of Beauvais 8.XII M. de Solanges dies at Madagascar	26.III Cholera in \Paris 01.X Last case of Cholera in Paris	1832	22.I Missionaries of Hawaii arrive in California 30.IV The news of the expulsion arrive at Picpus 16.VII Mgr. Raphael Bonamie named Bishop of Babilonia 18.XI Consecration of Mgr. Bonamie in Rome
	Abd-el-Kader heads a revolution in Algeria	1833	14.VI Mgr. Rouchouze is Apostolic Vicar of East Oceania 26.VII Missionaries leave for Boston (USA) 27.IX Missionaries arrive in Boston 10.XII Mgr. Bonamie leaves for the East 22.XII Consecration of Mgr. Rouchouze in Rome
16.V Saint Andrew Fournet dies 25.VI Enciclical "Singulari"	9.IV Second Insurrection of Lyon	1834	06.I - 2.IX Mgr. Bonamie in Alepo 31.I -13.V Trip of Crisostomo Liasu to VALPARAÍSO 07.VIII François d'Asis Caret and Honoré Laval at GAMBIER 19.X Mgr. Rouchouze to Pacific 15.XI Mgr. Bonamie at Esmirna 16.XI CHATEUDUN 23.XI DEATH OFGOOD MOTHER 10.XII Françoise de Viart elected Superior General
III – IV Lacordaire, Conferences of Notre Dame		1835	3.VI COUSSAY-LES-BOIS 30.X SAINT SERVAN SUR MER
	30.X Conspiracy of Estrasbourg (Napoleon)	1836	20-27.III Mission of GF in Coussay .VI LA VERPILLIERE
		1837	27.III DEATH OF GOOD FATHER 17.IV Alexis Bachelot returns to Honolulu 4.V Mgr. Bonamie is elected Superior General IX CHARTRES 04.XII Alexis Bachelot dies at sea

	27.IX Intervention in Mexico	1838	1.IX Third General Chapter of the Brothers 1.IX Third General Chapter of the Sisters
		1839	
		1840	24.III Approval of the updated Constitutions (Brothers)



APPENDICES

1. Pierre Coudrin: Sermon on Suffering (1790-1791)

Beati qui lugent quoniam ipsi consolabuntur

“Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted”

(Mt 5:5)

What a teaching, my brothers! It must seem strange to men of little faith! Will there be many who follow it? We will find at least some who are able to accept it? Is there at least one that does not show the most consistent opposition to it? It is easy to see men who suffer. But can we find someone among them who will believe he is happy when suffering? We see many Christians who flee adversity, but do they believe that by doing so that they are withdrawing from the source of happiness? Ay! They look for happiness in such profane joy, worldly pleasures and frivolous honors. And where are those that have found it? They think it a misfortune to be afflicted, despised and persecuted. And the source of this misfortune is only their own impatience. Oh men, you grow restless in your chains in vain. Your agitation cannot break them but only serves to make you feel all their weight. It only makes you hurt more grievously. Remain in them with resignation and bear them patiently. That is the real way to lessen their weight. This is the order of Providence and the vow of religion.

Afflictions are necessary, inevitable, and advantageous. Faith teaches us what experience confirms. However all hearts are oppressed and souls revolt at the very mention of affliction. The world tells us: blessed are those who swim in abundance, blessed are those filled with riches and honors, blessed are those who can abandon themselves to all their inclinations, satisfy their tastes, satisfy all their whims. This perfidious message is received and no one contradicts it. It is eagerly listened to, it is followed with joy. The mob runs after this shadow of happiness that then dissipates. They argue over it. They catch a glimpse of something shining but ultimately deceiving. And when the Scripture says: woe to the rich, woe to those who rejoice, woe to those who are filled. Where are those who are convinced of this truth? Where are those terrified by these curses?

However, my brothers, there is nothing to weigh. You must choose between Christ and Belial. If the world says the truth, then the Son of God is deceiving himself and the Gospel is nothing but a book of lies. But such a thing horrifies you. It would be blasphemy to compare the word of Jesus Christ with that of the agents of Satan. Therefore, it is indisputable that only those who live in tears will rejoice, because only they shall be comforted: *Beati qui lugent quoniam...*

My dear listeners, I am not saying that suffering in itself creates happiness. There are tears that are useless, there are some that God despises, and there are others that He hates. Antiochus watered the earth with his tears and Antiochus was rejected. The criminal who suffered next to Jesus Christ, only changed the gallows for an abyss of pain, while his companion in crime found in his just suffering a quiet death followed by a heavenly life. The unfortunate found only the frightening path from the rage of despair to the torments of hell. Therefore it does not suffice just to suffer to be happy. We have to suffer in a way that deserves to be consoled. It is not enough to suffer with Jesus Christ, we must suffer for Jesus Christ and we must suffer as Jesus Christ. That is how the saints suffered. And it is in that way that the passing afflictions of this world produced a weight of eternal glory for them (2 Cor 4:17).

Consequently let us suffer because it is our duty: I will prove it in the first part. But we must suffer as Christians, since only religion can make suffering a source of happiness. That is the theme of the second part.

Oh Jesus, how can we doubt the obligation to suffer, when I see you nailed to this instrument of pain? How this cross reminds me of my duty! How eloquent to my heart is the voice that comes from the blood of your wounds! How can I consider that head crowned with thorns, how can I look at these hands pierced by nails, without crying from the depth of my being: Oh God! My Savior expires in torment and I would refuse to suffer? The innocent Pontiff has drunk to the depths of bitterness, and my sins would dispense me of the same? Ah! Lord, may the memory of your passion never be effaced from our mind. For it is by your passion that we have been saved. Save us by its divine virtue, save us through the merits of your suffering, save us by teaching us to suffer. We implore you by the last signs of tenderness that you gave to the Mother of Sorrows, the blessed Virgin, who dried your first tears and who, after suffering at your side on Calvary, now reigns with you in heaven to present to you the cries of afflicted souls, to receive the homage that we address to her as we say with the angel: Ave Maria.

FIRST PART: Let us suffer because it is our duty.

We have to suffer ... these are hard words for our nature but mild when compared to the terrifying words that the judge of consciences will address to the condemned. How terrible it is to hear Him say: "Accursed, go to the eternal fire." However we must resolve or be resigned to suffering here below. There is no other possible way, my brothers. On the last day you will be placed among the goats or among the sheep. And the only way to be numbered among the elect is to use the resource of afflictions.

It is through Jesus Christ that we will be saved (Acts 4:12). He alone is the way, the truth and the life. (John 14: 6). He alone is our head (Eph 1:22), our guide (Mt 2:6) and our model (I Pt 2:21). You can not follow in his footsteps unless you carry his cross (Lk 9:23). We are able to enter into life only by this narrow gate (Mt 7:14). One can only be his disciple by renouncing the habits of the old man (Eph 4:22). Finally, the road to salvation, is essentially the path of tribulation (Acts 14:21). Jesus Christ himself only reached the Kingdom of Heaven by the path of suffering. Scripture says that it was necessary that He suffer, so as to enter his glory (Lk 24:26). Weak humans as we are, how could we pretend to be privileged? Could we believe it possible to snatch heaven without doing violence to ourselves? Would we want to acquire true happiness without it costing us something? No, my brothers, it is neither beneficial nor allowed, nor desirable for a Christian to live without affliction. It is not advantageous, because prosperity is a scourge for corrupt men. It is not permitted, because sinful man is only deserving of punishment. It is not desirable, because a Christian rescued by the sufferings of Jesus Christ, should not be treated better than his Redeemer.

Let us develop these truths.

1. *Temporal prosperity is incompatible with the happiness of man. He is too weak to bear it. He is too corrupt not to abuse it and he always abuses it to his own misfortune.*

What is it that makes us miserable, my brothers? It is our passions that tyrannize us, our vices that infect our hearts, and our sins that defile our souls. Moreover, it is prosperity that sets in action these instruments of our misery. It is prosperity that misery finds its impulse and its energy. It is prosperity that feeds our passions, strengthens them, inflames them and consumes us. It is prosperity that makes vice daring, enterprising and uncontrollable. A mortal drunk with its favors, does not know restraint or limit.

He believes that everything is permitted. He no longer knows how to blush. Finally, all sins, offspring of pride and depravity of heart, are born of prosperity. All the summits of presumption, all delusions of vanity, all the excesses of self-love, all the refinements of voluptuousness, all the delicacies of flesh, are the product of our passions.

They do not share in the afflictions of men and that is what makes them proud, so said the Prophet King. Their crimes are the result of their abundance. Abundance delivers them to a wide range of passions: *"In labor hominum non sunt: ideo tenuit eos superbia. Prodest quasi former adipose iniquitas eorum, transierunt in affectum cordis"*. This is a distressing truth but one confirmed by daily experience. Look around you, my brothers, see where wickedness reigns in all its splendor, with all its scandals. It is certainly not in this humble hut where the indigent dwells. There is nothing there that might fuel vice. There you can only hear the cry of need. There you see no other joy than that of a good conscience. It is not in these pitiful states where constant work safeguards innocence, where long tiring days go by in simplicity, where the greatest evil is the illusory desire for a more prosperous life. Finally it is not in these meager conditions, living between opulence and distress in a mixture of happiness and adversity, success and failure, for such conditions are a reminder of the value of modesty, frugality, temperance, regularity. No, my dear listeners, we must not accuse the destitute or those with meager means of the irritant excesses that cause dishonor to Christianity today.

On the contrary, it is among such men neglected by richness, despised by pride, forgotten by ostentation, where holy virtue seems to have taken refuge. It is there where there is still morality, probity, and religiosity. One also surely finds weakness. That is the heritage of mankind. There is also deception, because the yoke of sin weighs on all the sons of Adam. But it is reserved to the rich of the world, to the happy of the earth, to show us the passions in their true sense, vice is all its deformity, crime in all its impudence. I am not saying that the advantages of prosperity cannot go together with being good. There are gifts of God and they would never cause someone to be perfidious. What I do say is that the combination is difficult to find. We need to use powerful aids to preserve ourselves from such poison. Finally, I would say that such powerful aids are only found in affliction.

As Scripture says, even though Israel became fat with the good things of the Lord, she soon left her benefactor and returned to him only because of calamities. David presumptuous, cruel, impudent in prosperity acknowledged his sin only when the hand of the Lord struck him. Manasseh, armed with authority capable of anything,

knowing only excess, surrounded by successes that he owed only to God, turned his accomplishments against God. Every step he took was marked by atrocities. Everything he did was a succession of abominations. Then a blow from heaven made him a different man. A reversal of fortune tamed this ferocious character. He who had been a bloody tyrant became a model king. He who was a scandal to Israel became an example of piety for the ages.

Oh! My brothers! How many Davids there are in the world! How many Manassehs in every country! How many insidious men, raised to the highest honors, who only become virtuous by their downfall. How many mortals, blinded by the deceptive sparkle of the pleasures of the world, whose eyes are only opened by the torch lit at the furnace of tribulation! Only the bitterness of affliction can correct the mortal sweetness of earthly joys. True delight and real joy only exists in virtue and prosperity is virtue's tomb. It extinguishes the least trace of the divine fire that gives life to our souls. Everything is thrown off, everything languishes, and everything is destroyed under its disastrous influence. That man whom fortune has suddenly lifted up becomes complete unrecognizable, slave of the most shameful passions. He does not even preserve the appearance. Modest in humiliation, generous, compassionate, religious, all that changes with his rank. Now he is contemptuous, hard, merciless and impious. What will be needed to be once more as he used to be? A false step, a disgrace, an unfortunate accident or a humiliation. This person, who was more pious than lucky, lived out his innocent years in peace and tranquility. At an age when passions predominate, he was virtuous. His exterior qualities made his virtue more attractive, without exposing him to seduction. He fled the world and the world respected him. All of a sudden the enemy of his happiness, disguised under the name "fortune", took hold of his heart. A supposedly advantageous alliance puts him on easy street and the life of ease leads to pleasure, luxury, vanity and crime. Happily, the grace that watches over his destiny has not abandoned him. Some disease will soil that fragile beauty. A fire will devour that house of pleasure. Bankruptcy or a suit will dry up that deadly fortune. And the one who says to his soul: you have riches to last a long time, eat, drink, enjoy, will feed only on his tears. And the hand of God, hidden under these unforeseen events, will bless these tears and there where iniquity abounded, there will be a superabundance of charity. My brothers, this is what happens every day. Men run after these evil goods and Christians fear the blessing of adversity. So, do they not know the true secret of happiness? It is only found in purity of soul and in goodness of heart. It is grief that purifies it and prosperity that corrupts it. Look at the evil rich: prosperity not

only makes him guilty, it goes so far as to stifle what is most human in him, what is most worthy of man, what is most pleasing to his heart. I am speaking of what comes from that precious sensitivity to the divine seed that we all carry in the depth of our being and that flows with our blood to all our members. It tears at our guts when we see suffering and makes our heart leap when we can relieve it. I am speaking of that heavenly feeling which, guided by faith, sustained by hope and made holy by charity, becomes the source of the most heroic virtue. Oh sensitivity, charm of a good heart! My God, leave me this good and, if necessary, deprive me of all others

Sensitive souls, you like this way of speaking, you applaud my wishes. Never, no, never have you tasted purer or more delightful joys than those that spring from this ocean of blessings. And to what do you owe this happiness? Have no doubt about it, to affliction. One has to have suffered so as to be moved by the misfortune of his brothers. Vile animals attended to Lazarus covered with sores, while the rich man dressed in purple would not even look at him. The crumbs from the table of the well fed man would be enough to feed the suffering misfortunate and he is refused even that little bit. Ah yes, one day his eyes will be opened and the light that arrives too late will only come because of suffering, but suffering which will never end. Then the fortunate mortal will curse the days spent in joy, while the miserable, who moaned at his gate, will bless each moment of his affliction.

Oh! Father of Mercy, only you know what it is advantageous for us, you work effectively only for our happiness. You are rightly called the God of all consolation. By afflicting us, you help us best: your blows are graces; your affliction is a source of happiness. Therefore, strike, Lord. Afflict us in this world, as long as you console us in eternity.

Oh! You, who suffer, be courageous. If the weight of adversity overwhelms you, think of the burden a thousand times heavier that it frees you from, think of the sins that it preserves you from, of the remorse that it delivers you from. Finally, believe that it is not good for you. I will say more, it is not allowed that you live without affliction.

2. It is sin that has introduced affliction in the world.

And from sin comes the obligation to endure it. The first man left us that sad legacy, and none of his children are allowed to renounce it. The greatest saints are obliged to suffer, because they were all sinners. And if God can afflict his friends, what must he do to his enemies? If his arm weighs upon those who adore him, must he hold it back from

the guilty who offend him? No, my dear listeners. Affliction cannot be foreign to us. An irrevocable law has determined our duty. We have sinned and the sinner deserves only punishment. The sinner will only have torment. Therefore, when fettered by adversity, do not say my suffering is too much, I cannot endure any more. I have done nothing to merit such grief. Say rather: Oh mercy of my God, which strikes me to heal me, which punishes me to save me! *Misericordiae Domini, quia non sumus consumpti!*

God is just, and his justice must punish us. God is just, and his justice cannot impose a punishment too harsh. You have deserved to be wounded with the sword of his fury, and he has only struck you with the rod of equity. You deserved hell, and what are your sufferings compared to hell? Ah! Christians! We would not doubt the obligation to suffer, if from time to time we thought of the reasons why we suffer. The passing sorrows of this life would seem very light to us if we thought more often of the sufferings of the future life.

You are overwhelmed by infirmity. You enjoyed outstanding health for such a long time and now you are left with only bitter memories of your former happiness. You moan over your situation. Your regret is extreme, but are you allowed to lament a good that you had abused? Is it allowed to lament a good that you so often abused? Are you allowed to complain of an evil that you brought on yourself by your sensuality, your intemperance and your debauchery? Can you complain of an evil that, even if caused by something innocent, is in a way proportionate to the punishment due your sins? If your pain stings, does it make you think of the future? In spirit descend into that abyss where there is only weeping and grinding of teeth. There is a place there just for you. You are to be thrown into that place of horror forever. And to avoid such an abyss you find your suffering too cruel!

A furious enemy pursues you. An atrocious slander has wilted your honor. Bad weather has reduced you to poverty. The death of a protector has ruined your hopes. A single one of these misfortunes would cause a great affliction, and all of them have fallen on you at the same time. Your situation, dear listeners, is deplorable, but why are you saddened at your misfortune without looking for its origin? You mourn, but you do not mourn your sins, which are the real cause. By contrast, you multiply them with your gossip; you aggravate them by your impatience, and fill their measure by pointless despair. Oh! Afflicted men, be convinced of the justice of your destiny! Suffering is our first duty. It is a debt we have contracted at birth, which increases every day of our lives, and has to be paid until death. Blessed are we if our Savior desires to abolish the decree of our condemnation, nailing it to his cross!

Alas, my brothers, if we had only committed a single mortal sin, we would be worthy of all its rigors. Teary mother, tender wife, generous friend, this is our response to your cries. You have lost the one most dear to you in this world. Your heart has received a wound that will only be healed in the grave. May God deliver me from condemning such legitimate affliction. Nature has rights that religion cannot ignore, but only faith teaches us all the truth. From faith you will learn to turn once more to the hand that wounded you. First, go within your conscience. There is the source of evil. It is there that the storm formed which then broke upon your head. It is from there that the dart that heaven threw back against you came. Yes, when I consider the different conditions of life, when I look into peoples' hearts, when I inquire into peoples' consciences, everywhere I find people who are afflicted and I have never found one who did not merit it. So, my dear listener, accept tribulations as the just punishment for your sins. Accept them as a scourge from which you must not be delivered. If somehow you were dispensed from bearing it by reason of justice, recognition would make a duty of it. For, it is not desirable to be exempt from affliction.

Indeed, my brothers, should a Christian be treated better than Jesus Christ? Is the disciple greater than his Master? Is the servant above his Lord? Are the members to be more privileged than their Head? Jesus Christ, the God-Man has suffered, and we are we to believe ourselves exempt from suffering? He suffered incredible torture and we would have the right to avoid the slightest discomfort? He has suffered for us and we have nothing to suffer for his love? He has suffered as our model and we refuse to imitate Him? Ah! Far from us those sentiments unworthy of the name we carry. It would be strange that a crucified God would have for worshipper's men who hate the cross! That a God who had no where to rest his head, would have as his disciples those who have regard the deprivations of poverty to be a disgrace! A God who died between two thugs would recognize as his children, Christians who lose heart at the slightest insult!

Is it not shameful, asked St. Bernard, a head crowned with thorns with such delicate members? And what are we complaining about? Does our suffering equal that of the Son of God? Your days are nothing but grief, stumbling blocks are all along your path, your spoiled children repay you with ingratitude, a dissipated husband ruins you, an unbalanced wife covers you with shame. But have you been betrayed, sold, and handed over to murderers? Have you been stripped only to be covered with a cloak of opprobrium? Have you been led through the streets like a criminal? An insult considered serious, an affront maybe well deserved, losses and injustice have embittered your spirit. You

erupted in invectives, you demand reparations, you speak of revenge, and you despair. But Jesus Christ was slapped and did not lose his meekness. They spat in his face and he remained silent. He was beaten with a switch and he did not take revenge. He was unjustly condemned and did not complain. They spilled his blood and He prayed for those who did so. Alas, my dear listeners, can we keep count of what we suffer when we look at Calvary? Ah! I believe I hear from the height of that place of suffering, I believe I hear that divine Savior addressing the same reproach to each of us that an idolatrous chief, laying on burning coals, addressed to a servant who was complaining at his side (I hope such an association does not scandalize you, my brothers, I do not intend to make a comparison): And I, said the suffering hero, am I perhaps on a bed of roses? Oh, my children, you suffer, you are in anguish, and I on this cross, am I on a bed of rest? Men abandon you in your affliction, and was I not abandoned by my own Father? You are insulted in your suffering, new wounds are added to those that already make your heart bleed, and I, did I find compassion among my enemies? Did my executioners afford me any relief? Oh! All of you, who are witnesses of my situation, look and see if there is any suffering like mine! *O vos homnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus!*

Yes, the prophet rightly calls the Son of God, the man of suffering. There is no kind of suffering that has not tormented his body. There is no kind of affliction with which his soul has not been plagued. And for whom has he suffered? He was innocent and he suffered for us, his brothers, who are guilty, to heal us by his wounds, to wash away our filth in his blood. And we resist, because we must suffer. We murmur when we are afflicted. My dear friends, suppose that a loving friend would become a victim for you out of love. I imagine that if he were faithful to the feelings he pledged to you, he would preserve them even in the midst of suffering. You have merited that but he is the one who will endure it. Rather than betray you, he suffers the most awful things for you. And there you are, you witness of the event. You see him shed his blood. You see him torn limb from limb. You hear his last breath. At that point would you be so sensitive to such overwhelming suffering? Would you find it too much to be worn out by hunger, to burn with thirst, to be wiped out by misery? Would you consider yourself unfortunate when there were such just reasons to suffer? No, I have a better opinion of you and your heart. You would never be able to wipe away the image of your friend suffering. From then on you would feed only on the bread of affliction; you would quench your thirst with your tears. By your own choice, life would become one tribulation after another.

Well! Here is the model of the portrait that I have just exposed. On this altar is the divine friend who has taken on himself your iniquity, who has taken on himself your suffering, who has been broken by our crimes. Jesus Christ is the one who gave us the unique example of a love that human feelings never reach. What gratitude, my brothers, does that benefit asks of us? And gratitude to a God, who has suffered for us, is it not to be found entirely in the suffering? We please him only by imitating him. We can only imitate him by suffering. We must resemble him to be worthy of his graces. The only way we can resemble him is by affliction. .

Our resemblance to Him not only means that we must be grateful, it is the foundation of our salvation: we will never be able to reign with Jesus Christ if we have not suffered with him; *si tamen compatimur, et ut conglorificemur* (If only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. Rom. 8:17) What we have to note is that the passing afflictions that are part and parcel of our nature are not enough to lead us to the kingdom of heaven. We have to get there by daily suffering, by continual tribulation *per multas tribulationes oportet nos intrare in Regnum Dei* (it is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22) What extreme conditions! And that is not all. When you suffer all that you are humanly capable of, none of it will bring you happiness, unless you suffer as a Christian. This is the subject of my second part.

SECOND PART: To suffer as a Christian

How unfortunate we are when we cry without any hope of being comforted! Suffering without finding relief for ones suffering, suffering without hope of reward for our suffering! What a situation my brothers! And it is yours, dear listeners who suffer but not as a Christian. In this respect nature is very weak, reason is insufficient. You need other resources that can only be found in faith; you need other resources that can only be found in hope. It is grace that gives suffering value. The reward promised to the good use of grace comforts afflicted souls. Only religion can make suffering worthwhile, because it alone inspires the true feelings with which we are to welcome suffering. Only religion can make suffering consoling, because it alone provides the means of consolation needed to endure suffering.

All the fruit we can expect from suffering comes from religion.

The land of grief that is our inheritance can only be cultivated by patience and true patience is the work of faith. It is our tears that must fertilize it and tears are sterile

when they are not colored by the blood of Jesus Christ. I might begin by asking you, my brothers, what is the use of impatience in the midst of affliction? Is resistance to an inevitable evil a way to avoid it? Are your shouts enough to stop this flood that destroys your inheritance, the pest that destroys your harvest, the disease that brings death to your home? Can you stop wars, famine, the rigors of heaven or all the crimes of the earth? No, certainly not. And if it is impossible to halt the progress of such evils, is it reasonable to oppose them by building a damn that would be useless?

If it must be that adversity pierces you with its arrows and your agitation, will your efforts blunt its tip? A sick person consumed by a burning fever, will be relieved by his murmurs? An indigent deprived of everything, is he less miserable because he is angered by his misery? That man debased by calumny, has he recovered the esteem of his fellow citizens by his outbursts of resentment? No, people that are impatient are like those angry animals, powerless in their anger, which bite the stone that hit them. Oh! Men, how your situation makes you worthy of pity! It's not because of the afflictions, because they are necessary, but the use you make of afflictions.

Since you are so sensitive to suffering, take a look at this sensitivity of yours. Your impatience irritates it. Your murmuring increases it. Your complaining has no other origin than a desire to stifle the pain, and that desire always resisted makes it more alive. Far from easing your pain, it makes it bitterer. Far from healing your wounds, it poisons them. In a word, you are impatient, because you do not want to suffer and because you are impatient you suffer all the more. So go on and complain, if that's what nature wants. Complain. Religion allows it but if you are going to complain then complain as Christians. Complain as Jesus Christ did. Say with him to the God who afflicts you: O my Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me, but may your will be done and not mine. And that, my brothers, is the only complaint that heaven allows. We cannot make others without provoking God's anger. We cannot resist the divine will without losing the fruit of our suffering. Submission to the commands of Providence, resignation to the good pleasure of God, the union of our suffering with that of Jesus Christ, those are the essential characteristics of Christian patience. Those are the indispensable conditions for it to be worthy of heaven.

The pains of life are sacrifices that God imposes, and every sacrifice must be voluntary. They can only be salvific for us, if they are pleasing to his Heart, and nothing under heaven can enjoy such fortune without the mark of the name that is source of salvation.

See then, my dear listeners, what a treasure you have lost when you most need it! See what idleness has been yours in the midst of the most demanding work! See the how many stains you have incurred for the purifying fire can wipe out the blackest filth. May a feeling of humble submission, an affectionate glance toward the Savior's cross, a look toward heaven change your wrong into merit. You suffered but you remain empty handed. You have sown with tears but your only harvest is lament. You should have been a martyr and you are hardly Christian! Why are you unable to make a profit with the priceless talent that the Father of the family has confided to you? It costs so little and the profit is so sure! Those concerns that torment you, that problem that is eating you up, that weariness that wears you down, those contradictions that bother you, those insults that wound you and finally the least displeasure open before you a source of living water that springs up to life eternal.

If we knew the gift of God, if we were attentive to the hand that presents it to us, with what appreciation we would accept this kind deed! With what ardor we would use it under the eyes of the divine Benefactor! What strength is inspired in a bereaved soul by the thought that God sees our sufferings, is interested in our sorrow, hears all our cries and numbers all our sighs. While He strikes with one hand, with the other he gathers the tears caused by our pain! My brothers, this is the foundation of true patience. The assistance of a merciful God is what forms it in us, and it is confidence in this, which sustains it.

Reason may well demonstrate its necessity but only grace can give it. Reason can desire it; faith alone can rely on it. That an unbeliever would fear suffering does not surprise me a bit. He believes himself to be alone. But would a Christian doubt it, he who sees the God of patience at his side, the God who never abandons the suffering heart? The Lord is close to the brokenhearted... (*Juxta qui est Dominus iis Tribulato sunt corde*. Psalm 34:19). No, my God, I will never fear afflictions, because you are with me: I fear no harm for you are at my side... (*Non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum is*. Psalm 23:4) Your support is my strength, your goodness my only recourse. Like the Apostle, in the shadow of your wings I will resist the combined efforts of the harshest assaults: hunger, nakedness, threats, persecution and violence. Nothing in the world will be able to separate me from your love. In the excess of my affliction I will throw myself into the arms of Jesus Christ. I will press my heart to his heart. I will mix his tears with mine. I will water my wounds with his blood and this life-giving blood will restore my troubled mind. That priceless blood will give infinite value to my suffering. Ah! The feeling of pain

may still disturb my senses, but my soul will always stay calm. The violence of evil may place cries of resistance in my mouth, but my heart will always be obedient. It is to this inner calm, this obedience of heart, that God attributes the merit of affliction. Do not be mistaken here. Not everything that looks like patience is really always patience.

Insensitivity, pride and a false kind of decisiveness often appear to have all the characteristics (of patience). We admire the tranquility of some people who are unmoved in the midst of the jolts of adversity. Nothing alters their serenity. No cloud covers their brow, not a murmur stains their mouth. They maintain their composure, even in the midst of blows that would knock over the most robust of mortals. The storm rages over their head and they listen without batting an eyelid. The most horrible event seems to hardly graze their soul. Is that patience? No, it's pride. They want to appear strong, but God sees their heart.

Finally, as they say, there are some people who are able to reason in the midst of affliction. In other words, they put the thought of it far from them by merely human considerations. They weaken its affect by trying to feel otherwise. In other words, they use "pain killers" to lessen the hurt, while they should be applying fire to heal it. Ah, my brothers, do not seek healing in these useless remedies. Learn how to suffer and we will be healed!

The evil that we have to heal is sin; the medicine is suffering. The health that is most important for us is that of the soul. The means to preserve it is patience. "*In patientia vestra, possidebitis animas vestras*" ("By your perseverance you will secure your lives" Lk 21:19). In that way the sinner acquires justice, the just are preserved in it, penitents recover it and the Saints obtain the crown. Yes, even if we had all the virtues, if we lack this one, we will not reach the goal that is only possible with patience. It is the necessary test of the soundness of all the others. Patience is the crucible in which the gold we bought with good works must be purified by suffering.

At times you are anxious, my brothers, about the future prepared for you in heaven. You would like to know if you will be among the small number of the elect. Listen, then to what I am going to tell you, or rather what St. Paul tells you through me. God alone knows those whom he has predestined, but we do know with certainty that the only ones in this happy number are suffering souls. We know with certainty that we will surely be saved if we are conformed to the image of the suffering Jesus Christ. "*Quos praescivit et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui*" ("For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..." Rom 8:29). This is therefore

the infallible character of predestination. Do you suffer? Do you suffer for Jesus Christ? Be reassured, my brothers, your confidence is based on the word of the Lord which will never pass away. Oh my God, what peace, what contentment will we enjoy in this valley of tears, if we are able to enter into the mystery of suffering, if we are able to know the value of patience, in other words, if we know how to be Christian! For religion does not only show us an inexhaustible source of merit in affliction but it is the only source that can bring us consolation.

Yes, my brothers, in vain do we search outside religion for the means to temper the bitterness of our tears. Only God can sweeten them, God alone sweetens them. Human consolations are frivolous! In the world all is vanity and affliction of spirit. In our souls all is weakness and impotence. Where are the men who want to console us? Where are those who can? Those who are jealous of your prosperity applaud your misfortune. Others who are companions in good times, abandon you in times of misfortune. They feel your pain, without wanting to relieve it. Others think that you deserve it and so do not console you. Another is overly cautious and does not dare to try to heal your wounds because he is afraid of making them bleed if he touches them. Still another is imprudent and pushes the dagger deeper in your heart while trying to pull it out.

The indifferent comforter's eagerness to help tires you out. The bland impression of the happy man humiliates you. The attention of this secret enemy angers you. The very sensitivity of your friends just increases your affliction. However if you were able to expect from men some consolation, it would be in the heart of a friend that you should find it. You do find it there, my dear listener, by what consolation? A phony consolation that fools us, consolation that is sterile and without effect, a consolation that quickly passes, consolation without reason and without substance! How ingenious you are to torment yourself, this compassionate friend says to me. You are not in a desperate state. This loss is easy to repair. This humiliation can be turned to your glory. I know the author of your ills. He is a vicious man that you must despise He is an atrocious person, whom I detest. Ah, perfidious consoler, you inspire confidence in me and evil reaches its height. Now I am only unfortunate but you want me to become guilty. By blindfolding me, do you want to make me insensitive to the thorns I am standing on. By arousing my heart to resentment, do you think you will calm my troubled soul? You say that you share greatly in my affliction. That's just polite talk, sometimes sincere and never very consoling. And if I am persuaded of your tenderness, will my condition be any better? Will your crying dry my tears? Can your sadness inspire my joy? When I suffer, humanity, mercy and

friendship, may well offer more to you but I am still the one who suffers. Perhaps you enjoy the satisfaction that one feels in pitying the misfortune of another but I only experience the misfortune that moves you to pity. We must not exaggerate, my brothers.

We have to admit that friendship can offer comfort, some sort of sweetness mixed with the bitterness of affliction. Such is the power of feeling, that a word, a look, the simple presence of a friend can often make us forget the harshest misfortune. But little consolation! A momentary consolation! The instant that is produced it is also taken away. The following moment hardly contains a trace of it. You have a consoling dream but you awaken and reality is even more painful. To really be consoled, we need grounds and what grounds can men give us that come from their own depths? Cold sayings, outdated principles, many reasons and no consolation at all.

I lost the sole support of my life, and they say that we are all mortal. Victim of a horrible persecution, I moan in my disgrace and they want to silence my moans by railing against the evil of men. I suffer and those with me tell me that man is made to suffer. Honor, health, fortune, I've lost it all and they console me by proving that fragile things are passing. What can I say? Can an afflicted man be his own consoler? Where are his means? What are his resources? Is it reason? Is it reflection? I appeal to your experience. Has reason ever consoled you? Hasn't reflection always increased your affliction? By reflecting on your suffering, haven't you just been more strongly affected by it? Doesn't reflection just take them to the very depth of your soul and into the most secret corners of your heart? Doesn't reflection add past suffering to the suffering of the present? Who is going to look in the future for reasons for suffering that does not yet exist and perhaps will never exist? Alas, often with all its strength, our reason fails when confronted with imaginary suffering. What can it do against very real difficulties, profound affliction and suffering?

Oh! My God, too often have I experienced that the efforts of the mind are powerless in the face of heartbreak. Turning in on myself, I am worn out by reasoning as I try to console myself. I berated my weakness, condemned my sensitivity, responded to my own weeping, imagined help, conceived hope and I forgot that you Lord are my only hope on the day of affliction. *Spes mea tu in die afflictionis* (you are my refuge on the day of misfortune. Jer 17:17).

Yes, my God, you've said and you cannot deceive us: I, it is I who comfort you. *Ego, Ego ipse consolabor vos* (Is 51:12). My brothers, what a promise, what a Comforter! To have as a guarantee of consolation the word of a God! To be consoled by a God! Is there

a more sure consolation? Is there a more perfect consolation? If I say to that unfortunate buried in the darkness of a filthy prison cell, have patience, my brother, your chains will be smashed, just one more day and you'll see light, once more you will be among your friends, they will honor you more than before, you will enjoy unfailing peace. My dear listener, what joy, what consolation I would bestow upon his soul! With what gratitude he would listen to my voice! With what outpouring of hear he would bless his chains!

Well! What I am saying now to afflicted souls comes from God: be consoled, be consoled! It is the Lord who comes in power. He brings with him his recompense. He holds in his hand the price of your suffering. *Consolamini, consolamini. Ecce Dominus in fortitudine vienet et ecce ejus cum eo.* (Comfort, give comfort...Here comes with power the Lord GOD... Here is his reward with him... Is 40:1, 10). Be consoled, persecuted souls. The kingdom of heaven is close and it belongs to you. Be consoled, humiliated souls, just one more moment and you will be raised as high as you have been cast down. Be consoled you faithful ones whom God has tested by temptation. Soon you will receive the crown of life that he promised to those who suffer with love. Poor of Jesus Christ, you who endure hunger, you who mourn now, be consoled, the time is not far off when God, who is rich in mercy, will console you with the riches of his glory, when you will be filled with bread from heaven, when your sorrow will be changed into a joy that no one will ever take from you. Finally, be consoled, all of you who sorrow! Here is the consoler who opens his arms to you. Here is the one who says to you, come to me and I will comfort you. Of Jesus, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, the only words that are able to console us perfectly.

My dear listener, I know that as long as we dwell in a mortal body, we will groan under the weight of this house of mud, as the apostle says. I know that here below consolation is always mixed with something else. Suffering is always bad. Affliction is always a suffering but this thing that is so bad is light and this suffering is consoling, when you think of the sovereign good, the endless rest that it gains for us! An eternity of happiness! An eternity of glory! An eternity of delights! Oh suffering souls, if you are not moved by that, do you even have a heart? If you are not consoled by that, do you have any faith? You will suffer the most awful treatment just to have a few more years of this passing life. . You bear with satisfaction work, fatigue, countless discomforts, to achieve perishable benefits: vain honors, a fragile reputation. The expectation of eternity, the sight of an incorruptible treasure, the promise of infinite glory, can have no effect on your heart!

Oh! Holy religion, is it typical of Christians to be ignorant of your power in an afflicted heart? Is it not you that filled the disciples of the Savior with joy, because they were judged worthy to suffer disgrace for his name? Is it not you that placed in the mouth of Saint Paul the touching words that came from the depth of his soul, I have great confidence in you, I have great pride in you; I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy all the more because of all our affliction. "*Superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione nostra*" (2 Cor 7:4). Is it not you that impressed on the face of martyrs that radiant joy that attracted the admiration of their persecutors? Is it not you that made them run to meet torture that inspired in them the desire to prolong their torments in order to increase their happiness? Finally, is it not you that poured out that oil a thousand times sweeter than all the sweetness of the world, in that faithful soul who lays her sufferings at the foot of the altar, who mingles her sighs with the ineffable groaning of the consoling Spirit, who receives in her breast the Victim immolated for our eternal salvation? Oh consoling religion, if you had not come down to earth to sanctify us, the need of our hearts would call you down to console us.

My dear listener, this is the science of true happiness. Let us know how to suffer and we will be happy. The world only seeks pleasure and its efforts are often pointless. Sometimes the world enjoys pleasures but its enjoyment is followed by regret. The Christian, on the contrary, finds occasions to suffer everywhere. His suffering is never without consolation. Let us leave the blind children of the world to glorify in their advantages that lead nowhere but to death. We who are children of light, let us glory in the cross of Jesus Christ (Gal 6:14).

Oh! Cross of my Savior! You will be now my only recourse; you will serve my soul as a strong and secure anchor in the storm of woes. Those who hurry to their loss may well consider you as madness. For me, who want to save myself, you will be the wisdom and the strength of God (I Cor 1:18). I will not be content with reverencing you on the altars. I will not confine myself to making the sign of the cross on myself as a blessing. I will imprint you on my deepest being. I will place you on the altar of my heart. There as on another Calvary, I will honor you by my suffering, well convinced that after having been the object of my worship in this earthly Jerusalem, you will become the subject of my eternal homage in the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

2. Sermon of the Good Father on Faith (LEBP 2199)

My friends and my brothers,

It is an inexpressible joy for us to dwell in the bosom of the faith in spite of the impious. But it is not enough just to know this happiness and to have a taste of it. As you are aware, it brings with it commitments. They consist in four types of homage that faith demands of us: the homage of submission, which helps us heed it¹¹⁶⁴ with docility; the homage of affection, which helps us love it tenderly; the homage of zeal to ardently defend its interests; the homage of action which helps us love and honor it by our works. Holy God, author and completer of faith, deign to enlighten me with your divine light and grant me the grace to persuade these two young hearts and to inspire in them greater fidelity, that fidelity with which they must inviolably fulfill their duty toward the Faith.

1. *Humble and meek submission: this is the portion of the Church's true children.*

The faith requires it in such an indispensable way that if someone were to refuse it to her, she¹¹⁶⁵ would disregard him, condemn him and summon all her anathemas against him. Henceforth he is no more than an indocile sheep. Woe betide him if, thus going astray, he becomes victim of the ravenous wolf. Henceforth he is but a stone of scandal that has no place in the edifice of the heavenly Jerusalem. Henceforth he is but a rotting member that must be cut off for fear that he spread his disease... Firm and unshakable submission to the point of sacrificing everything, suffering everything and loosing everything, rather than loosing the faith, even rather than putting oneself in a situation where one could lose it. Possessions, honors, health, freedom, life itself: all of that is precious. But if all of that would compromise the faith, it must all yield to faith. And if necessary, faith triumphant must rise on the ruins of all that.

Holy Church: may my right hand be cut off, if it ever writes words which my spirit denies. May my tongue dry up and cling forever to the roof of my mouth, if I ever pronounce words that my heart disavows. My religion teaches me to speak and not to equivocate. My faith teaches me to die and not to lie. A faith that allowed me such dishonesty could only be worthy of my condemnation. I would say to it, away from me, in no way are you a Christian faith. The integrity of a pagan is of greater value than you.

1164 it=faith

1165 From the context "she" seems to refer to the Church.

2. *The homage of affection which causes us to love it tenderly.*

The Church is our mother. On this point my heart is speaking without my mouth being able to explain. You are such an amiable mother, Holy Church, could we ever disregard you? And how many are the reasons for which you deserve this sweet name? You are the one who begot us in Jesus Christ, who received us in your arms, who nourished us with your milk. When hungry, you have filled us with the heavenly manna and bread of Angels. If we maliciously wandered away, you have kindly called us back. You received us tenderly when we came back sorrowfully. How many the prayers to the Lord for us! How many sacrifices offered on your altars! How great a help in preparing for heaven! That is not the limit of your favors, holy religion, for it is only in your bosom that we have had the happiness to find grace. It is in your arms that we hope to breathe our last breath. And to whom would we give our affection if we were to refuse it to you? Justice, gratitude, interest: aren't these so many eloquent ways in which you speak to us and ask for our heart? Therefore we consecrate to you, divine Church, these hearts and all their sentiments forever. We give you all our affection. But by what signs can we show you this?

What are the signs, my dear friends? By our zeal to defend her interests and zeal for the faith, could a reconciled Christian lack that? We believe we have it, but do we really? Are we our own judges? Ah, Lord, we are faithful and Christian in name only. Are we such in our conduct and our lifestyle? Our faith has commandments. She has laws. She has practices. Do we observe those commandments? Do we respect those laws? Do we carry out those practices? Now that is zeal. Can we flatter ourselves thinking that is what drives us? Our faith has interests. Do we take them to heart? Each one must answer those questions for himself. But for ourselves, can we respond in any way but by condemning ourselves? Our faith has enemies to fear, persecutions to endure, battles to be undergone. We know that. How does that affect us? Does zeal for the house of God consume our heart, like that of the Prophet? Do we speak, do we act, and do we live for her? And if our state does not allow us to speak, do we at least pray for her preservation? Do we pray for those who defend her? Do we pray for her ministers, for her children, for her enemies? Like Moses, do we lift our hands to heaven while Joshua fights for her? Even without undertaking their works, we will have a share in their victory. O divine faith! In former times you found that burning zeal in the first Christians. They offered it to you by the witness of their blood. Without going that far, my dear friends, she asks of you the homage of your works. Faith and works much always be joined together and walk

hand in hand. Works without faith are sterile and faith without works is dead. The tree is known by its fruits, says the Lord of the world, and the Christian is known by his works. Without our being asked, our actions must indicate what our religion is. We do not wear our faith written on our forehead, but we must render it respectable by our conduct, by works that honor faith, that preserve and maintain faith. Love of God, detachment from ourselves, charity for our brothers, mutual edification, such is the glorious witness that we owe our faith. But what would happen, O my God, if rather than honoring the faith by our works we were to place ourselves in danger of losing it. And don't we run the risk of losing it when we listen to speech that questions everything and when we enter into relationships where the faith is no longer respected? The Savior of the world said, "Do you think that when the Son of man comes one day that he will still find faith on the earth?" Alas, adorable Savior, without waiting for the end of the world, if you were to come right now, would you find much faith among us? Ah, do not take this sacred deposit away from us; do not extinguish what remains of the heavenly torch. Do not deprive us of this precious portion of your heritage. Punish us, we merit it. But do not punish us to such an extent as to take away from us your divine Spirit and deprive us of his lights and the gift of faith. My dear friends, such is my desire for you. Amen.

3. LEBP 2197. Early Rule drawn up by the Good Father (1797...?)

God brought us to birth in the bosom of the Christian religion, he called us to holiness. Therefore it is in no way a rash thing to tend toward that. We need a guide, a model, a protector. In Jesus we find everything: his birth, his life and his death. That is our rule. His divine heart will be our refuge and our exile. It will be the solitary place to which we often withdraw so that He might speak to our hearts.

God is our Father, Jesus our spouse, the Holy Spirit our light. The Blessed Virgin is our good mother, the holy Angels our guardians and Saint Joseph our protector.

Jesus was born of a virgin. His preference for virginity leads us to embrace it. He was born poor, we want to live poorly. He lived in seclusion for some years. That is our plan, unless he shows us that it is not his will.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart, humility and meekness will be the fundamental virtues of the Congregation.

From Easter to the feast of Saint Michael (September 29) we will arise at 4:30 and from the feast of Saint Michael to Easter at 5:30. On awaking we will enter our usual refuge to adore him and to ask him to present us to his Father. While we dress we will

recite Psalm 62, from Lauds of the office of the Blessed Virgin.

From 6:00 to 7:00 there will be prayer, and then Prime and Tierce of the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Virgin. At 7:30 Mass followed by a quarter of an hour of thanksgiving. Then we will recite the ordinary prayers. We will leave in silence that will be observed until 9:00. That time will be used for keeping one's cell in order. At 9:00, we will prostrate ourselves in adoration but without ceremony, we will say the *De Profundis* for the brothers. That must not take more than seven or eight minutes and then we will work until 11:00. Those who have no particular work will remain in their cell.

At 11:00 we will say the first small office, then the examen. At 11:30 there will be dinner followed by the angelus and glorias at noon. There will be recreation from 1:00 until 2:00 followed by a quarter of an hour of reading, a quarter of an hour of reflection, a second period of reading and a second time of reflection. So in all there will be a half hour of reading and a half hour of silence.

At 2:00 there will be Vespers, the same prayers as at the end of Mass, the litany of the Sacred Heart and 15 minutes of adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. At 3:00 we will prostrate ourselves and recite the *Miserere* in honor of the hour of the death of our Redeemer. Then we will withdraw in silence to our cell where we will work. At 4:00 we will gather as at 9:00. From 6:00 to 7:00 there will be prayer, the rosary. At 7:30 we will have supper and recreation until 9:00. We will then observe silence until 9:00 the next morning. We will recite Matins and Lauds, the exam, the Gospel of the next day, a chapter of the Imitation of Jesus, all of that can serve as material for meditation for those who desire.; we will not be obliged to that. It will be around 10:00 when we go to our cells. They will not spend more than a half hour there.

Food – At all the Church's fasts, we will not take oil, butter, fish, eggs, milk, or cheese. Besides obligatory fasts, we will fast Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and the vigils of the feasts of the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles. For those feasts, they can take milk, eggs, cheese, fish but without oil or butter. The other four days we will eat meat but will only have soup and boiled vegetables in the morning. In the same way hot soup and cold vegetables in the evening, sometimes we can have salad and put a bit of oil on it.

For clothing: no linen, a wool shirt, a brown under dress, a cord for a belt, the pockets should be strong, no doublet. We will not take off this first garment when we go to sleep. Our bed will be small, with a straw mattress, a pillow of the same style, woolen sheets and a grey blanket. We will have no furniture other than a table, a chair and a prie-Dieu which will have a small cupboard underneath and only three pictures which we can choose according to our devotion.

Order of intention for prayer. For the different seasons and feasts we will follow the spirit of the Church. Beside that they we adopt the following rules:

The first Sunday of the month will be consecrated to rendering honor and homage to the Blessed Trinity; the second to praying for the souls in Purgatory; the third to adoring the Most Blessed Sacrament and to repair the outrages that He receives; the fourth to prepare ourselves for death, the fifth, when there is one, to thanking God for bringing us to birth in the Church.

During the week: Monday, Mondays to ask the light of the Holy Spirit, to implore him to present to the Father our prayers for the relief of the souls in Purgatory. Tuesday, for the church and to pray to the guardian Angels for those who watch over it and for those who persecute it so as to obtain perseverance for the first and conversion for the latter; to implore the holy Angels to present our prayers to God. Wednesday, for our parents, our friends, our enemies and our confessors; that day is under the protection of Saint Joseph; we will pray to him to obtain for us the spirit of prayer. Thursday we will ask the holy Angels, who have the honor of surrounding the Most Holy and Most Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, to make us share this spirit of respect, adoration and love that penetrates them as they gaze upon the excess of the love of our God for ungrateful men. For it was not for these heavenly spirits that he came to live on earth, but only for us. Friday is for honoring the sufferings of Jesus, especially the tender wound in his divine Heart, to pray for those who are in mortal sin; Saturday is given to honoring the Holy Virgin and asking her protection, to praying for perseverance of the virgins and for the conversion of others.

These different intentions must be mentioned at morning prayer and without taking too much time. As regards to extraordinary penances, none without permission of one's confessor.

Every first Friday of the month, we will choose an hour of adoration during the day...The night before we will go to bed only at midnight, in order to observe 11:00 to midnight, the time of our divine Master's agony. That day will be a day of silence in the house, no recreation. Except for times of liturgical prayer, we will be free. We will choose another day of retreat during the month. The great feast will be a day free of work.

Cor Jesu, salva nos, perimus. (Heart of Jesus, save us, we perish.)

(In all, 7 hours of sleep, 7 hours of prayer, 8 hours of work, 2 hours for meals.)

4. LEBP 192 ArchSSCC / F. Letter to Miss Helene de la Barre, Rue des Hautes-Treilles, No. 221 Poitiers

Paris, August 4, 1804. Feast of St. Dominic, who passed through the crucible of tribulation, for a work similar to the one that, in spite my exile, is all my happiness.

Yes, my dear daughter, I live only to reinforce, if necessary, and at a grand price, the work of the Heart of this kind Master who fills me with his favors. If I'm ungrateful, he still loves me, and I feel in my heart that he will always love me, yes always.

I could just go on and on, if I were to write everything about the power of his grace on my soul, the full extent of his power in the depth of my being... So, love Him completely and I assure you that nothing will separate you from Him. Whether we are persecuted or left in peace, let us be children of the cross. May we burn with the desire of immolation that He requires or allows. And, yes, all will go according to His will, which I believe and will believe until death is always adorable.

I have not yet received favorable news of the arrival of my eldest daughter. I expect that she will come directly here. I have a nice place for her, which she will like. It is at the home of an older woman lady who wants to go with her, and arrange in advance her affairs with your mother, to remain with her for the rest of her life....

I still have others, if they agree. At least if hell is angry with me, there will be some who flee from it and God will draw glory from that.

Be strong as columns at home. May nothing make you leave there, because finally the house belongs to you. They may be able to keep you from keeping the Spouse of your souls with you, but they cannot prevent you from adoring him and loving him completely. Do not trust any kind of human strength. The best only make a lot of noise, and when the work is really difficult, their fire only produces smoke.

In my experience, everything is deceiving here on earth. Fortunately I am prudent and up to now, I have not been duped by anyone. If they caused me difficulty, I saw it in advance and I submitted myself. The sacrifice was always made before it was demanded.

Tell my son (F. Isidore) and his children to let nothing shake them. Let them be cautious and if their love is tested, it will not be for long.

Let them cling to the cross. The cross has defeated more enemies than I know them to have. In a word, let them pray and hope...I'm still at peace. It is more than possible that I will not be worthy of chains. Four days ago St. Peter was delivered from them, and I always remember a picture that you must have, that is the first altar of the 1st sacrifice that

I made at the Olérons around ten years ago ... This picture, or rather what it represents, received my first resolutions and those of many others who bless with it the Holy of Holies in glory. ... Will I still tell you not to be too sad? My prayer about that cannot change the will of your much beloved Savior, but at least I want you to know that I suffer with you, I cry with you, I am with you where you are, in order to share all and to adore all.

Goodbye, my dear daughter; tell Thérèse (Beuvier), etc, etc, etc, that I am as respectfully as tenderly united to them.

F. M. J. (Br. Marie-Joseph)

PS Mrs. Emilie is well, she knows something, but not all and it is good to keep for your God what he likes more.

5. LEBP 1163 ArchSSCC / F. To Father Alexis Bachelot in Bordeaux

(P.S. posted a letter) in October 1826

PS - What can I add, my dear friends, if not that my heart and my mind will follow you. They will accompany you until we have news from you.

Love each other well; support the small difficulties that will come about because of different characters; have one heart and one mind.

The Holy Angels will help you, guide you, enlighten you and bring you into port...

Be gentle and obedient towards each other. Let no one cling too much to their feelings. It is more in keeping with the will of God to give a little bit for the good of all than to want the best, when there are obstacles which in are not bad in themselves.

Farewell, dear, good and worthy friends. I believe you are very fortunate to be the first of the Congregation called to fulfill the ministry of Saints Paul and Barnabas.. But, please, my dear sons, never receive our Lord Jesus Christ with a doubtful conscience and may the grace and peace of his divine Heart be with you all.

Your poor father,
M. J. Coudrin, Sup. Gl.

6. LEBP Copying HL, 1309. To Sister Alix Guyot, Mortagne (1827 or 1828)

I do not have time to read what they send you, my dear daughter, (a letter from B. Severine Coulognes, to which the GF. Adds a P.S.), but what I know is that I pray the good Lord that you are holy, and that all my dear daughters are holy.

May all of you work at serving well and adoring well this very good Master. If you

are really happy to be his children, I am really happy that you are happy. Tell this to all your good friends, the dear daughters of his divine Heart. May they really love one another, may they put up with each other's infirmities in the charity which drives out fear. May all their actions be done to gain heaven. May they really believe that they have entered religious life only to die to themselves. May they be angels in obeying promptly, virgins so as to follow the Lamb, detached from everything so as to possess nothing when the Spouse comes to open the gate of heaven.

F. M. J. Coudrin

Hello and much peace to good sister Arsène and all my poor daughters. If the cross is her inheritance, may she make it her happiness and her joy, the precious way that God has traced for her from all eternity, the way that she must follow with faith, hope and love. A vocation in faith, is it not the best? This beloved daughter of his Divine Heart certainly has this vocation. Confirm her in this truth. Tell her that I urge her to redouble her fervor and to revive her courage, always looking to that crown, which is promised to the victor and not the vanquished.

7. LEBM. I.21; HL, 1 - GB.4 Arch SSCC / S; Billet to GF (1800-1801)

It is certain that Mr. David's (the future Father Isidore) vows will be very pleasing to the good God. He wants him to make the sacrifice of delaying his ordination, but perhaps that will not delay it. He will tell the Bishop de Vienne that he is a religious. He will explain to him our situation. He will say that his only concern is that the Holy See approve it or at least tolerate it and that we are all of the same intention. It is not only the Blessed Virgin who wants this order, but it seems to have become a need for the Heart of God, so great is his mercy toward us. It is impossible for me to explain for I have told you nothing in comparison with what I learned or sensed on this matter.

8. LEBM. I.22; HL, 4 - GB, 5 Arch SSCC / S; Billet to GF (Late January 1801)

A shower of blessings is falling on Lussa and Rochette (the two de la Garelie sisters) relative to the ceremony of their taking the habit and their...The Blessed Virgin has been praying for us since midnight. I also saw the little vow book. You have something else you want me to do but I do not know what it is.

9. LEBM. I.34; HL, 7 - GB ArchSSCC / S; Billet to GF (7 Feb. 1801)

Note.- This billet has been placed as LEBM 18 in the realignment done by Fr. André Mark

The Blessed Virgin is in heaven, when she prays for us. The little book is there also. I believe that is to make us realize that nothing will happen to us, that He had cast a glance of mercy upon us. He reproached me for not having faith. But it was at that moment that I saw the palace and the two men bringing someone there whom I did not know. Our Lord brought me back to how I am now, where he lets me know the secrets of his heart. I came down to tell you that. Since I have been here I have prayed that nothing will happen. Our Lord told me to write. I asked to say my rosary. After that, He reminded me that He had told me that his Mother wanted our affair,¹¹⁶⁶ that it had become her own. He told me that He wanted me to write. I saw my papers making a small book. The good God withdrew completely seeing that I was not going to get the writing case. I was forced to leave.

10. GB, Answer to my Brother (1795?) ArchSSCC / F; 1-70-5/L.1.

If I have understood well the request that you made of me, you want me to write something about what we call the “immensity”. But I would need a heart that can really feel. I would need a heart whose ice had been melted by sparks of divine love, to guide the pen that writes a few lines about the Society whose glory is to be very close to the Heart of Jesus. Heart of Jesus, eternal object of the Father’s love, Heart of Jesus, burning with infinite love for the Father, Heart of Jesus, you who have loved men so that your delight is to live among them, Heart of Jesus you, who, (oh height of mercy) do not refuse to come to rest near my own heart. You dissipate my frightening darkness, encourage me when I am stupid and talk to me when you want me to talk. May the strokes of my pen be strokes of fire. If it is possible, may my pen show how sweet and loving is the union of the hearts that you have formed for yourself and who, by a special vocation, are called to form but one heart in order to love you.

In some way, the Society of the Heart of Jesus represents the agreement and the blessed union of the saints in Paradise. The saints sing perpetually the song of the Lamb; the associates are always in adoration before the Lamb sacrificed on our altars for the sins of men. The saints have no other occupation than to love God; this must be that of the associates. The saints of every age, of every walk of life only know and love themselves in God and for God. That same kind of charity must unite the associates among themselves.

¹¹⁶⁶ i.e. the Congregation.

Is this comparison too strong? Oh my God, should we not lift our minds to the dwelling place of your glory to have a big enough idea of the beings created in your image, who have consecrated all the faculties that you have given them to loving and serving you? ...

If these hearts, led by the heart of the gentle Jesus, leave the contemplation of his infinite greatness, how great are the exterior works to which they will give themselves ... Relieving and consoling the extreme misery of the virgins on whom the scourge of persecution has fallen in a particular way; educating young hearts in the duties of religion, hearts that could have been hurled into the abyss of heresy and vice; helping the unfortunate who are afflicted by sickness and disease, who are facing an eternity of happiness or unhappiness, who surrounded by their poor parents, lazy or wicked, might be deprived of the help that religion and charity offer them in their need. If, thanks be to God, religion still has worthy ministers, who escaped the fury of the wicked but who still run the risk everyday of capture, these will find in the Society faithful who still know how to imitate the zeal of Aquila and Priscilla.

O my brother, what have you asked me? My hands tremble and want to stop ... I shudder at the size and scope of the subject I must address....

In casting a glance at group that forms this blessed Society, I see confessors of Jesus Christ, some of whom have aged under the fatigue of their ministry or the chains they bore for Him and others whose age and health could no longer resist the exile or hard work to which they were subjected. Yet they devote their lives every day to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. I see widows and women that spread, the good fragrance of Jesus-Christ and respect for religion in the world where they are forced to live, even to those who blaspheme. I discover in this Society young women happy to have given all their freedom to gentle Jesus, happy to be able to live only for Him, a thousand times happy to be able to devote all the faculties of their souls, all the affection of their hearts to serve without obstacles, to love totally and to be able to freely give, if necessary, all their blood, drop, by drop, for Him, for Him alone and to be consumed by love in the immensity of his love ... I believe that the diversity of state, age and means among the members of the Society represents that wonderful diversity that embellishes all works of the Creator and whose accord in the dwelling of the blessed will form such a charming unity.

O my country, afflicted by such cruel suffering, this treasure that is hidden right now, will it always remain hidden? Will we ever see a beautiful day shine, when the holy devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus will triumph over wicked and lax Christians? ...

Blessed Society, formed in the midst of the ruins of our temples and our altars, are you destined to raise them once again? ... If it were necessary in order to obtain the Lord's mercy, to suffer all the evils that the impious still plan, if it were necessary to bear the weight of the justice of an angry God, if It were necessary to groan in chains or lose your life by torture, at this one word: the glory of God demands it, may there not be a single heart in the Society which hesitates or draws back...Could we then have a right idea of the spirit that must animate this Society, if such were not its sentiments?

My brother, I would like to converse with the angels to ask them to correct what I write and to tell me what I may not say. I do not know if anyone ever thought of asking a blind man to speak about colors. Anyway, you have done just about that. They say that the blind are joyful, but I can assure you that not all of them are. Thus it was no way in my power to obey the second part of your request. I would agree that if something could make us sing the songs of the Lord on the banks of the river of Babylon, it would be the spectacle of exiles who find their refuge in the Heart of Jesus...May heaven, who hears my prayer, fill these chosen souls with its sweetest blessings. May my brothers and sisters ever only shed the tears that cause joy and devotion to spread. May all the evil ones be converted by their example and their prayer and may..., (the text finishes here, the remainder of the document was lost).

11. HL, «**Quelques remarques sur le Révérend Père Marie Joseph**» (1802)

(«Some Observations about the Reverend Father Marie Joseph (Coudrin)»)

ArchSSCC / F.1 70 5G 4a.

These "Some remarks on R.P.M.J." are the first written by Fr Hilarion Lucas that we have in our archives. It is a book of 32 pages (16 sheets), the text of which stops at the 1st third of page 26. The dates and other information between () are in the margin of the text of P. Hilarion. The details between () are the hand of Fr. Hilarion.

1. One day when Brother Polycarp¹¹⁶⁷ was saying an Ave Maria that someone had asked of him, instead of saying Sancta Maria, he said Sancte Joseph. He immediately corrected himself. "Do not correct yourself," said our Father, they understand each other perfectly." (1801)

It was commonly said: Mr. Jerome¹¹⁶⁸ teaches us to love God and Mr. Pruel to pray to Him. (I got this from Mr. Roulleau).

When he was first a priest, he was forced to spend a few months hidden in a loft, hardly seeing anyone and praying continually. It was there that he conceived

¹¹⁶⁷ Brother Polycarp: Father Jean Brumauld de Beauregard, the future Bishop of Orléans.

¹¹⁶⁸ Fr. Coudrin said Jerome or Marche-à-terre.

the idea of becoming a missionary and it was with this intention that he left his loft on October 20, the feast of St Caprasius, to whom he dedicated himself.

2. One day (around 1797) in the street (maybe around 18 fructidor),¹¹⁶⁹ he heard some people talking who seemed worried, “My God, she is ready to die and we could not find Mr. Fab. .. “ (It was the name of an “intruder”).¹¹⁷⁰ He stopped, asked them with confidence why they were looking for the intruder, and told them that he was a priest, that they could take him to the sick person that they were talking about. They took him; he heard her confession and converted the whole family.
 3. After leaving the loft, which I mentioned, he was forced to hide in the woods and was unable to spend the night in the same place. He was met and stopped by a policeman. “What do you want to do with me?” he asked him gently and with a trust that seemed to inspire pity and that was the result of virtue. “I am a priest. It is true.” Struck by his courage, the policeman offered him a place to stay at his house, hid him there for a few days and then found a better place for him to stay (1792 to 1793).
 4. During the Terror, he showed great courage. He climbed the walls of prisons to bring spiritual consolation. He told me himself that one Christmas night he climbed over the wall of Pénitentes¹¹⁷¹ carrying with him the sacred vestments, a chalice with the ablutions, because he had already said his first Mass and went there to offer the Holy Sacrifice for the people that were in prison there. Here is another fact that I have from his mouth. At the height of the Terror, he was called to give the sacraments to the wife of one of the fiercest patriots. He went there. The man was present. Fr M.J.¹¹⁷² had hardly said a few sentences speaking of God in the energetic and touching way, so characteristic of him, when the man converted, fell to his feet admitting that a few moments before he would have handed him in himself. It is unknown whether this man persevered, for I do not know who brought the GF there or where the place was, nor who the person was.
- 4bis.** One day he told us that we would do him a service, if we preserved some particular ideas that God gave him in his sermons. He said, “In the early years I preached a retreat. I had no experience. I hardly knew what a retreat was.

1169 4 September 1797.

1170 “Intruder” i.e. priest of the constitutional and schismatic Church.

1171 Convent converted into a prison.

1172 Fr. Marie-Joseph Coudrin.

Well, I preached morning and evening but I used phrases that overwhelmed my people. I saw the significant effects they produced. I would see their heads lowered, sinking into their hoods. I gave another talk: I saw them sinking further. And after the sermon I left these people motionless lost in thought. In fact people who heard him told me, "He was on fire in those days and has lost a lot." I heard from one person that more than once he was forced to stop because he was exhausted, as his message also had such an effect on himself.

5. One day (I do not know the year) he was called to administer (the sacraments) to a woman who was unconscious. He went there and had on himself an image of the Sacred Heart with which an astonishing miracle had been performed. I will speak of that latter. Arriving in the house, he spoke to her, but uselessly. He made everyone leave under pretext that he could get something out of the woman if he were alone. As soon as he took the Sacred Heart and applied it with faith to the patient, she recovered her voice, received the sacraments, lost consciousness and died. (*Miss de Rechine-Voisin, at Guron, 5 miles from Poitiers).
6. He remained hidden for some time with Mr. Dodain, a respected priest who later was martyred. Before Good Friday this holy priest said to Fr. M.J., "You will not believe me, but the past few days in my prayer I find that the guillotine is desirable for me. However, this will be quite difficult to cut," he added, bringing his hand to his neck which was very short. Two days later he was taken and guillotined on Good Friday, the day he was to preach the passion. His firmness, his courage, his joy in going to his death caused Planier, a married priest, and Bobin, his judges and his executioners to tremble. "Remember," he said to the latter, "that I will be your judge. I pledge before God. One day I will be sitting on one of the twelve thrones of Israel and I will judge you. "As he had not said Compline and had a quarter of an hour to wait before going to the scaffold, he asked: "Is there not someone who would have the charity to find me a breviary so that I can say Compline?" A woman sent him one and when he was about to leave, he handed it to people whom he instructed to thank her for her charity towards him. The executioner failed to kill him three times and was forced to finish him off with a knife (1793 to 1795).
7. A few days later, Fr MJ went to Pillory Square, to the house of Miss Bâtard. He had on him the good God in order to help an unfortunate nun escape. She had had the weakness to marry her own uncle, a priest. The woman was dangerously

ill. The door of house where he went was closed, so he walked around the square and so as not to appear afraid, he even went up on the guillotine still stained with the blood of his beloved Dodain. Coming down he recognized the voices of two “intruders” who were talking, and with whom he had studied in the seminary. Fortunately they did not recognize him.

As he told us himself, “At that time I was all fire. I was like that for more than two years. Not having a house where I could leave the Blessed Sacrament, I always had it on me, in case I came across someone who was sick. Sometimes I gave the sacraments to six or seven a night. My whole idea was that if I were arrested that I would communicate as viaticum. That was my whole consolation. I had no rest night or day. I hardly ever slept and I, who need sleep so much. All the time I was running from one end of town to the other and sometimes I followed the guards who were making their visits (1793-1794).

8. “Many times with Mr. Fauvette¹¹⁷³ I climbed the walls of prisons, of the Carmelites, of St. Pierre, of the Pénitentes, to bring consolation to those who were detained. The prisoners did not know where we entered and there were only two in the hall who knew how we did it. Someone drove us to the backyard and we had to climb over the walls. At the bottom on the other side there were people who took us to the hall where the prisoners were and we returned the same way. The jailer of one of the prisons had the nightly custom of going out to close his shutters and of leaving the door open for a short space of time. We had a password with the prisoners and we entered during that short space of time. There was a dog at the odor that did not bark and we found a person who waited for us there and took us to the hall. At the beginning we carried the Blessed Sacrament on us in ciboria full of hosts. I was the first to realize that I could put all the vestments in a kind of haversack. I did not tell Aglaé,¹¹⁷⁴ but when we arrived, I told him that it was not everything and that we would celebrate Mass. I celebrated it, I preached and everyone feared that we would be heard. So Aglaé did not celebrate Mass. My dear friend, he told me, you expose us by your carelessness. “
9. “Once I was going to bring the good God and give the sacraments to a sick person in one house. In the courtyard there were a huge mastiff, a valet and two

1173 Abbot Soyer, the future Bishop of Luzon (cf. Lestra, I, P. 123). The “nom de guerre” of some priests hidden in Poitiers during the Terror are excerpts from a special folder deposited in the archives of the diocese of Poitiers.

1174 Abbot Martin, said Aglaé or Auguste or Marie-Jeanne, a priest of Angoulême (cf. Lestra, op.).

Westermann¹¹⁷⁵ sleeping. Two women who were supposed to wait for me fell asleep. I arrived and I wanted to push a large door. As it was badly hung on its hinges, it came crashing down on the cobblestones. By a miracle of providence it did not even wake up the dog that was sleeping in the courtyard. I went in. The two women said to me, “Ah, sir, what was that noise we just heard?” I said to them, “My good friends, what do you want? I am lost, but I still must give that sick woman the sacraments.” While I did that, they went out and hanged the door on its hinges. When I left, I asked them who had put the door back. They responded, “Sir, it was us and we have had loads of trouble.” So I said, “My God, you want to keep me safe and I am hardly even worthy.”

10. “At the time I heard the confessions of all the priests in the city. I had more than forty. I would spend three or four nights doing that work.
11. “Having initially spent six months in the city, I then made a kind of promise to God that I would remain in the countryside to work until it was no longer possible to stay there. Therefore I went all over the countryside, until the great Terror began. Then I was pursued everywhere. I wrote to Fauvette that I had no place to stay. I came to Poitiers, passing by any number of guards. I was disguised as a baker, carrying a sixteen pound loaf on my head. They didn’t ask me anything. First I went to the home of Miss de Pleumartin. That was in 1793. Miss Chevalier, who at the time was with Miss Bert, came and offered me a place to stay, provided that I promised to celebrate Mass on Sunday and so I stayed there.”
12. “I was always going out. I had much more courage than I have now. I had much more work to do. People thought that it was only a matter of time before I was captured and so they would draw straws and left it to luck to see who would accompany me. I got mad when they tried to prevent me from going out, and I threatened to leave the house in broad daylight and never return. I said, “How can you want to prevent me from exercising my ministry? Ah, I would rather be arrested than not exercise the ministry. “
13. Throughout this time, he was pale and haggard. He hardly ate at all and was overwhelmed by fatigue but he never got discouraged.
14. When the Vicars General received power from the Pope to receive the retractions of priests who had taken the oath, Mr. de Brunn ...¹¹⁷⁶ sent him to Richelieu to

1175 Soldier of a body, commanded by a general of the name, for the fight against the Vendéens.

1176 Abbot of Brunneval, said “the General”.

receive those of an entire chapter and of another priest at a time when no one dared set a foot outside.

- 15.** One day when he was saying Mass at Moulin à Vent, and the oratory was full, some people came to visit. Miss de Lus ... la Garélie looking out of the window saw the guards and went to tell him, as he was about to preach: There they are! “My brothers,” he said to those around him, “stay quiet. I will go out for a while, nothing will happen.” In a moment he disappeared and they took everything out of the chapel. Miss Ber. And Sr. Therese remained alone in front of the Blessed Sacrament. They let the guards in by one door, while the faithful were leaving by the other. When they came into the chapel, they asked Sr. Therese why she was praying to the good God. They irritated her so much that she answered them firmly, “We are praying to the good God for you, against you and in spite of you.” Having asked what was there, pointing to the tabernacle, Miss Bert replied firmly: “the Blessed Sacrament”. Same demand, same answer. It is believed that she even added, “Your God and mine.” They put in their notes that she had told them that there was “a Blessed sacrament” and retreated (after 18 Fructidor).
- 16.** During the Terror, Fr. MJ was forced to disguise himself so as not to be recognized by those who had known him as a seminarian a few years before. Sometimes he was disguised as a baker, sometimes constrained need he dressed as a gendarme or an officer and more than once was saluted by soldiers, as he looked like one. Sometimes he concealed himself in peasant attire and it was as such he spent fifteen days as a servant in the house of a respectable lady. It was because they feared the chattering of one of the domestics, who was a good Catholic but very indiscreet. In order that he would not always have to be with that girl, he and the lady of the house agreed that he would eat with her and, so that the girl they mistrusted would not suspect something, he gave as a pretext that he wanted to make use of the nation’s goods which were for all as everyone was equal. A really amusing part of the whole adventure was when the maid wanted to send him to the public square to sell peas that they had picked in the country. As he did not want to do it the maid said to her mistress, “Madame, this rascal, he’s proud at least, he does not want to go sell peas on the square.” She tormented him continually but he maintained a reserve that was amazing. She hit him hard when he did not do the jobs around the house in the way

she wanted them done. Finally came a day where he was to say Mass. Father Lamothe,¹¹⁷⁷ who was in the same house, told him to be the first to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice. He went up to the Oratory and dressed. The girl entered the room at that moment, bringing the light. She wanted to beat him with the fire tongs she was carrying, shouting “the rascal is fooling around with the sacred vestments.” Fr. M.J. then turned to her and with priestly seriousness spoke to her about the difficult times that forced priests to take these strange forms. This girl was so deeply struck by seeing that the one she had previously regarded only as poor Joseph was a priest that she fainted. She died since then (1792).

- 17.** Many times, in the same clothing and under the same name of Joseph, he accompanied Father Lamothe, lantern in hand. When they met one of the most notorious terrorists, he would say out loud: “Joseph, give me light”.
- 18.** He went to the prison to hear the confession of Misses Goffreau, who were detained there. The oldest one was in a dungeon. He gave her the good God (1793-1795).
- 19.** During more than a year and a half, he never left the Blessed Sacrament day nor night, because there were always sick people who wanted to go to confession.
- 20.** Five or six days after the death of Mr. Dodain, he went to hear the confession of sick person in the house of the same person who had caused this holy martyr to be arrested. The man himself opened the door, taking him for the relative of a person of sixty some years. That one, to conceal the thing, embraced him and wished him a good day as if he were a family member. At that moment a surgeon, a famous terrorist, was in the sick person’s room and God allowed him to think that Fr. M.J. wanted to speak to his relative who lived in the same room, so he withdrew so as not to interfere. In a short time he heard the patient’s confession, gave him Extreme Unction anointing him only once and gave him Holy Communion. Fr MJ left and had just closed the door of the house when the wife of the unfortunate man who had been a furious patriot, a woman who had no less fury, shouted to her husband: “it is a priest who is leaving.” He replied: “You should have told me that earlier, I would have had him arrested.” But the victim was already far away.
- 21.** We could quote several traits of Republican fanaticism. Some people came to confess to Fr. M.J, saying: “Father, we have chosen you precisely because, as

¹¹⁷⁷ Abbot of Montrebeuf or Monfrebeuf, said Lamothe, dean of the chapter of Amboise (cf. Lestra).

we only knew you under the name “Marche-à-terre.” We watched for you, a gun in hand to kill you, believing that we would be performing a great service for the Republic.”

- 22.** As F. M.J. was at Mrs. Favre’s home, a poor woman came to tell Miss Favre ... “If I may say so, you seem to be an honest person, you could really help me.” Miss Favre asked her how, “Oh, my God!,” she replied, “It is said that there are many priests in this street. They will give fifty francs to those who denounce them. Perhaps you could find me some.” “Say what,” replied a surprised Miss Favre, “you would not mind tormenting people that way!” “Oh,” said the other in a very tranquil tone, “when you are poor! ... And then these people did such harm to the nation.” - “If I knew some,” said Miss Favre. “I would never tell you.” “I would not believe I was doing wrong,” replied the woman. “I would like to know, but I would not want to denounce houses of which I am not sure.”
- 23.** Another time, Fr. M.J. went to hear the confession of some disabled and sick at nine o’clock in the evening in a house where there was a dinner for twenty-two terrorists. He was dressed like one of the poor from the Incurables. The servant that was waiting for him had said that at nine she would be behind the door and he had only to knock. He did knock with his stick but she was at the top of the house. The woman heard him, looked out of the window and asked who was there. He hid immediately in the door, so she did not see him, so she told her husband: “It is nothing. I thought I heard knocking.” The servant remembered what she had promised. She went down and lead him to the room where the people were who wanted to go to confession. There was a big dog in the yard that not only did not bark, but even licked his feet. Thus the animals paid tribute to virtue persecuted by men. Fr. M.J. stayed an hour to hear confessions. Then he went down immediately and crossed the same courtyard. The dog accompanied him to the door and once he was gone, started barking as usual.
- 24.** A few days after the death of Miss Babin, he went to Montbernage to hear confessions ..., but this bloody execution had sown terror in every heart. Nobody wanted to put him up. These poor people told him “Sir, you have too much charity to expose us. We have children.” He was with the husband of la Guste. “My poor friend,” he said, nobody wants to receive me. I cannot sleep outside. You have to take me back to the city.” This man pointed out that they

could only go over the Pont-Neuf (a bridge across the River Clain) and that there were eleven or twelve guards who would let no one through without a passport. "Under the protection of the good God," said F. M.J, and they agreed that he would walk behind this man, who, if they tried to stop them, would give his name, and, as it was very dark, F. M.J. would continue to go. As they got close, the guards shouted: "Who goes there?" The man replied: "Citizen". At a second request, the Good Father himself replied the same thing. All the fusiliers, with the exception of the guard, were in the guard-house and shouted to him: "Be careful. Take a good look at the passports." The guard replied: "Do not be afraid, it's a good citizen." When F. went by, he offered him his hand and shook his, saying: "Ah, sir, you are escaping a great danger!" It was a man whose confession he had heard two days previously. He had recognized his voice.

- 25.** An anecdote will illustrate the great darkness of those awful days. The Chartres brothers, who were captured in brushwood belonging to Miss Babin, were put in prison and they did not admit anything. But it was known that they were timid and in order to get the truth out of them, an infernal plot was hatched. A sort of decree was printed that stated that those who uncovered the truth would be pardoned. They were taken to prison. Then they were told that if they revealed the people who had given them lodging, whose houses they had visited, who had done anything for them, that a pardon was all set for them that all those people also had nothing to fear. But they would be imprisoned for perhaps eight days, so as to get around the law, and they would be set free. What's more, if they were really as religious as they appeared, that it was better to save themselves for the salvation of the people, rather than to die as fanatics. Thus deceived, these priests, who were very scrupulous, believed that they had a duty to reveal everything as a matter of conscience.

On their evidence, Mlles Goffreau was sent to the scaffold, Sr. Ave was sentenced to 15 years in prison for having concealed them and with them the one known as Marche-à-terre. Miss Babin, in whose house they had been found was also imprisoned. Immediately they were taken for interrogation. "Mr ... is sentenced to death as a traitor to the motherland. Mr. ... is sentenced to death as a traitor to the motherland. Citizen Babin is sentenced to death for having concealed them." At these words, those who expected to be released joined hands in an

expression of pain. Immediately their hair was cut and they were put in the cart en route to the guillotine. These respectable priests so horribly deceived asked Miss Babin, "Will you forgive us?" She encouraged them as they went to death, telling them: "Come on, gentlemen, have courage. The only grace I ask of the executioner is to be guillotined first." Indeed they were made to go up all three together on the scaffold and they saw her executed in front of them.

26. Fr. M.J. offered many services, either himself or someone else, to almost all priests who came to this city. He provided them sanctuary. He sent them or had sent flour and other basic necessities. And no one was more slandered than he. He was slandered for his knowledge. He was treated as ignorant and even an imbecile, even to the point that once a group of his careless colleagues met for a party and brought him on the pretext of important business but really to make fun of him all evening. Fr. M.J. suffered all this in a spirit of sacrifice and offered all his suffering to God. One day speaking to us familiarly as a father to his children, he said, "Because I was much better then, than I am now." He could not open his mouth that they would not laugh in advance, so foolish did they consider him. Other faithful priests, as zealous and respectable, had as many enemies and were also treated disgracefully. There was Mr. Henri, who early on during the revolution was of great service, hearing confessions continuously. He so went without sleep that when he was hearing confessions, he had to have a glass full of water nearby so that he could rub water on his eyes to prevent him from falling asleep. He also caught a disease that left him with one infirmity after another. Then there was Mr. Perp ...¹¹⁷⁸ All three had to put up with the same insults and it was said of them: "There's that fool Henri, that insane Jér ... and that imbecile Perpe...."

27. Fr M.J. was even attacked in his faith. They made him come off as a heretic. He was reproached for supporting erroneous opinions, to such a point that, as part of an insidious and perfidious plot, he was sent a list of false propositions that he was accused of supporting and asking him his opinion. He sensed the trap and answered by returning them to the author adding that he saw the trap that was set for him. But as they were asking his opinion, he condemned all of them, he abjured each and every one in particular, and that he almost dared to add, he even abjured the hand that had written them.

¹¹⁷⁸ Chanoine of Chastenier or Chasteignier said Perpetua, who later joined by the "Little Church" (cf. Lestra, *ibid.*).

28. He was slandered in his zeal, which was treated as hypocrisy or (at least) guilty recklessness. The Sup Ecclé, poisoned by false reports, while internally approving his zeal that one could not help but admire, criticized his alleged carelessness repeatedly. They even called him “the executioner of his colleagues.” Always humble, he was tempted to condemn himself. Finally once a generous courage prevailed over his fear and he replied with a priestly strength to Mr. de Brun..., then responsible for the administration of the diocese. He put at the top of his letter these words: *Sacerdos Christi ad gubernatorem dioecesis pictaviensis*.¹¹⁷⁹ And in the body of his letter the first words: *Sacerdos Christi* were repeated more than once. He appealed to the conscience of this great virtuous V. ...;

Well maintaining the respect due to his situation, he told him that he would have to give an account to God for having restrained the zeal of a priest, that if the others did not have the courage or strength, at least they should not prevent the little he did for JC, that these priests who reproached his carelessness with so much bitterness, did not think that he exposed himself too much during the Terror, when not have the strength to go out to help one another, had him come to hear their confessions, that he could at least prevent him from ministering and that he would go work in another diocese. In effect, some administrators of two or three dioceses, edified by his zeal, had sent him faculties. Mr. Brun ... himself felt the full force of his reasoning. One day all the priests shut up with him at Trinité gathered round him and urged him to prohibit him. He answered them “Sirs, I can make certainly present your complaints to this young man, but my conscience would reproach me if I were to dampen his zeal.” Three days later, Fr M.J. was forced to climb the walls of the Trinity to meet them for an important matter having to do with their own lives and that he could not confide to anyone (towards 18 Fructidor).

29. He was slandered in his obedience. He was accused of violating the prohibition of singing ordered by the diocesan authorities. And no one was stricter in observing the prohibition. Since that time, nothing has been sung on any occasion. In general he was more submissive than anyone else to the orders of those who had authority. He always regarded them as he masters and he believed that he had to follow their decisions blindly (since 1799).

1179 (Translation) A priest of Christ to those who govern the diocese of Poitiers.

- 30.** I will not speak of the heinous charges against his morals. It would be better to cover such impostures with an eternal silence. Such charges only serve to put those guilty of making them in a horrible light. But unfortunately for them, it is not possible to ignore them. The slander has been public. Virtue was wounded out in the open. May Heaven touch their guilty hearts and make them feel the greatness of the wrong they have done.
- 31.** At the height of the Terror, Fr. M.J. said Mass for over fifteen hundred people in the countryside of Montbernage and all sang the beautiful song: “Mother of God, Sovereign of the World”, so that at 2:00 in the morning on the Place Royale¹¹⁸⁰ a muffled sound was heard coming from the dunes.¹¹⁸¹ He then went two miles from there (1793 to 1795).
- 32.** During the days of carnival, he preached the 40 Hours in this neighborhood and in order to get them to sacrifice some of the fun, which they can so easily make for themselves at the time of carnival, he told them in his sermon that since their neighborhood had shown so much faith, they had to show it in another way and that he was going to ask a favor of them. He continued his sermon, without telling them what it would be, in order to arouse their curiosity and to make them more willing to do what he was going to ask. Finally, after repeating this general exhortation several times, he asked them to fast for three days and not to drink wine between meals in order to expiate the crimes which were being committed during these days that were so difficult for the Church. It took a lot out of them but they did what he asked of them. Walking through the neighborhood on very day of Carnival, in several houses he saw people together in large numbers, laughing but without drinking wine.
- 33.** Miss Mars ... had stuck scissors into her hand and the nerves constricted so that her fingers turned into the hand. She was considered maimed and they wanted to send her to Paris. A surgeon had told her that she could be maimed for the rest of her life. One day our Father tied a Sacred Heart to her hand saying to her, “If you have faith, Mademoiselle, you will be healed.” She answered, “Father, I would ask nothing more.” As he held her hand, he was praying and a man came in. Fr. MJ withdrew his hand afraid of what the man might think. She went before the good God and stayed there until around ten or eleven in the evening. The Good Father had her come to him to pray.

1180 Today Place du Marechal Leclerc.

1181 A high plain that dominates Poitiers to the east.

In the presence of Miss Lussa, Renne and S.Th, he said to her, “Let us see your hand; we want to see how it is.” He had already said to Miss Lussa before: “What damage has that man did to me, she would have been healed already.” He took her hand and pulled her fingers with effort. She said “Ah, sir, you hurt me very much.” He said: “Come on, you are already healed.” At that moment she gave a little cry and said, “I feel bad”. He repeated again: “Come on, you are cured.” And he passed his hand over hers and he could find no damage. They went immediately to the chapel to say a Salve Regina.

- 34.** When Fr. M.J. was staying at St Pierre¹¹⁸² one day he told Miss la Garélie de Lussa, not to tell someone who was asking for him because he was occupied with a delicate matter of the ministry and it was a great annoyance. He went on to say that he feared that if he were to go out, that someone would have an accident. Remember that every night they were looking for him in the streets of St. Savin. As they were unable to capture him, they resolved to sacrifice him by using his own zeal to catch him in a trap. A man in disguise arrived and knocked at the door. Before opening the door, they asked him whom he was looking for. He answered that he was looking for Mr. Marche-à-terre for his wife who was very sick. After some hesitation, Miss de Lussa opened the door. She asked him his name. He hesitated, gave the assumed name of a woman, everything indicated that it was a ruse. He insisted that his wife was very sick. He even added the names of other places, where there were priests staying, in order to seem trustworthy. He gave the name of his wife. Miss de Lussa told him to go to the apothecary to get some medicine and in the meantime she would take down the information. She went to speak to Fr. MJ, who said that he knew the woman. In the meantime another person arrived. She was a relative of the woman who was supposed to be sick and she said that she was just fine. Afterwards it was known that there were four men hiding. One of them said that all the devout were nothing but liars and they never wanted to say where the priests were staying (Circa 1797).
- 35.** F. M.J. was born to Abraham Coudrin .His father was very devout and for a very long time this virtuous father had said the seven penitential psalms of penance every day to ask God the grace that his children during that day not commit mortal sins. He gladly spent from four to five o'clock before the Blessed

¹¹⁸² House situated opposite the Cathedral of St Pierre; Lussa the Garélie, the future Sister Claire, died in Mende December 21, 1803.

Sacrament. Since his childhood young Pierre C. had a penchant for preaching. He worked, he studied all day and in the evening he explained holy things to his family, so that his sister told Miss Lussa: “since that time he’s been a good preacher.”

- 36.** He was brought up in the home of Mr. Riom, his uncle, his mother’s brother. This respected vicar had been named to a parish, where nobody had been able to stay very long before him, because the pastor behaved very badly and was unbearable. However Mr. Riom remained and when he was offered a parish, he refused on the advice of Mr. Aviau, then Vicar General of Poitiers and now Archbishop of Vienne. He died during the Revolution on a prison boat, having nothing and eaten by worms.
- 37.** During his early years this was young Coudrin’s guide. His confessor was the parish priest of St Pierre de Maillé.¹¹⁸³ He also saw this holy pastor’s vicar daily. The vicar was a very superficial young man. He was sent to Mr. Fournet so that his strictness might temper the young man’s superficiality. For a while Mr. Fournet let him indulge in music but little by little asked him to give up all his musical instruments. Soon he got to the point where he slept on a board, performing more mortification than Mr. Fournet himself. One very cold day he was called to take holy Viaticum to a sick woman. He went there carrying the Blessed Sacrament in his hand and the cold was so great that his hand froze and they were forced to thaw it out the stove little by little near. He found the sick woman much better and up and about. Never the less he wanted to hear her confession. Then he told her to get in bed and receive Extreme Unction and holy Viaticum. She refused saying that she felt much better and that she had had something to eat. He insisted saying that she did not know what was to happen. In fact, as soon as he gave her the sacraments, when he was putting away the sacred vestments, she died. (1792-24 = 1768: 24 years).
- 38.** When he was about to die, he was extremely emaciated, he called the drunks of the parish and others like them and said, “My brothers, see what the death of a sinner is like.”
- 39.** These were the kind of people among whom Fr M.J. was brought up. After that he lived in Poitiers in various boarding houses, and to his great credit he was a member of the “fucum” society.

1183 St Andrew Fournet.

- 40.** It was in 1792 that Fr. M.J. was ordained a priest. He went to Paris for it. Along the way he found all kinds of resources, horses for his trip, honest people to defray his expenses, so it cost him nothing. He was ordained by the famous bishop of Clermont in the library of the Irish Seminary. They were hidden there, while there was a visit on the first floor, so they were forced to speak in a low voice. The impression that the ceremony of the consecration of his hands made on him was amazing. The day he was ordained as priest had been the happiest day of his life until Christmas Day 1800 which was, as I heard from his own mouth, an even more beautiful day than the first.
- 41.** After he was ordained, he returned to his father's home. The parish priest of the place was so happy to see a young priest ordained by a Catholic bishop that he had him say Mass publicly. After the Mass the town council was furious and came to ask him who had ordained him. He answered that if they trusted the pastor, they had to believe that he was a priest. What's more he was not obliged to reveal his secret. Then high spirited patriots came, armed with sticks and spades, to look for him at his father's. They were going to smash everything if he was not handed over. His father, Abraham, had other children that he could not sacrifice for just one. His son was forced to leave his parents' home and go to the loft that I spoke of. There he could not go out, neither to eat nor to answer the call of nature.
- 42.** Returning to the city after being rescued by the gendarme that I spoke of, he stayed at the Incurables.¹¹⁸⁴ He then went to work in the countryside, as we have said.
- 43.** As it was the height of the persecution, he only went out at night and disguised. It was staying at about two or three leagues from Poitiers, in the village of Mont Moreau.¹¹⁸⁵ In the winter he would go only at eight o'clock in the evening to Mount B.... The first time he went there, he said Mass at midnight in the presence of a large number of peasants. When he was in at the elevation, he heard all these people exclaim at the same time; "O my God, it is so long since we last saw you." He arrived at eight o'clock, heard confessions, said Mass and left at one o'clock in the morning, whatever the weather was, because he had to get home before three o'clock, for he had to pass by a barn where the sharecroppers came after three to take care of the animals, and those sharecroppers were

1184 Hospital for Crippled chronic Poitiers, Pasteur hospital today, given the Daughters of Wisdom.

1185 Vaumorêt, barn on the road between Anxaumont and Montamisé, East of Poitiers.

patriots. The husband of la Guste went with him.

- 44.** One of these nights, P. M.J. while he was returning with someone through ***, they got lost in the woods because it was very dark... Remember that F. M.J. normally had the Blessed Sacrament with him. As they did not know what path to take, and they were very confused, they saw quite a bright light appear. The man said to him: “Sir, do you see that light?” “Yes, yes, “ he said, “yes, my good friend”. It went ahead of them, they followed it and it did not disappear until they reached the door of their home. F. M.J. recommended that the man not speak about what had happened, telling him, “My good friend, you are simple and gullible. Do not talk about this. It could have been phosphorus.”
- 45.** It was returning from the countryside that he went to the house of Miss Chevalier. But he stayed there only on Sundays. The rest of the time he often spent in different houses, as in that of Miss Goffreau or Miss de Paligny, etc. ... It was shortly after that Miss Bert and Miss Chevalier, who had been staying with Mrs. Babinet, came to stay at Olérons with Sr. Teresa¹¹⁸⁶ who, living with her sisters in the house next door, would pass through the garden gate and spent most of the time with the others. Sr. Teresa had been quite frivolous, and one day when she was going to a concert, Mr. Fauvette told her: “You would do much better, Miss, if you did a little penance.” She answered: “Sir, I ask for nothing better.” He heard her confession and soon after put her into the hands of P.M.J, saying, “My dear friend, here is a heart that I have got in a good disposition, you perfect it.”
- 46.** It was there that he began to establish the exterior society of the Sacred Heart. Almost every night, especially on major feasts, a great number of people would come together. A large number of priests came together and they formed the great society. One day they were six: Mr. de Brunev..., Messers. Aglaé, Fauvette, Henri, Louis, and Fr. M.J. Others came later such as: f. P^{pe}, Messers de la Fère, Ricner, a foreign priest, Pascal,¹¹⁸⁷ Pruel, Michel. Those who came together on the first day made determinations for the good of the new society (1793 to 1794).
- 47.** Filled with burning zeal, Fr. MJ. gave a retreat there which many people attended. It was there that he also had a Protestant woman make an act of

¹¹⁸⁶ Sister Therese of the Garélie, sister of Lussa and Rochette, who died April 23, 1801 in Poitiers, at the age of 35 years.

¹¹⁸⁷ Henri: Arsonneau, a priest of Saints; Louis: Abbot Murat; Pascal: Abbot Perrin, missionary montfortain.

retraction. That attracted an even greater number of faithful on Christmas night. He had said his two first Masses in two different houses, one in the St. Didier cul de sac at the house of Mrs. La Ronde and the first one at the house of Mr. La Barre. Going toward where there were some Jacobins, accompanied by Charles, the son of a businessman, they heard the footsteps of several people coming from the direction toward which they were headed and others coming from the opposite direction. The GF said, "Ah, my dear Charles, we are lost," for he believed it was two patrols. The faith-filled man replied, "Sir, in whatever direction we go, we run the same risk, with God watching over us." They discovered that it was some people, who themselves were going to Mass. He came back to say his third Mass at Olérons where he received the act of retraction.

48. More than once he went to visit the sick in the middle of the day, while these ladies prayed and waited seized with fear. It was in these occasions that they resorted to lots to decide who would accompany him (at Olérons in 1793).
49. It was after Olérons that they went to Moulin à vent (circa 1795). From there they went to St Pierre, and after to Notre Dame de Mars until the feast of St Michael of the same year, when they established themselves at the Grand-Maison (1797 to the end).
50. When he would stay a whole day at Olérons, prayer, which was his favorite occupation, took most of his day. The only time he had to rest was at meals. Even then, his conversations during this short time were something like sermons. The rest of the time was divided between prayer, confession and visits to the sick. His sermons were full of fire. There were sermons on prayer, on the passion, which were to be admired. There were especially two, one on the end of a perfect religious and the other on the end of the imperfect religious, which touched hearts.
51. Miss Rochette¹¹⁸⁸ was plagued by an extraordinary hearing loss, in such a way that only with great difficulty could she hear anything and it was believed that she would not recover. She made a novena to the good Angels, principally to Saint Michael for his feast day. On the ninth day, as F M.J. was leaving to visit the sick, she asked to go to confession. She was ready to make any sacrifice, taking all the remedies she had to, as painful as they were, or to accepting her

1188 Rochette de Garélie, sister.

deafness, if that was what God wanted. She said, among other things, that if he wanted, he would cure her. He completely dismissed that observation. When he finished, she begged him to read her a gospel. He read it, and she only had enough time to do down to the hall. She found her head extremely heavy, as someone who is going to be sick and all of a sudden she heard clearly, so clearly that sometimes she found that people were speaking to her too loudly. That lasted for about six months, until the death of Sr. Th. ... she was so affected by it, that it occasioned another deafness from which she was also healed (in 1800).

- 52.** As for his character, he is very advanced in the practice of interior mortification. Those who have known him noticed particularly that he embraces the things that are more painful for him with inner joy. Occupations that wear him out and frustrate him were always preferred. When he left them he felt that inner calm. It was shown outwardly in that gentle and quiet peace so characteristic of virtue. "He brings the peace of God with him," Sr. Teresa would say.
- 53.** What can we say of his patience in accepting the most humbling reproaches and the most offensive insults? I myself once brought him to a house where they had called him on very pressing business. He was given a complete report of all the vices, all the abominable crimes attributed to him. And the person giving it was acting out of charity. Fr. MJ said to him, "What do you want a priest to say to such charges? The only thing he can do is keep quiet." Going back he said to me, "I would have accepted the snack they offered me (it was a fast day) but I wanted to get back for the Salve Regina, so as to make a sacrifice to the Blessed Virgin of everything they said to me." (The end of 1800 or the beginning of 1801).
- 54.** He is so esteemed by all those who know him that his father, his mother and his entire family go to him for the sacrament of penance and people come to him from as far as twenty leagues to go to confession to him. He led a large number of ecclesiastics, who had unfortunately fallen into error, to make a retraction. Respected priests speak of him even as a model of how one is to act with regard to these unfaithful ministers of the Church.
- 55.** What can be said about his deep humility? He was so often corrected for his manner of preaching, so effusively, that he lost some of it. He came to think that they were right and, like St. Bernard, he had almost resolved to just stop

preaching. Fortunately he took it up again for the benefit of the faithful and especially of his children who hear him.

- 56.** That love of God, that patience, that angelic sweetness, he received it all from his ancestors. We can note quite a striking characteristic of his grandfather, who was also a man of great piety. Some wicked folk had begun an unjust legal case against him. He won. They were so atrocious that when he was coming back they had him arrested by a large group of men who pulling him by his four limbs. They tore at him so that he never healed and lived twenty years as an invalid, walking with the help of crutches. He knew perfectly well who the perpetrators of this horrible treatment were. However he forgave them completely, having not even the appearance of resentment. To those who urged him to pursue a legal case, he responded, “My friends, at God’s judgment, those who laugh last, will laugh well!
- 57.** Heir to their virtues, the young Coudrin showed by his whole conduct the example he had received from his forebears. In his youth, he loved music. He got a violin and another instrument for himself. But when he wanted to enter the seminary, he understood that he would have leave behind all these useless pastimes and he sacrificed everything. You can judge the greatness of his sacrifice back then, as even now, when he hears someone playing an instrument, it makes the deepest impression on him and, as he said to me himself, without even wanting it, he feels in his heart the sacrifice that he made back then.
- 58.** During the revolution, his whole family had to suffer greatly because of its commitment to the true religion, to the Catholic Church. For his part, there is no need to say what he had to put up go through. But it was a source of great pleasure for him.
- 59.** “When I had to flee my father’s home, he said us once, I was extremely happy to see myself in this situation of absolute poverty. I was joyful in having to suffer for the name of Jesus.”
- 60.** “In my loft, I was situated in such a way that I could not stand up. At times I would go down by a sort of trap door into the office of Maumain¹¹⁸⁹ (that was the name of the man in whose house he was hidden) where I had at the most a three feet width where I walked. The lack of exercise caused me to become

1189 P. Hilarion Lucas writing “Maumain” but the correct spelling is “Maumin”, as can be seen in P. Jacques Médard, “Letters and Writings of TRP Marie Joseph Coudrin, I, correspondence with his family”, Rome, 1976.

extremely fatigued. What I ate was almost always cold as it was difficult to bring it to me in my hiding place. Then that bothered my respiration. I was all dry, thin to the point that my skin clung to my bones and my body gave forth such an odor that I was poisoning myself. However, during those five months that I had to stay there, I was not bored for a single moment. Every day I would say Mass at midnight and even though I took great care in purifying the corporal, I always believed that I had left some particles of the sacred species and thus I had the Good God with me. After saying my Mass, I would go up to my loft where I spent the whole day reading Church history and praying. Only when Maumain came back, I would spend some time with him. He would tell me often that everything would once again be as it was, that Mr. de Bouillé¹¹⁹⁰ would reduce everything to ashes. For Maumain was extremely aristocratic. But I told him to forget it, that things would finish all that soon.¹¹⁹¹ “My dear friend”, I would add, “do not deceive yourself. Right now the only thing we can do is give ourselves to the good God. You must go to confession. First I heard the confession of poor Renne¹¹⁹² and then himself. They were the first people whose confessions I had heard since my ordination, except one person in Poitiers, when I went to receive the approval of the Superiors.”

- 61.** “I was shut up there for five whole months, without being able to go out or go to confession. But the Lord gave me to grace not to experience any anxiety, and I enjoyed great peace of conscience. It is certain that at that time God was giving me great graces.”
- 62.** “It was there that one day having gone up to my loft after saying Mass, I knelt down before the corporal where I always believed that I had the Blessed Sacrament. I saw then what we are now. It seemed to me that we were several come together; that we formed a troop of missionaries that was to spread the Gospel everywhere. As I was thinking of that society of missionaries, the idea also came to me of a society of women, but not a community as it exists, for I had never seen religious women. I said to myself, “we will have neither money nor income. We will be eaten by lice and as much as I can remember, for I

1190 Bouillé chief loyal to the monarchy, who had crossed the border into Germany.

1191 Because he often repeated that there was no schism that had lasted ten years and Maumain told him one day ahead of us: “I have repeated since many people what you had predicted me on the matter.”

1192 This girl was the one who I already said was present at the miracle of the healing of Miss Marsault’s hand. She was a very good Christian and had brought up Miss Viart, today Sr. Françoise, with a deep sense of piety. She said, “Many times that girl prevented me from making mistakes.” For some time she was with Miss de Lussa. Later she married a man from the countryside and died around 1800. She belonged to the great association of the Sacred Heart.

cannot say it with certainty, for fear of lying, I said to myself then: there will be a society of pious women who will care for our affairs when we are out on mission.”

- 63.** That desire to form a society that would carry the faith everywhere never left me. I wanted to start with Henri. He left me. It was with that intention that I raised the de Prins. When they were educated, they abandoned me.
- 64.** “When I finally left Maumain’s, I prostrated myself at the foot of an oak tree that was not far from the house and I consecrated myself to the point of death. For I became a priest with the intention of suffering everything, even of sacrificing myself for the Good God and to die if necessary in his service. However I always had a certain premonition that I would be alright. Sometimes Maumain would say to me, “But how will you get away? And I would answer him, “Come on, the Good God will take good care of me.”
- 65.** “In the exercise of my ministry, I found myself responsible for directing forty priests, and to get as many to retract, of directing more than 900 people without means to study, and yet it almost never happened that I departed from principles. Sometimes I went to see Mr. de Brun ... speaking to him of decisions I had made, I asked him if I had decided well. He answered, “Yes, these are the principles; go with confidence and follow the spirit of God who will guide you.” (1793 to 1795 and beyond).
- 66.** People who knew F. MJ at the time are all in agreement that it was surprising how much work he did. Burning with the fire of charity, he communicated it to others. One could not see or hear him, without being touched, without being unsettled. The danger of death, which was a constant threat, disturbed consciences and made them disposed in advance. He got so many to make general confessions in just a short time, without omitting anything essential.
- 67.** In n. 44 I spoke of the appearance of a light, according to what I had been told by Miss de Lussa, who could not recall the name of the person that accompanied F. M.J.. Here is how he told me it himself.
- “At the height of the Terror, while the guillotine was still active, I was staying at Mont-Moreau, two leagues from Montbernage where I would often go at night to say Mass and hear confessions. I heard confessions during part of the night. Often the people were all in the same room out of necessity. Then I would say Mass and preach. I would leave at two or three o’clock covered with sweat,

soaked, and I returned to where I was staying carrying in my backpack my vestments, my chalice, and my corporal. I had on me the Blessed Sacrament, after having given the people benediction. More than once it was pouring. However I never got a cold and I was very happy” (1793).

“It was on one of those nights that I saw phosphorus light. I was accompanied by Etienne Puisaye who devoted himself to this good work. I had the Blessed Sacrament on me. On the way I felt pressing needs (the need to relieve myself). I should not have had the Blessed Sacrament on me, but none the less. I put the meanest handkerchief I had on a stone. I also put my breviary on it. I put the Blessed Sacrament there saying to this man to kneel and pray to the good God. He knelt in the water as it was raining heavily and I withdrew a bit. At that very moment there appeared a little brilliant light which surrounded the Blessed Sacrament. I was terrified. I said to this man: “Do you see it?” “Yes,” he replied,” I see it.” And as he had much more faith than I do, he said “Sir, have confidence, it is your good angel”. We saw it, both together. I then took the good God with me, and we continued our journey”.

- 68.** “Another time that we were returning together, I, as well as he, saw a light no larger than a candle come across the wood. It was coming in front of us horizontally at surprising speed. It seemed to be taking a thousand steps, while we just took two. It seemed it would swoop down on us at any minute. When it was behind an oak tree, the rays spread out. But at the very moment, it passed the oak and the light reappeared in the same position. However, even though it seemed to move so quickly, it did not move in such a way that I feared it that it would fall on me. Yet I was afraid, as I thought that perhaps it was some patriot who was coming quickly looking for priests, to do some harm. I was so frightened that I could not walk. This man, always so trusting, told me that it was our good angel, that if I wanted, he would stay and that he would see the end of it. I answered no, that it was not necessary that he expose himself to danger. Finally we arrived at the door of the house. I knocked quickly and as soon as they opened the door, I went in with him and I quickly closed the door behind me. There were two priests there to whom I spoke of it. We went out and we no longer could see anything. Was it a miracle or not? I do not know. I suspect that it could have been a light coming from some house that was in the woods.”

69. F. M.J. had initially stayed some time at Montbernage itself. When he had to flee from there, he retreated to Mount Moreau, where there were several priests. At night they withdrew to two houses which they thought safe. They had very poor beds. They were forced to sleep two or three in a very narrow bed, and as they feared the visits, in the morning they were sent to the woods, each with a big piece of bread of barley with husks in it. Because it was a very bad time, it was difficult to get bread. Besides, all they had with it was some cheese and for a drink some bad sour wine and not even all that they needed. As the other priests did not want to say the Mass for fear of being caught and they even wanted to leave their breviaries hidden, Fr. M.J. who was unwilling to agree to the latter precaution, left on Easter Tuesday 1793. "How, Lord," he said, "could I be a priest and not say Mass!" (1792 to 1793).

Once the guards came for a visit and went to a meadow while he was hidden in a ditch in that same meadow in the midst of thorns with another one of sixty-some years and they were not captured.

70. As he spoke of the suffering of not being able to go to confessions during the five months in his loft, he would say to us, "It is true that during that time there were not many voluntary faults committed. The few faults I did commit were consumed by the love of God. If there was something a little more important, I lamented it before the good God and moved myself as best I could to perfect contrition. I said Mass and thought nothing more of it. I had no more need to go to confession at the end of five months, as I would have now at the end of eight days."

71. One day at the Incurables, he saw one of the nieces of Sister Ave. This respectable Daughter of Wisdom had had her come so that she could embrace the same state of life, but the young woman felt no attraction to it. As she was telling this to Fr. MJ, he said to her, "Miss, I assure you that you will be a Daughter of Wisdom. Look, I am going to pray to the good God and say an Ave Maria for that intention in the chapel." He had hardly finished talking to her and suddenly she changed. She went to find her aunt to tell her that she absolutely wanted to follow the same kind of life. Indeed she persevered and was at St. Laurent to make profession. She returned to perfect herself under the watchful eyes of her aunt and to learn everything necessary for the care of the sick (in 1800).

72. I will not speak of his external mortifications. What can we say about the chain, the hair shirt? This victim, who, I would say, was really almost innocent, clung to these instruments of penance. But interior mortification was even more pleasing to him. He was aware of its great worth and that is why he was so careful when guiding souls to prepare them internally for sacrifice and abnegation of their whole self.
73. As I said, during the worse of the Terror he would enter different houses. There he preached morning and night. Many people came to him. When he spent the day in one house preaching and hearing confessions, he left at night and went to another to do the same thing (1793-1794).
74. Zealot of the Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Father and Superior General of this emerging order, he experienced all that this state of life, which he had embraced, cost him. One day speaking of the happiness he experienced he told us, "Yes, if the Lord himself told me, 'you can save yourself also in another state of life, where you do not have to suffer, where you would be happy, valued and at the same time ensure your salvation. I offer it to you,' I would say, 'Lord, leave me where I am. It is my happiness, it is just for me.' And certainly, if the Supreme Pontiff were to say to me, 'There is only one place where you can observe your obligation and that is in Cochinchine,' I would go there as soon as possible." (1801).
75. How can I depict his admirable simplicity? One day when someone was speaking to him of his conscience and the evil thoughts that came to him at times about different people, with kindness and so as to encourage him to chase away those thoughts, Fr. MJ said to him, "I never judge anyone. Not even three times a year do I make a rash judgment. I don't even have a lot to struggle with on that subject. God has given me a great grace in that (1801).
76. Another one of Fr. MJ's great qualities was his great devotion to the Good Virgin Mary. He is consumed by it. So that when he speaks of Mary his heart seems to tremble with joy. He transmits these feeling that inspires him to others. So we can rightly say that he is the "Beloved son of the heart" of this Blessed Mother.
77. You would almost have to be him to give expression to. His heart burns with love for the good God and for his neighbor. One day when one of us was sharing with him how he seemed to be suffering, he said, "A priest who had a ministry

like my own, could he be a moment without affliction?" That is why he worked so many conversions. The sighs of the pure soul of a child of Mary have such power over the heart of God.

78. Mr. Hallier,¹¹⁹³ Superior of the Seminary, had great affection for F. M.J. He even wanted to get a dispensation so he could be ordained priest at 22 years of age. Let us add that Mr. Hallier was a priest respected for his virtue and for his superior abilities. He became even more venerable suffering martyrdom. He was guillotined at Niort.

One day while leaving the office and speaking of this passage from Tobit that the Church applies to St Hilary, "*quia acceptus eras Deo necesse fuit tentatio probaret te*" (Tob 12:13), he said the Brother Polycarp:¹¹⁹⁴ "Have you noticed that when doing something good, in the end there is always suffering. Either the world eats us up, or we suffer inwardly, or we are persecuted. For me I have never done anything slightly good or, at least, less bad, I did not experience it." (15 or 16 January 1802).

A nun impressed by a sermon he gave when he was sub-deacon with Mr. Fournet came to him a long time later with the good will to be converted.

12. Ceremonial, proper Calendar and Mass of the Sacred Heart

As we have seen elsewhere, the Ceremonial of the Congregation was approved in 1825, and promulgated with the Constitutions on February 11, 1826. Below are the most significant texts, which we include in a brief presentation such as ours.

A. THE CEREMONIAL

a) *Reception of Novices*

The only element of this ceremonial, which dates from the early years, was the formula of "resolutions" that the applicant made in the presence of the whole community.

The ceremony begins with the "*Veni Creator*" and the prayer "*Deus qui corda fidelium.*" Once the allocution is finished, there is the blessing of the religious habits and the following "*Oremus*"

Lord Jesus Christ, who hast vouchsafed to take on the form of our mortality, we beg you in the great abundance of your generosity to kindly bless † and sanctify these garments as a sign of an innocent and blameless life, so that your servant who is to be

1193 Louis Hayer, Lazariste, spiritual director at the seminary until the Revolution.

1194 On this date, it can only be brother Hilarion.

clothed with them, be clothed also with you and might always give worship and honor to your most Sacred Heart and the most Holy Heart of the Virgin Mary.

The celebrant incenses and sprinkles holy water on the habits. While the novice goes apart to put on the habit, the choir sings Psalm 113 “*In exitu Israel*”, and once he has returned with a lighted candle in hand, he kneels, and the celebrant sings the following:

Kyrie ... Kyrie ...Our Father

v / Save your people

r / Oh my God, for they have put their trust in you.

v / Send them help from your temple.

r / And protect them from Zion.

v / Let the enemy have no power over them.

r / And the son of iniquity not harm them.

v / Lord, be for them a tower of strength.

r / In face of the enemy.

v / Lord, hear my prayer.

r / And let my cry come to You.

v / The Lord be with you.

r / And with your spirit.

Let us pray:

Oh Lord God of hosts, we come humbly to you in your mercy, that by the abundance of your mercy you might purify this servant of yours from all corruption of the old man and make him capable of renewal in holiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray:

Lord, listen to our prayers, and deign to bless † this servant of yours, to whom in your name we have given the habit of holy religion and grant that, through your gift, he may remain devoted to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the most Holy Heart of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, and that he may merit eternal life. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Then the Celebrant sits and the Novice, kneeling, with the lit candle in his hand, pronounces his resolutions:

I brother N. make the resolution to live in poverty, chastity and obedience, in order to obtain the grace of one day making profession in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

While the novice remains kneeling, the Celebrant stands and says:

Let us pray : Merciful God, clement God, to whom all good things are pleasing and without whom nothing good is started or brought to completion, turn the ears of your mercy to our humble prayers, and defend this your servant from all mundane vanity , worldly impediment and illicit desire, and grant favorably, that supported by the merits of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the help of the most Holy Heart of Mary, he might persevere in his purpose and, having obtained remission of his sins, one day be joined to the company of your elect. Through Christ our Lord.

Let us pray: O almighty God, who have placed in the most Sacred Heart of your son Our Lord Jesus Christ all the treasures of knowledge and holiness, as well as the fullness of all graces, we humbly ask you that you deign to pour forth abundantly the grace of your mercy upon this servant of yours, who renounces worldly life, in such a way that he might journey through this present life and receive from your hands the reward of eternal recompense and that as he decides to undertake the holy company and regimen of

common life may he one day with the elect take possession of the promised reward from the hands of you who give the recompense. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

After this prayer, the novice gets up, leaves aside the candle, comes forward and kneeling receives the sign of peace, which the Celebrant gives him. Then he receives it from the professed, while Psalm 132 “*Ecce quam bonum*” is sung.

It ends with the prayer to the Heart of Jesus:

*v / Heart of Jesus, burning with love for us.
r / Inflame our hearts with your love.*

Let us pray:

Heart of Jesus, most perfect model of purity, make us pure of heart, so that we might be worthy to live, to do penance, to give ourselves selflessly, to teach, to rest and to die, following your example, Savior of the world, you who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

The ceremony ends concludes with “Live the Sacred Heart of Jesus, forever and ever.”

b) Profession

Prior to 1826, the ceremony of profession consisted in reciting the formula of the vows, while kneeling before the altar, and placing on it the signed formula. It is most likely that the ceremony included a short allocution by the Superior at the beginning and that the “*Veni Creator*” was sung. However we do not have witnesses that allow us to say with certainty that this was a custom that was always observed.

The ceremonial of 1825 calls for the singing of Psalm 121 “*Laetatus sum*” as the entrance, followed by the blessing of the cord, scapular and mantle. Naturally, after the entrance, if there has been no reception of novices, the rite was introduced as seen above and then the blessing with the following orations:

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

*r / Who made heaven and earth.
v / The Lord be with you.
R / And with your spirit.*

Let us pray:

Lord, God Almighty, bless † this cincture, which is to gird you servant, our brother, so that he may be permanently united to you, to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ and the most Holy Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary and always be committed to serving you. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ. (sprinkled with holy water and incensed).

Let us pray:

We beseech you, most merciful Lord, to cast a glance at the Heart of your beloved Son, in whom you are well pleased, and at the Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom you desired to preserve from all stain of sin and adorn with all virtues, and bless † and sanctify † this scapular so that your servant, wearing it always on his breast, might be

worthy to conform himself to the sweetest hearts of Jesus and Mary and in You come to the fullness of unity. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, deign to bless † and sanctify † this mantle, so that as the spirit of Elijah descended on Elisha, so might your consoling Spirit descend on your servant. May this mantle be a protection against all the wiles of the enemy, may it protect him from all evil of mind and body. May your servant be fervent in psalmody, humble in submission, persevering in adoration. May the most Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ, be for him the inexhaustible source of merits, and the most Holy Heart of Mary a treasure of holy hope, so that your servant might be filled with abundant graces and virtues. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (sprinkled with holy water and incensed).

While the novice is putting on the blessed garments, Psalm 83 “*Quam dilecta*” is sung by the choir. The Celebrant is seated and the novice kneeling, with a lit candle in hand, says the formula of the vows:

I N. (name of religion), in accordance with the Constitutions, Statutes and Rules approved and confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See, on November 17, 1817 and confirmed by the Apostolic Decree of August 26, 1825, make forever into your hands, Reverend Father, the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience, as a brother of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in whose service I wish to live and die. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Once the formula is finished, the newly professed rises, goes to the small table on which the book of the Gospels has been set between two candles, and placing his hand on the sacred text says:

So help me God and His Holy Gospel.

Then he prostrates before the altar, and four professed cover him with the funeral pall. Meanwhile the Celebrant intones Psalm 50 “*Miserere.*” Once completed, he says the “*Kyrie*” and begins “*Pater Noster*”, which everyone says quietly. At the end the Celebrant says:

*v / Lead us not into temptation.
r / But deliver us from evil.
v / Lord, save your servant.
r / Oh my God, because he hopes in you.
v / Send him help from your temple.
r / And protect him from Zion.
v / Let the enemy have no power over him.
r / And the son of iniquity do him no harm.
v / Lord, be for him a tower of strength.
r / In the face of the enemy.
v / Lord hear my prayer .
r / And let my cry come unto you.
v / The Lord be with you.
R / And with your spirit.*

Let us pray:

Oh God, who punish the sins of the wicked treating them severely, you do not reject the tears of those who weep, grant that we who have acknowledged the seriousness of your warning, might experience the grace of your mercy.

Almighty and ever living God, who demands that we die to the world so as to live in Christ, guide your servant on the path of eternal salvation. May his life be hidden in Christ, and through your gift may he desire what is pleasing to you and with greater power accomplish it. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The newly professed rises and the celebrant intones the “*Te Deum*”, and once completed, says the following:

Let us pray:

Almighty and ever living God, who commanded that we fulfill promises and observe vows, bless † this servant here before you, consecrated to the most Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the most Holy Heart of Mary, so that he might remain firm in his intention.

O God, who inhabits and guards chaste hearts and pure souls, look kindly on this your servant. May he be a perpetual adorer of the Heart of Christ. May he always seek to honor the most Holy Heart of Mary. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit may there be in him prudent modesty, wise goodness, profound meekness, chaste freedom. May he burn with charity and may he love You alone. May you be for him honor, joy, consolation in sorrow, council in confusion, patience in tribulation, abundance in poverty, nourishment in hunger, medicine in sickness. May he find everything in you. May he discipline his flesh and overcome the world and its prince. And so, adorned with the flower of virtue, may he await the Spouse with oil at hand and may he remain forever among the followers of the Lamb.

Oh God, whose mercy is beyond measure, and whose goodness is an infinite treasure, we give thanks to you most gracious majesty for the gifts you have given us, always begging of your mercy, that you grant what we ask of you, that you not abandon those who have recourse to you and that you prepare them for future rewards. Through the same Christ our Lord.

Joseph son of David the King,**Remember Christ’s flock on the Day of Judgment.**

v / He made him master of his house.

r / And prince over all his possessions.

Let us pray:

Oh God, with unspeakable providence, you deigned to choose Joseph as the husband of your mother, grant that while venerating him on earth, we might merit to have him as our protector in heaven. You live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

The ceremony ends with “*Vivat Cor Jesu ...*”.

c) The Renewal of Vows

“*Veni Creator*” is sung and an instruction is given, after which the vows are renewed, beginning with the Celebrant. At the end the “*Te Deum*” is sung and then there is said:

Let us pray:

Oh God, you give peace and love chastity, grant to your servants, who have renewed the vows of their profession, the grace to be renewed in the spirit of their vocation and in your mercy make them one.

The prayer “O God whose mercy” follows and the ceremony concludes as did the rite of profession.

d) The chapter of faults

The rite for the “chapter of faults” is the first that took a definitive form, so to speak. In the presentation to the Holy See to which we have referred, Fr. Coudrin says:

“Illae praeces in usu fuerunt apud nos ab incunabulis Congregationis nostrae, videlicet a triginta circiter annis.” This would take us back, at the latest, to 1797, or the end of 1796, in other words, to the very beginning of the foundation. In order to corroborate the antiquity of the rite, we find a blow by blow description in a billet of M. Aymer. The billet is not dated, but it is very possibly from 1800-1801 at the very latest. It is one of the few that has no reference to a vision. It could very well have been inspired by some monastic ceremonial.

It is interesting that there are many more details in the billet than in the Ceremonial of 1825. But those details became part of the customs, so that the description in the billet is much more complete than the Ceremonial itself with respect to the rite that we were familiar with until recently.

But let’s look at the Ceremonial.

The chapter opens with the “*Veni Sancte Spiritus*”, with the verse and prayer. This is followed by the verse “Heart of Jesus, burning with...” and the corresponding oration. Then there is added:

*v / Through your most Sacred Heart, Virgin Mary;
r / May we be worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray:

Oh God, you have always desired to reign in the most Pure Heart of Mary, Mother of Your only begotten Son, by her merits and intercession, grant that our heart, cleansed of all stain, may be always pleasing to you and obtain eternal rewards. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The prayer to St. Joseph, as indicated for profession, follows and finally there is added, without a new “*Oremus*”:

Oh Lord, do not give us what our sins deserve, do not deal with us to the measure of our iniquity. Lord, do not remember our iniquities of the past. Quickly send us your mercy, for we are so very poor. Help us, God our Savior, and for the glory of your name, Lord, free us, and be merciful to us in our sinfulness.

*v / Lord, show us your mercy;
r / And grant us your salvation.*

Oremus:

Oh God who punish ... (as at Profession).

Before opening the Chapter, “Live the Heart... etc.” is said. There follows the norms of the Constitutions Cap. XI.

At the end of the Chapter, the antiphon “*Sub tuum*” is said, with its verse and oration. Once completed, the Superior rises and blesses the brothers. He kneels again, and says the “*Salve*”, with the *v / They will seek your favor; r / All the great ones of your people...* with the prayer “Almighty and ever living God” and Psalm 132 “*Ecce Quam bonum ..*”

There follows the prayer to the Sacred Heart, as at reception, and the prayer to St. Joseph is repeated, as at the end of profession.

Finally there is Psalm 129 “*De Profundis*”, with the orations “*Deus veniae largitor*” and “*Deus Fidelium*” under a single conclusion.

The ceremony concludes with the “*Vivat Cor ...*”.

e) Blessing of the red mantle

In the first publication of Ceremonial, the formula for this blessing, which given its meaning is worth including, is given in an appendix.

*v / Our help is in the Name of the Lord;
r / Who made heaven and earth.*

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, deign to bless † this mantle, which our brothers will wear to adore your most Sacred Heart. In virtue of the Holy Cross † pour forth upon it heavenly blessing and by the seal of the Holy Cross † may it receive such blessing, that the powers of darkness might be kept away from them and trembling may those powers flee with all their court. May they not dare to bother or molest those who serve you, who pour out their prayer in your presence, almighty God, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

(The priest sprinkles holy water.)

B. THE CALENDAR

We can assume that the Roman calendar was adopted for the office, and here we note only what is strictly proper, given to the Congregation by particular indult.

January: 23. The Betrothal of the BMV. Double Major.

February: 2. Purification of BMV Class II, with Octave.

11. St. Simeon Prophet. Double.

13. St. Isidore of Egypt, Confessor. Double.
 23. St. Margaret of Cortona. Semi-double.
 - Friday after Ash Wednesday: Commemoration of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Double Major.
- March:*
6. St. Colette, Virgin. Double Minor.
 18. St. Gabriel Archangel. Double Major.
 - Friday after the First Sunday of Lent: Crown of Thorns Our Lord JC. Double Major.
 - Friday after the Second Sunday of Lent: Spear and nails of Our Lord. Double Major.
 - Friday after the Third Sunday of Lent: Five Wounds of Our Lord JC. Double Major.
 - Friday after the Fourth Sunday of Lent: The Precious Blood of Our Lord JC. Double Major.
- April:*
- Sunday III after Easter: patronage of St. Joseph. Double Major.
 1st class, with Octave.
- May:*
3. St. Jeremiah, Prophet, Double.
 14. St. Pachomius, Abbot. Double Minor.
 15. St. Isidore the Worker. Double.
 17. St. John Nepomucene, Martyr. Double.
 21. St. Felix de Cantalice, Confessor. Semi-double.
 24. BVM, Help of Christians. Double Major.
 30. St. Ferdinand the King. Semi-double.
- June:*
16. St. John Francis Regis, Confessor. Double II^a Class.
 21. St. Aloysius Gonzaga. Double.
 - Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi: Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Double, First Class with Octave.
- July:*
3. St. Marcial, Bishop and Confessor. Double Minor.
 9. Feast of the BVM of Peace.
 Double II Class (As in the Feast of the Conception of the BMV).

- August:*
- 4. St. Dominic, Confessor. Double.
 - 20. St. Bernard Abbot. Double.
 - 28. St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor. Double.
 - Sunday after 1st Octave of the Assumption of the BVM. Solemn commemoration of the Most Sacred Heart of BVM Double of II Class, without octave (As in Our lady of Snows).
- September:*
- 4. St. Rose of Viterbo, Virgin. Double.
 - 25. Office of the Blessed Redeemer. Double Major.
- October:*
- 20. St. Caprasius, Bishop, Martyr. Double Major.
 - 24. St. Raphael, Archangel. Double Major.
 - 30. Holy Relics. Double.
 - Second Sunday of October: Maternity BVM. Double Major.
 - Third Sunday of October: Purity of the BVM. Double Major.
 - Fourth Sunday of October: Patronage of the BVM. Double Major.
- November:*
- 21. Presentation of the BVM, Double Major.
- December:*
- 10. Translation of the Holy House of Loreto. Double Major.
 - 17. St. Lazarus Risen. Double.
 - 18. Birth expectation of the BMV. Double Major.

C. MASS AND OFFICE OF SACRED HEART

The Founders and their first disciples did not develop any proper scheme for the Mass or Office of the Sacred Heart, and were content to use what had been authorized in the diocese, and was more readily available in the various manuals of devotion. The most widespread is the text of the Mass “*Gaudeamus*”, attributed to Paray circles, but actually from St. John Eudes, a fact not known in the surroundings. It is likely that this was the scheme used by the community to honor the Sacred Heart, and this is why we reproduce it here:

Introit: Let us rejoice in the Lord, making a feast in honor of the most loving Heart of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, whose love the seraphim adore, singing with one voice: behold his dominion endures forever.

Ps. (CX): I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart, in the gathering of the righteous, in their assembly. Gloria. Let us all rejoice.

Let us pray:

Father of mercies and God of all consolation,, who have loved us with unbounded charity, with ineffable goodness you gave your most beloved Son a Heart filled with love for us. So that we might perfectly love you with him in oneness of heart, grant us, we ask you, that caught up into your unity, our hearts united to one another and with the Heart of Jesus, we might do all in humility and in your love and with your help fulfill the righteous desires of our heart. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading of the Prophet Ezekiel (Chapter 36)

Thus says the Lord God, I will prove the holiness of my great name, profaned among the nations, in whose midst you have profaned it. Thus the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when in their sight I prove my holiness through you. For I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you.

Gradual: (Gal 3; Phil 2; Eph 5)

Because you are sons of God, God has sent His Spirit and the Heart of His Son into your hearts, where he cries out: Abba, Father. Have in your hearts what was in His heart. And walk in love, as He has loved you.

v / (John XV). As my Father has loved me, so I have loved you: and this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Remain in my love.

Alleluia (Ps 56; II Mach)

My heart is ready, God of my heart, my heart is ready to do always with all my heart and determined spirit, which is pleasing to you.

Squence:

*Gaudeamus exultantes
Cordis Jesu personantes
Divine praeconia.*

*Haec est dies veneranda,
In qua Patris adoranda
Laudamus praecordia.*

*Cor arandum Salvatoris
Mellis fontem et amoris,
Corda cuncta diligent.*

*Cor beatum summi Regis
Cor et vitam novae legis,
Omnes linguae concinant.*

*Sit laus plena, sit immensa,
Sit perennis, sit accensa
Ardoribus pectoris!*

*Laudet, canat orbis totus
Colat, amet tote virtus
Et cordis at corporis!*

*Ora, manus, sensus, vigor,
Fides viva, purus arnor,
Cor divinum consonent!*

*Flammis sacris inflammata
Corda, voces atque facta
Cor amoris praedicent!
Cor mirandum Redemptoris,
Coadunans terrain coelis,
Unitatis speculum.*

*Digna sedes Trinitatis,
Plenitudo Deitatis,
Amoris miraculum.*

*Amoris Evangelium
Puri cordis incendium,
Magna Dei gloria.*

*Coeli nectar vivificans,
Cordis manna deificans,
Amor et laetitia.*

*Cleri sacri praesidium,
Rector benigne cordium,
Nostra rege pectora.*

*Fons aetenrae pietatis,
Ardens fornax charitatis,
Corda flammis devora.*

*Domus amoris aurea,
Turris amanturn flammea,
Coetus nostri lex ignea,*

*Fons perennis gratiae.
Cor, thesaurus sanctitatis,
Abyssus humilitatis,*

*Thronus Dei voluntatis,
Et centrum clementiae.
Paradisus Beatorum,*

*Consolator afflictorum,
Pax et salus peccatorum,
Cor omnibus omnia.*

*O Jesu, raptor cordium,
Amor flagrans mentium,
Cor tuum trahat omnium*

*Mentes et praecordia!
Cor, summa benignitas,
Immensa liberalitas,*

*Incomprehensa charitas,
Cordis Vera felicitas,
Car esto supolicibus!*

*Fac nos, Jesu, flammescentem
Cordis tui charitatem,
Et divinam pietatem,*

*Summam quoque sanctitatem
Sanctis sequi moribus!*

*O beata Trinitas!
Cordis Jesu charitas,
Immensae clementiae
Immensae sit gratiae,
Aeterna sit gloria;
Amen dicant omnia!
Amen. Alleluia!*

English translation:

*Let us rejoice and jump for joy
Echoing the divine proclamation
of the Heart of Jesus.*

*This is the revered day
in which We praise
the adorable breast of the Father.*

*You must be loved, Heart of the Savior
Source of honey and love
all hearts love him*

*Blessed Heart of the King,
Heart and life of the New Law
all tongues sing to you*

*May the praise be full, may it be immense,
May it be unceasing and aflame
With the burning fire of his breast!*

*Praise, sing all the world
Honor him, love him with all the strength
of heart and body.*

*Mouth, hands, strength, senses,
Living faith, pure love,
Celebrate the Divine Heart!*

*Inflamed with sacred fire
Hearts, voices and actions
Proclaim the love of my heart!*

*Admirable Heart of the Redeemer
That unifies heaven and earth,
Mirror of unity.*

*Worthy dwelling of the Trinity
Fullness of the Godhead
Miracle of Love.*

*Gospel of Love
Fire of the pure heart
Greater glory of God.*

*Life-giving nectar of heaven,
Deifying manna of the heart,
Love and happiness.*

*Protection of the sacred clergy
Kindly guide of hearts
Govern our breast.*

*Source of eternal mercy,
Burning furnace of charity,
Devour hearts in your flames.*

*Golden house of love
For the one who loves, tower of flames,
Of ours, law of fire
Perennial source of grace.*

*Heart, treasure of holiness
Abys of humility,
Throne of the divine will
And center of mercy.*

*Paradise of the Blessed,
Solace of the afflicted,
Peace and salvation of sinners,
Heart that is everything for everyone.*

*Oh Jesus, raptor of hearts
How you burn in love for souls
May your heart attract all
souls and hearts!*

*Oh Heart, all goodness,
Immense generosity,
Boundless charity,
True happiness of the heart,
Be the Heart of those who beseech you!*

*Grant, Jesus, that the flaming
Charity of Your Heart
And the divine mercy,
And your great holiness, we may
follow with holy conduct!*

*O Blessed Trinity!
Charity of the Heart of Jesus,
In your great mercy,
May your grace be great,
Eternal be the glory;
Let all say Amen, Alleluia!*

Gospel according to St. John (Chapter 15)

As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

This I command you: love one another.

Offertory Antiphon (Ps 19)

May the Lord be mindful of your sacrifice, most loving Jesus, and may your holocaust be abundant. May you give yourself according to your Heart and may firm all your plans.

Secret:

Almighty God, pour into our hearts the Spirit and the Heart of your most beloved Son Jesus, so that being of one heart and united with Him, and offering one and the same victim, we might be worthy of offering ourselves and all that is ours. Through the same Lord.

Preface of Christmas

Communion Antiphon:

Most loving Jesus, in your heart, broken to the point of death because of the violence of suffering and the love you bore for us, hear those who cry to you, have mercy on us and may you rule our hearts forever.

Post-Communion:

Most merciful Father, hear we beseech you the prayers of your family, with all our hearts prostrate in your presence and grant that the ardent charity of the most loving Heart of your beloved Son, be poured forth in the depth of our heart, obtain for us the divine favor and with power make us sharers in that, so that, through the intervention of this same most Sacred Heart, our hearts might be always immolated to you by the fire of your love and the flame of your eternal charity and fulfill your just desires. Through the same Lord...Amen.

Concerning the Office actually used in the community, we have too little and fragmentary information to say anything. We have the office included in the *Breviarium Romanum* used by Fr Coudrin, Coudrin, edited by Belin-Mander, Paris 1828. It comes in a *Supplementum*, and was approved by Clement XIII in 1766, for the confraternity in Rome and for Poland. It corresponds to the Mass *Miserebitur*, which was not widespread in France until the mid-nineteenth century. We cannot forget that the feast did not become part of the liturgy of the universal Church until 1856.

13. Father Alexis Bachelot to his Sister Sr. Corneille, 22 September 1827 (Extract)

(On Part III, Chapter VI. n. 1. we said that there was no documentary evidence concerning how long after 1803 the revelations of Mother Aymer continued. This is true as

regards communications concerning the characteristics and vocation of the Congregation, but not completely. We have recently found a document that, out of respect for the truth, we should make known.)

I conclude (this letter)... much longer than I had intended it to be, with a small episode that can be an encouragement for us in our little troubles. Shortly before our departure from Paris, our mission appeared to be under the most advantageous auspices. (Humanly speaking, for as a work of God they could not be any happier). At least on our arrival, we had no idea what kind of human protection would fail us here. However, the Good Mother, whose words have normally so often been a support for us as for so many others, said she had seen missionaries of the family on an island, without any human help, suffering great difficulty and deprivation, but that after some time the Blessed Virgin helped them and that afterwards they were fine. Mr. Deletang (Bro. Joachim), who had heard her, became frightened for us and came in tears to tell us. As we had all been laughing and since it could refer to others as well as us, while being prepared for anything, as we knew anything was possible, it did not make a great impression on us. But when the tragedy happened we remembered and we it caused us to renew our offering.

14. Fr. Alexander Sorieul: on the Vow of Chastity

(According to the notes of Novice Barthélemy Huillery 1848)

Chastity is a virtue that rules the person's affections, in connection with the pleasures of the flesh. It is the second thing that the religious promises by a vow, for we could say that it is contained in the vow of poverty. In fact if one were not to practice chastity, one would not be perfectly fulfilling the vow of poverty. Our divine Savior wanted to practice it himself and he wanted his holy mother, St. Joseph, his apostles and his disciples to practice it. So the first motive is that it is a necessary compliment of self-denial and the second motive is imitation of our divine Savior. The third reason is liberation from all the impediments that marriage brings with it. Any community come together for whatever reason, always makes the resolution of vow of chastity.

To observe chastity without a vow is a beautiful thing, but to observe the vow is still much more beautiful. The vow may be individual, or conditional, or temporary.

It is called a "simple vow", when it is not recognized by the Church as solemn. In order to make a solemn vow, it is necessary that the one making it has the intention to make it solemnly and that the Church recognize it as such. A dispensation is almost never granted from a solemn vow, while bishops may often dispense from a simple vow.

The obligation is such that whoever goes breaks this vow, commits a double sin, because, 1) all actions contrary to this virtue are prohibited by the commandment of God, and also 2) a sin against the virtue of religion, is a sacrilege.

As for the perfection of the virtue. It has its source in the will, in the habit, in the means, because the stronger the will, the greater the habit, and the greater the means, the more perfect is the virtue.

The will is the faculty that must command all the others; and by faith we hold that it always has the strength to be dominant in us. Thus, when we sin, we want to. We must not imagine that we are perfect in the virtue of chastity, when we do not commit any fault against it. There is another way of being chaste, to be so in memory, in imagination, in all our faculties. A person, who has reached this point, would have attained the highest degree of chastity. The means by which we control our memory, our imagination, and our senses is the will. Therefore we must always be trying to strengthen our will and doing that by making good resolutions, considering all that is vile in this vice and all that is beautiful in the virtue. In order to possess this virtue, it is not enough just to make acts of it every once in a while. We have to make them often. The “habit” is necessary.

The habit is formed little by little. The more frequent the acts, more quickly will the virtue take root. Once one has acquired this “habit,” it can be said that one has come to possess some degree of the virtue. The other means is struggle and victory. To know what one is capable of, it is necessary to struggle. The Holy Spirit himself says to us, “What does the man know that has not passed through temptation?” Because of that God often allows souls that are sincerely converted to experience temptations against this virtue.

There are three kinds of means. Without understanding it, we think that within us there are two wills. One wants what is good and the other wants what is evil. From that follows the first two means: 1. those that can contribute to enhance the principle that leads to goodness. 2. and weaken the will that leads to evil. 3. The third class: all things that can help us to take precautions to remove the danger.

The second kind of means is anything that can help undermine whatever leads us to evil: interior and exterior mortification; fleeing occasions of sin, monitoring the senses.

The third includes resources we can use to remove the danger. Our Lord said that anyone who loves danger will perish in it. When mortifying the eyes, this is what should be done: “require of yourself a bit more than what is commanded.”

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