

## SECOND PART

EVIDENCE PRODUCED FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE  
CONGREGATION CALLED THE CONGREGATION OF JESUS AND  
MARY UNTIL THE DEATH OF THE SERVANT OF GOD.  
(1818-1837)

In this second part will be found together all the documents regarding the foundation and development of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary until the death of the Servant of God. As is evident, the history revolves round the person and activity of the Foundress. Nevertheless, during the five years 1818-1823, even though she held a very important post and at times a decisive one, the Servant of God is put in the second place by the figure of her director, Fr. Coindre.

To avoid confusion and misunderstanding we give a short note on the variations of the title of the congregation and the name of the religious.

The congregation founded by the Servant of God, took the name of Jesus and Mary in 1842, five years after the death of the Foundress (cf. Doc. XXVII, *Histoire*, pp. 655-656). In the first period, 1818-1823, the name of the congregation remained undecided; during the time it was settled at Pierres Plantees (1818-1820) we find only the name of "Providence of the Sacred Heart" or "Providence of Pierres Plantees". The Servant of God and her companions, established at Fourviere in November 1820, began to call themselves "Ladies of Fourviere", and "Ladies of Pious Education". Until it had obtained canonical approval in 1823, the most common name was that of "Religious of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary".

The Servant of God, Claudine Thevenet, and her first companions, unable to obtain ecclesiastical approbation immediately (cf. Doc. X, p. 245) desired at least to take the name of a saint (cf. Doc. XXVII, *Histoire* 558). Some documents date the fact back to 1822, but in a letter of Fr. Andre Coindre of the 10th November 1821, he already gives the name of "Mme Ignatius" to the Servant of God.

## DOC. VI

OF THE FIRST HOME OF THE INSTITUTE at "Pierres Plantees". *Excerpt from the original document which has the title "Census", kept in the Archives of the Municipality of Lyon, without a signature.*

The *Histoire de la Congregation*, chapter III (cf. Doc. XXVII, p. 545) offers a detailed account of the way in which Fr. Coindre assembled Claudine

and some of the members of the "Association of the Sacred Heart" on the 31st July 1818 (Doc. IV, p. 38) and organized with them a new religious institute, the principal end of which would be the instruction and general formation of poor and needy young girls (Doc. XIX, 4, p. 417). For this purpose a new *Providence* was opened immediately, like that founded in the Parish of St. Bruno (cf. Doc. III, p. 33), namely a house with a school and a workroom for sewing and weaving, where the young girls were taught the fundamental elements of religion, the work proper to women, and the silk industry, typical of Lyon. The *Providence* was established at Pierres Plantees, in the workers' quarter of Croix Rousse, and the first future religious gathered together there, one by one, as their respective families allowed them.

The night of the 5th-6th October 1818 was particularly painful for Claudine. Later she would confide to her collaborators, to encourage them to overcome their difficulties, that the first night passed at Pierres Plantees was the most terrible night of her life, uniting the sacrifice of leaving her mother, the temptation to give way to discouragement, loneliness and fear. Indeed, the Servant of God found herself faced with an uncertain future, alone with the widow Ferrand, later known as Mother St. Borgia, in the house rented at Pierres Plantees the poverty of which was profoundly to impress Fr. Mayet (cf. Doc. XXV, 2, p. 487).

Claudine and those with her who had firmly dedicated themselves to the new work following the call of God, kept a rule of life in common and took care of the children in the *Providence*. The Servant of God together with Fr. Coindre, sought to organize the new Institute canonically. At the beginning, the Associates still kept in contact with their parents and their respective families. Claudine lived more or less uninterruptedly in the *Providence* of Pierres Plantees, and the *Histoire* says (cf. Doc. XXVII, p. 548) that when the Servant of God went to visit her old mother, this latter exclaimed sadly, referring to the long absence of her daughter, "What silk-weaver's charm has bewitched you, tell me, that you leave your old mother so often for these girls of Pierres Plantees?" Also Fr. Mayet, an eyewitness of these scenes, remembering the situation of Claudine, notes above all, that he saw her occupied with all that concerned her foundation, and that his father, the brother-in-law of the Servant of God, called her with affectionate irony "Madame Abbess"; and everyone was amused at seeing the gentle aunt blush, and, bending her head, become more engrossed in her lace-making (cf. Doc. XXV, 2, p. 487).

To facilitate the study of this new stage of the life of the Servant of God, we consider it opportune to present a plan of Lyon preceded by an explanatory note.

Lyon is situated at the confluence of the Rhone and the Saone, around two hills, the Croix Rousse and Fourviere, separated by the River Saone. Between the right bank of this river and the hill of Fourviere is "Old Lyon" with its narrow streets, beautiful Gothic houses, the Cathedral, the Archbishop's residence (now the library), etc. In the eighteenth century the

population had been spreading towards the "peninsula" where the Church of St. Nizier, the Abbey of St. Pierre, the Town Hall, etc. were situated. The silk merchants and almost all the commercial establishments were forming a group round the Place des Terreaux, whilst the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy lived mostly round the square of Bellecour, extending towards Perrache, leaving "old Lyon" to the poorer classes. The left bank of the Rhone with the Brotteaux, today densely populated, was then almost uninhabited. Fourviere, the highest point of the city, was the place of pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin; the Croix Rousse was occupied in its highest part by the Carthusian Monastery and some country houses of Lyon families, and was becoming especially the home of workers in the silk trade.

The Servant of God, like the Laporte and Jaricot families, was born in the parish of St. Nizier, and lived successively in the rue Neuve, rue Griffon and rue Royale in the centre of the city, staying from time to time at Chaponost, 12 km to the south west of Lyon, where her parents possessed a small villa, with a vineyard. (3 E9611, "Testament Guyot de Pravieux", *A. D. Lyon* and J. JOMAND, *Chaponost en Lyonnais*, Lyon 1966, pp. 159, 337). In 1795 the Thevenet family moved to rue Masson, on Croix Rousse and, when worship was restored, the church of St. Bruno of the former Carthusian Monastery, now become the parish church, was the centre of the apostolate of the Servant of God, who effectively helped the parish priest. We have seen her first Providence 'settled in a "cell" of the Carthusian Monastery (cf. Doc. 111.4, p. 35) and the meetings of the Associates were held in the Chapter room, transformed into a chapel for retreats.

In 1818, the Servant of God rented a house near her home in rue Masson, to open a second Providence and there on the evening of the 5th October she went to begin her religious life. The house was situated in *rue Pierres Plantees*, so called from the great upright stones placed in the ground to prevent vehicles from entering the dangerous descent of the Grande-Cote.

In this house of Pierres Plantees, described in the document we present, the Servant of God had placed a woman silk worker who would teach the future pupils the use of the loom, and one orphan who would soon be joined by others, so that in a short time there were twelve (cf. Doc. XXIII, *Memorial* p. 461). The Servant of God and the widow Ferrand arrived on the evening of the 5th October, and then the first companions came: on the 7th A. Cartel; on the 20th P. Chippier and J. Planu; on the 24th November R. Guy on ... The census of 1820 says there were 36 persons in all. When they transferred to Fourviere on the 11th November of the same year there were already 40, of whom 17 were future religious and 23 were orphans.

The house of Pierres Plantees had no chapel; the associates with their little proteges went to St. Bruno's for Mass, a walk of twenty minutes (cf. Doc. XXIII, *Memorial*, p. 461) and they were often stoned by urchins as they walked along (cf. Doc. XXVII, *Histoire*, p. 549).

While this new Providence was developing Claudine Thevenet continued to be President of the Association (cf. Doc. IV, 2, p. 88). She directed all its works, and besides, at Pierres Plantees, she attended to the organisation of "(In-future religious congregation. In this period three groups of future religious were formed: a) those who would be dedicated to administration, and government; b) those who would teach the silk weaving in the workrooms; c) those who would be occupied above all with domestic work. Fr. Coindre had given some rules (cf. Doc. VIII, p. 200, and XXVII, *Histoire*, p. 545), which the Servant of God put into practice, and continued to perfect by her experience and prudence.

Regarding the place of this first foundation, the official archives of Lyon confirm what is said in the *Histoire* and the tradition of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

In the short document reproduced here we find the name of "Pitrat", as the proprietor of the house occupied by the Providence. Fr. Claude Mayet, who describes with very significant expressions the great poverty of this house, in his testimony gives a similar account, with a slight variation, regarding the whereabouts of this Providence, saying it was "in the place where the Tour Pitrat is now", (cf. Doc. XXV, 2, p. 488).

This "Tour Pitrat", which was to be used as an observatory, was to have been 100 metres high, on the hill of Croix Rousse. It collapsed while under construction and was reconstructed by the same Pitrat in 1828, but on a smaller scale. It was totally demolished in 1874.

Today a part of the foundation on which the Tour Pitrat was built is occupied by the Mother House and adjoining clinic of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. A wall of the clinic is pointed out by the sisters as the place from which the tower arose. The house that the Servant of God had occupied was demolished, it would seem, a little while after the transfer to Fourviere took place.

1820

Floors	Name of Tenant	Profession	No. of rooms	Rental value	Tax	Men	Women	E.D.	Residents	Looms	Rue Pierres Plantees No. 1 & 3 Building in the Garden.
B. 2.	Mile Thevenet	Establishment of the Providence	8	200			1		36	10	Proprietor: Pitrat