

PRISSAC (Indre)

Parish Archives: * XVIII.

LE PUY (Haute-Loire)

Episcopal archives: negative result.

Archives of the parish church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel:
* XVI.

Departmental archives: XI, * XV, XVI.

Municipal archives: * XXVII.

ROME

General archives of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary: IV, VII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX.

General archives of the Society of Jesus: XVIII.

General archives of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart: * IV, VIII, * XIV, XVI, * XVII, * XIX, * XXVI, * XXVII.

General archives of the Society of Mary: IX, * XXV.

SAINT-AMAND (Cher)

Parish archives: * XVIII.

SAINT-DIE (Vosges)

Episcopal archives: negative result.

VERDUN (Meuse)

Episcopal archives: * XXVII.

YSSINGHAUX (Haute-Loire)

Archives of the Seminary: * X, * XVI.

III - Notes on the documentation

Our documentation is divided into three sections, each of which groups together the historical and biographical information relative to a determined period in the life of the Servant of God. These sections are subdivided into parts which explain by means of documents a particular aspect of the life and reputation of sanctity of the Servant of God. The sequence of the documentation has always been in chronological order of the principal events, especially in the first two periods.

Within the first part are included five documents illustrating the most significant and characteristic points regarding the Servant of God, until the foundation of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. In fact, Documents I-II (pp. 4-18) present the family milieu, together with the social and political background, which undoubtedly influenced the formation of her strong and unflinching character, and of which we can find traces in the initiatives undertaken by her, and carried into effect. Doc. III (pp. 18-38) describes her first apostolic and charitable good works undertaken in favour of young abandoned children and girls, who were gathered together and helped in the Institute called the *Providence*. This work, which would become one of the specific aims of her life and foundation, becomes a reality in both its spiritual and practical aspects in the Pious Union, the Society or Association of the Sacred Heart (Doc. IV, pp. 38-172), whose nature is perfectly outlined in the *Rule*, and is documented in the *Register* of the Minutes of the ordinary and extraordinary assemblies of the same Association. These are two fundamental documents which give information about the activities of the Servant of God in those years. For this reason they are published for the first time, preceded by a comprehensive introduction, and illustrated by explanatory notes. Finally, much light is thrown on the person of the Servant of God by some evidence of Pauline Marie Jaricot (f 1862) who was first her disciple and then her collaborator (Doc. V, pp. 172-181).

The second part includes 14 documents, which, within the general framework, can be divided into four sections.

In the first section are described the first stages of the new Congregation which began its activity (1818) with the foundation of a new *Providence* situated in *Pierres-Plantees* (Doc. VI). It was soon transferred to *Fourviere* (1820), which became the Mother House (Doc. VII, pp. 186-200). At the same time as these events were taking place the Servant of God was providing for the internal organization of the Institute in collaboration with Fr. Andre Coindre, drawing up the Rules in accordance with the experience gained in the first years of the Institute, and inspired by the Rule of St. Augustine and the Constitutions of St. Ignatius (Doc. VIII, pp. 200-215). Fr. Coindre gave the same Rules to the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, which he founded. Later on this led to a certain confusion about the origin of these Rules, and for whom they were first intended — a confusion

which was eliminated once and for all in 1956 in the course of the preparation of our *Positio*. The accurate researches of our collaborators established with certainty that the first text was not meant for a Congregation of men, but for an Institute of women, and precisely for the Congregation founded by the Servant of God. The discovery is of great value for our *Positio*, and for the history of the Brothers and of the Religious of Jesus and Mary, and therefore we publish the whole text, restoring the primitive feminine form, and annotating the variants which relate to the Brothers.

The geographical expansion of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary outside Lyon is the subject of the second section. The history of the house in Belleville (1821-1835) is reconstructed in Doc. IX, pp. 215-244, from information drawn from the original Registers. We consider that the documentation regarding the diploma of Mistress and Assistant Mistress of a boarding school, obtained by the Servant of God in 1822 at the age of 48 years, is very important. Then after this, in 1823, followed the foundation of Monistrol which lasted only for three years. Finally, with the establishment of the Congregation at Le-Puy-en-Velay in 1825, the principal events of which are referred to in Doc. XV (pp. 263-271), substantially reported from the original registers, the Congregation reached its maximum geographical development during the life of the Foundress, acquired well-deserved renown for its pedagogical methods, and secured numerous and excellent vocations.

There follows, in the third section, another group of five documents which illustrate the internal problems of the Institute. In 1823 came the diocesan approbation (Doc. X, p. 245). Particular solemnity was given to the first professions (Doc. XI, p. 250), as also to the canonical election of the first Superiors (Doc. XII, p. 254). Some particular norms for the good organization of the *Providence* were issued (Doc. XIII, p. 257), and on July 18th 1825, the first Statutes of the Congregation were approved (Doc. XIV, p. 259).

The personality of the Servant of God is studied more directly in the last five documents, which fill almost half of the first part of the *Positio*. The principal questions are these: government (Doc. XVI), legislation (Doc. XIX), correspondence (Doc. XVII), relations with the priest Fr. F. X. Pousset (Doc. XVIII), and death (Doc. XX).

Doc. XVI (pp. 271-333) is fundamental and of a certain complexity. In it we have grouped various passages with the intention

of offering a general view of the activity of the Servant of God as Superioress General, and of making more easily understood the direction of her government, her relations with certain persons who influenced the life of the new Congregation, her assiduous and active co-operation in the internal life of the communities and in the expansion of the Institute. Among the historical sources from which we have drawn for this reconstruction, *Register III* stands out; and precisely because of its importance and because it had been interpreted in different ways which gave rise to confusion and inaccurate conclusions, reflected in the Informative Process, it was the subject of a profound and integrated critical study by an expert calligraphist, carried out in the *Institute for Scientific Restoration of Books*, by its Director Fr. Mario Pinzuti.

Document XVII (pp. 333-363) is devoted entirely to the analysis and publication of the writings of the Servant of God. These are reduced to the sixteen letters which have been preserved, addressed to members of her family. We have divided them into five sections, according to the subject matter. All, except the first (1828), correspond to the last five years of the life of the Servant of God and constitute a good means — although of limited proportions — of penetrating into her spirituality and psychology. It was precisely in those same years as Doc. XVIII (pp. 363-370) explains and illustrates, that she had to support misunderstandings and sufferings inflicted by the chaplain of the Mother House of Fourviere, Francis Xavier Pousset (f28th August 1878).

Doc. XIX (pp. 370-420) presents the definitive text of the Constitutions, preceded by a full introduction, in which an attempt has been made to explain their sources and development, and to establish to what point and in what degree, the rules are the work of the Servant of God. In preparing the critical work we have limited ourselves to presenting the parallel passages of the Constitutions of St. Ignatius. This seemed to be necessary in order to document the Ignatian spirituality that the Congregation of Jesus and Mary has always considered as an integral part of the spiritual patrimony transmitted by the Foundress.

Finally Document XX (pp. 421-433) gathers together the information relative to the death and burial of the Servant of God.

In the third part of the documentation we have put together the testimonies relative to the reputation of sanctity of the Servant of God and its continuation up to our own times. The documentation given here can be divided into three periods or stages.

In the first period, from the death of the Servant of God to the end of 1854, it seems that no one was concerned about writing any biographical account; but nevertheless there are preserved some writings which testify to the continual veneration with which she was remembered (Doc. XXII, pp. 448-453).

The second period, from 1854-1878, begins with the composition of a historical narrative on the origins of the Congregation, and into it have been inserted short biographical notes on the Foundress; the *Memorial* remained at that time in manuscript, but it has great value, not only because it was drawn up from accounts of eyewitnesses, but also because its contents were revised and approved by the Religious who had the highest authority at that time, and were contemporaries of the Servant of God: Mothers St. Teresa and St. Pothin (Doc. XXIII, pp. 454-478). To that period belong the report of M. L. Badiche (Doc. XXIV, pp. 479-483) and the testimonies taken from the correspondence of Claude Mayet, S.M., nephew of the Servant of God (Doc. XXV, pp. 483-492).

The third period covers the years from 1878 to 1896, when the Superiors began to collect in a systematic way information which could serve for the compilation of a definitive work. As the first collaborators and contemporaries of the Servant of God gradually disappeared, the desire was felt more keenly to record for ever the memory of her virtues and her teachings; and in this work Mother St. Pothin, Superioress General from 1867 to 1885, played a distinguished part. All these scattered testimonies have been analysed in Doc. XXVI (pp. 492-520).

The fourth and last period goes from 1896 to 1930. Fifty-nine years after the death of the Servant of God came the publication of a full biography, joined to the History of the Congregation (Doc. XXVII, pp. 521-685). This document is of capital importance for the Cause. Therefore, before reproducing the text, enriched with the corresponding critical notes, in the introduction we have attentively developed the usual questions which precede historical criticism and which serve to facilitate its use and evaluate its importance, also

because the historical consultants will have to give a personal and authoritative judgement on the text. The *Histoire*, which gathers together the memories and testimonies of the first generation of religious of Jesus and Mary, outlines in a certain way and with sufficient characteristic traits the personality of the Servant of God. For a judgement on her virtues, chapters VII, XVIII, and XIX, seem to us to have particular importance.

The publication of the *Histoire* made known the person and work of the Servant of God, and aroused ever more interest both within and outside the Congregation (Doc. XXVIII, pp. 685-701), until from 1926 to 1928 the Informative Process was instituted in Lyon (Doc. XXIX, pp. 701-723), and was completed with an Additional Process from 1930 to 1933 (Doc. XXX, pp. 723-750). From the historical point of view these Processes offer nothing interesting or new, and for this reason only some testimonies relative to the continued reputation of sanctity of the Servant of God are given.

IV — Biographical Profile of the Servant of God

In order to appreciate and do justice to the moral portrait of the Servant of God it is necessary to consider the environment and the circumstances of time and place in which she lived.

Claudine Thevenet was born in Lyon of a well-to-do and pious family in 1774, the year of the death of Pope Clement XIV and of King Louis XV, and of the succession to the throne of Louis XVI. Lyon, second in importance among all the cities of France, enjoyed, in the first years of that reign, a period of prosperity and calm.

The spouses Thevenet-Guyot had seven children, of whom Claudine was the second. Gifted with precocious intelligence, great sensitivity and an upright and peace-loving character, she was the favourite of her brothers, and the one from whom they sought protection and support. The little girl lived happily in the heart of a united family, and was the object of care and affection on the part of her parents, uncles and aunts and maternal grandparents.

She was nine years old when her parents suffered a reverse of fortune which obliged them to adopt a more modest life-style. It was probably at that time that she entered the Abbey of St. Pierre as a boarder. These two events undoubtedly made an impression on her through their influence. According to the custom of the time, Claudine