



TO KNOW OUR IDENTITY

following the FINGERPRINTS of St. Claudine



PRESENTATION

We believe that the Family of Jesus and Mary is a genuine grace and that the bond which unites us is rooted in one and the same charism. We believe that you witness for us the origins of our Congregation which began with a group of lay women, and that you are part of our history. We believe that all the groups of the Family of Jesus and Mary are leaven, salt and light, a source of new life. We believe that in recognising the gift of the Father's Love, each one according to our vocation in our shared mission, together we can say: HOW GOOD GOD IS!

Rome, October 2001. General Chapter

The fundamental idea of this document is to understand the identity of the Association of the Family of Jesus and Mary (AFJM) by following the traces of St. Claudine 's identity and, thus, to get closer to her life so that, from there, one can visualize and reflect on our reality and our desire to be part of this family.

To do this, we have recovered and updated part of a text prepared some years ago by Sister M^a Puy Montaner, a Spanish Sister, whom we thank for her work.

In literature, fingerprints have been used as a metaphor for individuality and identity. Writers often use fingerprints as a symbol of uniqueness, highlighting the idea that each person has his/her own path in life.

In this way, each "fingerprint" can serve as a reason for reflection on a personal level to later share in an existing group or in a new group that is just beginning its journey.

The "fingerprints" will represent our desire to leave a human trace in the world to establish our identity as AFJM.

Because, like St. Claudine, we too can try to leave our mark on others with all the values and gifts that we can offer to the world through her charism.

We offer the following fingerprints prints::

Fingerprint 1. We begin our journey.

Fingerprint 2. We are not islands.

Fingerprint 3. An ordinary life.

Fingerprint 4. Your story helps us.

Fingerprint 5. God's project.

Fingerprint 6. A life that fades away.

Fingerprint 7. A path ahead – The Mission.

Fingerprint 8. Charism.

Fingerprint 9. The vocation and mission of the laity.

Fingerprint 10. The AFJM Decalogue as a life commitment.



Fingerprint 1

WE BEGIN OUR JOURNEY



1. FROM OUR REALITY

We will begin this first topic with a personal reflection and a presentation of our motivations for approaching an existing group or a new group that is beginning its journey in the AFJM.

To reflect on:

- ~ Your specific details: name, age, marital status, profession...
- ~ What brought you here and what do you expect from the group?
- ~ What is your relationship with Jesus and Mary?
- ~ Main features of your life story.
- ~ Current specific life situation.
- ~ Interests and skills.
- ~ Fears and hopes.
- ~ Main positive traits of your character.
- ~ Less positive main traits of your character.
- ~ Moment of faith that you are living.

Take time to think about it all, it will help you to be aware of your current situation and start from your reality. If it helps you, write it down and save it.

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

- A. A. Extract from the Biography of Claudine Thévenet on the Vatican website.¹

CLAUDINE THÉVENET (1774-1837), was born in Lyon on 30th March 1774, the second of a family of seven children. "Gladly" as she was affectionately known had a strong influence on her brothers and sisters, thanks to her

¹https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_19930321_thyenet_en.html

goodness, gentleness and self-forgetfulness in the desire to make others happy.

The French Revolution broke out when she was fifteen. In 1793, she experienced the tragic days of the siege of Lyons by the government army and she witnessed the execution in revenge of her two brothers after the city fell in January 1794. Their last words, "Forgive, Glady, as we forgive" remained deep in her heart and her mind and were to change the course of her life. From now onwards she would dedicate herself to the relief of the great suffering caused by the Revolution. For her a main source of distress was the people's ignorance of God and thus was born in her the great desire to make Him known to every one, but it was to be the children and the young people who would be the main object of her zeal and her desire to make Jesus and Mary known and loved.

Her encounter with a holy priest, Father Andre Coindre, would help her to discover more clearly what God was asking of her and would be decisive in the orientation of her life. When Father Coindre found two little shivering children abandoned on the steps of the church of St. Nizier, he took them to Claudine who did not hesitate to take them into her care.

Her compassion and love for destitute children is, therefore, at the origin of the "Providence" of St. Bruno in Lyon (1815). Companions soon joined Claudine and they formed an association, the Association of the Sacred Heart of which Claudine was immediately elected president...

B. Story: The Best Carnation

A king went to his garden and discovered that his trees, bushes and flowers were dying.

The oak told him that it was dying because it could not be as tall as the pine. Turning to the pine, he found it depressed because it was sad that it could not bear grapes like the vine. And the vine was dying because it could not blossom like the rose, which in turn was crying because it was not strong and solid like the oak.

Then he found a carnation blooming and looking as healthy as ever. The king asked it: - How is it possible that you grow so healthily in the middle of this gloomy and withered garden?

The flower replied: - Perhaps it is because I have always thought that, since you planted me, you wanted carnations. At that moment I said to myself: "I will try to be the best carnation I can." And here I am! The most beautiful and lovely carnation in your garden.²

What do these texts suggest to you? Can you relate them to any moment in your life?

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 5, 13-16:

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bowl; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.

Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

4. LET US PRAY

In Search of God, by *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

I need you, Lord!
because without you my life dries up.
I want to find you in prayer,
in your unmistakable presence,
during those moments when silence
stands before me, before You.
I want to find you!

² "La vida viene a cuento". RBA libros. Jaume Soler y Ma Mercè Conangla.

I want to find you giving life to the nature that You have created;
in the transparency of the distant horizon from a hill,
and in the depths of a forest
that protects with its leaves the hidden heartbeats
of all its tenants.

I need to feel you around!

I want to find you in your sacraments,
In the reunion with your forgiveness,
in listening to your word,
in the mystery of your daily radical surrender.

I need to feel you inside!

I want to find you in the faces of men and women,
in coexistence with my brothers and sisters;
in the need of the poor
and in the love of my friends;
in a child's smile
and in the noise of the crowd.

I have to see you!

I want to find you in the poverty of my being,
in the capacities that you have given me,
in the desires and feelings that flow through me,
in my work and my rest
and one day, in the weakness of my life,
when I approach the doors of meeting you face to face.





Fingerprint 2

WE ARE NOT ISLANDS



1. FORM OUR REALITY

Once we have addressed who I am, how I am, what I am looking for... we want to delve deeper into what it means to participate with others, to walk together, the need we have for each other.

To reflect on:

- ~ What groups do I belong to or have I belonged to? What do I remember about them? What made me happy or uncomfortable? What have I learned from the people who formed them?
- ~ How important is it for me to belong to a group and to be committed to it and its goals? What are my fears and hopes?
- ~ What attitudes do I consider essential for participating in a group?

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

A. Extract from the Preamble of the Sacred Heart Association

When several people ardently desire to unite in order to achieve their own sanctification and that of others they are worthy of the highest praise. Such people, who come together and form a society with the aim of drawing closer to God, and of helping one another by their prayers, good works and their counsel to advance in the way of perfection and to devote themselves to all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy within their powers, are only following the example set by all true Servants of God.

A person who undertakes a long and difficult journey alone soon grows weary and finds only ordinary and commonplace means to

*encourage him. On the other hand, those who travel together do so with confidence, courage and the benefit of mutual support.*³

B. Story: Assembly in the Carpentry Shop

They say that there was once a strange meeting in the carpentry shop. It was a meeting of tools to settle their differences.

The hammer served as president, but the assembly notified him that he had to resign. The reason? He was making too much noise! And he spent all his time banging.

The hammer admitted his guilt, but asked that the screw be thrown out as well; he said that it had to be turned a lot for it to be of any use.

Faced with the attack, the screw also accepted, but in turn asked for the expulsion of the sandpaper. He made it clear that she was very rough in her dealings and always had friction with the others.

And the sandpaper agreed, on the condition that the meter stick that was always measuring others according to its own measurement, as if it were the only perfect one, was expelled.

The carpenter then came in, put on his apron and began his work. He used the hammer, the sandpaper, the measuring tape and the screw. Finally, the rough piece of wood was turned into a beautiful piece of furniture.

When the carpentry shop was left alone again, the assembly resumed its deliberation. Then the saw spoke up and said: "Gentlemen, it has been shown that we have defects, but the carpenter works with the best of our qualities. That is what makes us valuable. So, let us not think about our bad points any longer and concentrate on the usefulness of our good points."

³ Positio p. 54. Preamble of the Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This Association, which included Claudine and other friends, was founded in 1816. One of its most specific characteristics was its division into four sections: the first was the instruction section (religious formation and lending of books); the second, the edification section (helping young women leave behind what had harmed them); the third, the consolation section (visiting the sick or imprisoned, and their families); the fourth, the alms section (giving alms to the neediest families).

The assembly then found that the hammer was strong, the screw joined and gave strength, the sandpaper was special for fine-tuning and smoothing rough edges, and they observed that the meter was precise and exact.

They then felt like a team capable of producing quality furniture. They were proud of their strengths and working together.

What do these texts suggest to you? Can you relate them to any moment in your life?

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans, chapter 12, 4-8:

For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

4. LET US PRAY

Prayer of Abandonment, by *Charles de Foucauld*

My father, I abandon myself to You.

Make me what you want.

What ever you make of me, I appreciate it,

I'm willing to do anything,

I accept everything.

As long as Your will is done in me

And in all your creatures,

I don't want anything else, my God.

I put my life in Your hands.

I give it to you, my God,
with all the love of my heart,
because I love you,

and because for me to love you is to give myself,
surrendering myself to Your hands without measure,
with infinite confidence,
because you are my father.





Fingerprint 3

AN ORDINARY LIFE



1. FROM OUR REALITY

Let's begin to delve into the character of St. Claudine Thévenet.

On the evening of 5 October 1818, Claudine said goodbye to her mother and moved into a small house on a street in Lyon, Pierres-Plantées . It was a night of desolation and anguish. " I seemed to have engaged in a foolish and presumptuous enterprise that would end in nothing."

She was 44 years old. Jeanne Burty, 20, had preceded her to this house with her loom and an orphan.

This is how our Congregation of Jesus and Mary was born. With little resources and a great deal of trust and abandonment to the Good God that Claudine had known and wanted to make known and loved by so many young people and children.

Today, in many corners of our world, wherever Jesus and Mary is present, a song of gratitude resounds for being bearers of a shared treasure that speaks of forgiveness, kindness, praise, preference for the poorest, announcement and proclamation of the Good News of the Gospel.

To reflect on:

- ~ What has been your contact with the Congregation of Jesus and Mary?
- ~ Do you know the story of the life of our Mother Foundress? What features of her life, character or work attract or have attracted your attention the most?
- ~ Is there any aspect that you are more in tune with, with which you feel that your life and hers have common points?

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

Extract from the publication “Claudine Thévenet, Witness today”.⁴

1. AN ORDINARY LIFE

On March 31, 1774, a girl born the day before was baptized in Saint-Nizier, Lyon: Claudine. It is impossible to know what God's plan for her will be and what paths she will have to follow to achieve it.

The family, on both her mother's and father's side, was involved in the silk business, which was very common in Lyon. Philibert Thévenet, Claudine's father, had married Marie Antoinette Guyot de Pravieux and they had seven children: Louis, Claudine, Françoise, Elisabeth, Fanny, Jean Louis and Eleanor. Claudine soon showed a strong personality as well as great sensitivity and, without realising it, managed to influence family life. Elisabeth was, as well as a sister, a great friend of Claudine, with whom she shared her deep experiences. Claudine was affectionately called Glady.

The first years of her life correspond to a period of peace in France. Her parents were fully dedicated to the education of their children. It was a family of profound faith, where Claudine found guides who would mark her path of following Christ.

She learned from her father a sensitivity for the less fortunate, for the poorest. During the years of economic crisis in Lyon, Philibert tried to help all those who turned to him, resolving other people's difficulties, even at the risk of putting his own assets at risk. Thus, in 1783, his business suffered such a major setback that the family had to reduce its standard of living. This was not traumatic for them because together they are capable of finding things more important than money and comfort.

From her mother she learned the practical sense that was typical of an energetic and courageous character; the serenity of a total dedication to others and a contagious and authentic life that helped her children grow in faith. Claudine liked to give herself to others, to her family, without making noise, without attracting attention. That was why the adults call her "little Violet".

⁴ Published in the “Con Él” brochure, Vida Nueva offprint, 1987, pages 1-3.

At the age of nine, Claudine began her studies at the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Pierre in Lyon. It was a completely personalised education because the number of pupils was very small and each nun cared for only one girl. Her teacher provided her with a solid Christian formation and the intellectual knowledge necessary at that time of profound changes in ideologies. She also taught her manual needlework and embroidery, order and care for things. Claudine would remember her teacher for the rest of her life.

Claudine's time at the Abbey must have left a deep mark on her. However, she wanted to return home soon. The start of the revolution in France made this return hasty in 1789. Claudine is 15 years old. Events will trace the path she will have to follow to fulfil God's plan in her life.

II. VIOLENT OUTBREAKS

The political and social changes and upheavals in France led to a bloody revolution that broke out in 1789. For ten years the country suffered the horrors of violence. One of the most tragic events was the uprising in Lyon, then the second city of France and capital of the silk industry. There was no city where the social contrast was so strong. The interests and needs of the workers clashed with those of the businessmen, monarchists and capitalists, who sought the profits of industry.

The people of Lyon, under the influence of philosophers and economists, enthusiastically welcomed the innovative ideas of the Revolution. But they soon realised the excesses of the revolutionary crisis. Lyon became the scene of the cruelty of man. The revolution sought to uproot all religion in order to make the light of reason penetrate the people. Thus, a terrible and bloody persecution was unleashed, which sought to eliminate everything connected with religion. This was the time of the "Terror". Young Catholics gathered together to support each other in their faith, to help each other and to help others in their needs. They found their strength in the Heart of Christ, which revealed to them the boundless love of the Father, and in Mary, the mother of Jesus. Apostolic enthusiasm was the characteristic of the Catholics of Lyon who wanted to support others in their struggle for the faith. The dramatic circumstances led many of them to die without fear in defending this faith.

The situation of anguish, tension and uncertainty led to the outbreak of an insurgence in May 1793 under the cry of "Down with oppression!" The

insurgents took over the City Hall and imprisoned the leaders of the revolution. A delegation went to Paris to give explanations, however, the government of the Convention condemned Lyon as a rebel city and the army of the French capital prepared to invade the city.

On August 9, the city was besieged. The Lyonnais organized a resistance under the command of General de Précý. They endured the siege much longer than Paris can imagine. The fighting was increasingly tough. The bombardments were repeated without ceasing. Food supplies were running out; hunger weakened the resistance and achieved what the enemy had not been able to. On October 9, the city surrendered. In Paris, the decree was signed condemning Lyon, France's second largest city, to total destruction. From that moment on, entire districts were razed and Lyon was subjected to the most atrocious humiliations and violence. Tribunals were set up to judge and condemn to death thousands of Lyonnais counter-revolutionaries. Hasty trials, without guarantees, mass executions. From morning to night, the guillotine did its inexorable work, still too slow for the revolutionary extremists. Every day a new street disappeared; every day the corpses piled up in front of the cannons. Afterwards, those who still survived were finished off with swords or the butts of rifles.

In every home, rich or poor, suffering and anguish over separation, death and insecurity were present at all times. The Thévenet family did not escape this wave of vengeance and the consequences of the Terror.

III. EXPERIENCE OF FORGIVENESS

Thévenet family was in danger. They decided to take their four young children to the home of a sister of Mr. Thévenet who lived in a nearby village. The father took them there. When he returned, the gates of Lyon were closed. The siege had begun and he was unable to enter the city. At the Thévenet's home, the mother and the three eldest children anxiously awaited the return of their father, who had not arrived. Louis and Françoise, aged twenty and eighteen, decided to enlist under the orders of General de Précý.

Claudine, aged nineteen, showed great maturity in the face of these tragic events and the anguish that her own family was experiencing. Without knowing how her father and the four little ones were, and in the absence of her two brothers, it was she who had to take care of her mother. It was difficult to keep up her spirits when everything was falling apart around

her, to maintain hope when there seemed to be no hope. Her trust in God gave her the strength to carry on in the midst of so much darkness.

One day, near their home, on the quay of Retz, a terrible battle took place. Claudine and her mother knew that Louis and Francois are fighting there. When the battle was over, the field was strewn with corpses. To calm her mother's anxiety, Claudine made a decision: at sunset she went with an old servant to look at the corpses to find out what had happened to her brothers. She returned with hope: Louis and Francois were not among the dead, although they could be prisoners.

When night fell, fleeing across the rooftops, the Thévenet brothers managed to get into their house. They have managed to escape the massacre and took refuge in a friend's house. However, the peace did not last long. They are soon denounced, arrested and imprisoned in the dungeons of the Town Hall. From there, the only outcome was their deaths.

Meanwhile, Madame Thévenet 's anguish was eased by the return of her husband. They tried by all means to secure the release of their children, although with little hope of success. Claudine, disguised, often went to the prison to see her brothers, bringing them clothes and provisions which they shared with the other prisoners. One day, upon entering, she bumped into a guard who, insolently and to test her, offered her a glass of wine: "Come, citizen, drink with us to the health of the republic," and presented her a glass after he had taken a good gulp. Claudine, hiding her indignation and disgust, resolutely took the glass and drank the rest in one gulp. Thus she managed to enter the prison. It would be the last time.

Hours before their execution, Louis and Françoise wrote letters to their family. Full of affection, they conveyed an impressive testimony of faith and forgiveness, even more impressive in the case of two young people, betrayed and on the verge of death. In them they also wrote to Claudine, entrusting her with the care of their mother, after what the loss of her children would mean for her.

On January 5, 1794, unaware that his brothers' sentence had already been passed, she went to the prison to visit them. Arriving near the Town Hall, she saw a detachment of troops behind which the condemned men were marching in a double row of soldiers. She quickly approached them. Her gaze met that of her brothers. When the distance between them was short

enough, Louis said to his sister: "Bend down and take a letter from my shoe." Then he turned to his sister, pointing to the letter: "Take it, Gladly, and forgive as we forgive."

Claudine bravely followed the procession to the place of execution. Meanwhile, the last words resounded in her ears: "Forgive as we forgive." Then she heard the final order and the shots. Her heart joined her brothers in these dramatic moments. However, the worst was not over. Horrified, she saw that they were finishing off with blows those who have not yet died, among them Louis and Francois. From this moment, Claudine was left with a nervous tremor of the head and a continuous headache that she would call "my terror."

The Thévenet family knew the person who had denounced the brothers. When, after the Terror, courts were set up to judge those who had participated in this situation, the Thévenets could have denounced him, but they preferred to fulfil the wish that the young men had left in their will: "Forgive, as we forgive." The family had accepted the challenge.

Claudine's nephew, Claude Mayet, a future Maris priest, referred in two letters to another painful event for his aunt. It seemed that the Thévenet family had thought of a second candidate as Claudine's future husband (the first had died while she was still at the Abbey). Claude Mayet said in one of his letters: "During the Terror, the aunt, then young, had disguised herself as a soldier to enter the prisons and save Mr. de... whose name I have forgotten." And in another he said: "A little worldly in her early youth, she disguised herself as a soldier to enter the dungeon in the attempt to save her fiancé."

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 5, 44-47:

But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?

4. LET US PRAY

Our Father

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespasses against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.





Fingerprint 4

HER STORY HELPS US



1. FORM OUR REALITY

Let us continue to delve into the powerful life experience of St. Claudine Thévenet.

To reflect on:

- ~ What experience do you have of volunteering or collaborating in any social action? Have you belonged to any association?
- ~ What are the areas to which you feel most called to respond: Children, young people, the elderly, the disabled, catechism, hospitals, the poor, etc.?

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

Extract from the publication “Claudine Thévenet , Witness Today”.⁵

IV. LOOKING FOR THE WAY

At the end of the 18th century, the entire country, and especially the city of Lyon, suffered the consequences of the recently concluded Revolution. The Concordat was signed, and the church bells, which had been silent until then, began to ring out again to call Christians. One of the sectors most affected by the Revolution was the education of children and young people, who suffered, without understanding, the consequences of a cruel war between the city's own inhabitants.

The Thévenet family was reunited and in 1795 moved to the centre of the city, to the Croix- Rouse district. The house was close to the Chartreuse, which had become the parish of Saint Bruno. Claudine, who had lived through so much horror, felt calm. The experience of God's goodness filled her life. And she understood that if, France, had been capable of suffering so much violence, so much vengeance, so much pain, it was

⁵ Continuation of the “Con Él” brochure, offprint of Vida Nueva, 1987, pages 3-5.

because people lived and died without knowing Jesus, without having the experience of that close and good God, the Father. She felt the urgency to share with others what she had experienced in her life, despite everything. It was the deep meaning of her existence matured in a life of prayer, of contemplation of Christ, of interiorization, especially in the Eucharist. She was concerned to see the consequences of the Revolution, and her experience of forgiveness was gradually transformed into an effective attitude towards others. Some friends shared this concern with her. They met to find ways to educate young people and introduce them to the knowledge of Christian life. In the parish, Claudine began to carry out her apostolate. In 1804, she was fully involved in it. She was then 30 years old.

In 1815, Philibert Thévenet died. The family had shrunk because the children had taken their own paths. Elisabeth had also married. She had seven children. Claudine was godmother to the fifth, Claude, whom she loved very much and who later became a Marist priest. Her mother, Antoinette felt lonely and complained about her daughter's frequent absences due to her life in the apostolate. At the end of that year, Father André Coindre arrived at the parish and soon after joined the Association known as the "Missionaries of the Chartreuse".

One day, Father Coindre found two orphan girls on the streets of Lyon. For the time being, he left them in the sewing workshop run by the Sisters of Saint Joseph at the Chartreuse. He told the parish priest and Claudine about his discovery, who he has heard says helped out in the parish and was particularly sensitive to the less fortunate, especially children. Father Coindre noticed Claudine's great personality, her prudence, the greatness of her heart, her living faith and her availability to God. The parish priest, Father Coindre and Claudine recognized in this meeting a call from God to found a Providence, but to do so they needed a place to set it up and some means to support it.

Claudine could not force her mother to keep the two girls in the house. Even among her group of friends and collaborators, no one could take direct responsibility for their upbringing. They asked for help from Maria Chirat, a friend of Claudine's, who soon found a solution: they would live with her and she offered them one of the two floors of her house. They would stay there for eighteen months. A few days later,

five more girls would join them. To care for and educate them, they asked the Sisters of Saint Joseph for a nun to do the kitchen and organize a sewing workshop. Maria Chirat 's house became the "Providence of the Sacred Heart", better known as the "Providence of Saint Bruno". Claudine directed this work although she did not live there. They soon had to find a larger place. The main purpose of the female providences in France was to form Christian women capable of building happy homes.

V. THE FIRST STEP

The friends who shared Claudine's ideals understood that their apostolic action would be more effective if they united all their efforts in a more organized group. Above all, they wanted to improve the condition of the female working class by freeing them from poverty and ignorance. They went to Father Coindre for advice. After three days of prayer, Claudine and her companions met in the chapel of the Saint Bruno Retreats, and formed what would be known as the "Association of the Sacred Heart." There were eight of them who started it, including Maria Chirat. It was July 31, 1816, the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Father Coindre presented them with the Association's rules drawn up with Claudine, and explained that these must be a channel for spiritual growth. They were also necessary to consolidate an association that could become large. Its main purpose was to live according to the Gospel in the service of people.

The Association responded to the urgent needs of the present moment: evangelization of youth and aid to the poorest. According to the regulations, they must remain faithfully united to the Church. This represented a clear position taken at the time of the crisis that the Church of Lyon was experiencing.

In the election of the President, everyone thought of Claudine. Her desire to work in silence and to remain unnoticed is compromised. But she accepted the position, and would do so every year, placing her trust in God. The description of the President in the Regulations seemed to suit Claudine's personality: "The President (...) must be endowed with sound judgment, a firm character, profound humility, great affability, and universal charity towards all the associates." Each one strove to do

all her works with the sole aim of pleasing God; joy of heart, freedom of spirit, confidence and generosity were the signs that characterized her. The group grew and two years later sixteen new members had been admitted, among them Pauline Marie Jaricot, known today for the Work of the Propagation of the Faith. The friendship between her and Claudine was never broken, although they were destined to follow different paths.

The apostolic work had different fields. Catechism, preparation for First Communion, a library with book loans, visits to the sick, distribution of donations, etc. The associates met periodically to share their faith. Claudine assumed the responsibility of spiritually leading the group. The center would be Jesus Christ, mystery of love and mercy, whom all want to follow. The Eucharist had a special force within the group. Mary also occupied a special place among the associates, as a sure path to reach Jesus.

Claudine remained the Director of the Providence of Saint Bruno. However, in order for it to continue, larger premises had to be considered. In 1817, they rented a house, but when it became clear that none of them could devote all their time to it, Claudine entrusted the work to the Sisters of Saint Joseph. The only capital she had was fifteen francs. It seemed foolhardy and risky to continue the task. However, she placed all her trust in God the Father, convinced that He would not abandon what He had begun. Indeed, God, as a good Father, seemed to give generously to them: the alms always arrived at the moment when they were needed.

The Providence of Saint Bruno was the Association's favourite work. All the members took part in it to the extent of their possibilities. In 1825, due to a lack of financial means and, above all, due to difficulties in relations with the Sisters of Saint Joseph, the work was abandoned and left in the hands of the parish priest of Saint Bruno and the Sisters. It was not easy for Claudine to give up this Providence that she had directed for eight years and to which she had completely dedicated herself.

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 25, 14-30:

It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one - to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'

4. LET US PRAY

I am that child⁶

I am that child you held by the hands on the dark nights of Lyon,
You looked me in the eyes and made a place for me,
You housed me forever in your motherly heart.

I am that child who in the middle of the revolution gave
To your heart, creative courage and determination.

There are no reasons, there is no waiting
There are no reserved privileged places
There is pain and uncertainty
Hunger and loneliness
There are so many orphans...
And you gave way to tenderness
You taught us to trust others
And even more so in providence
Of a God who is father and mother,
You made us children of divine love.

It's me and others
Those children,
teenagers,
Men and women
From every corner where your crazy and presumptuous work arrived,
200 years later we are still having our own revolutions.
Many times we are afraid on dark nights,
We have different hungers and a feeling of orphanhood that makes us beg
for security and warmth.
from home...
We need it so much!

⁶ Lucila Alemán. She belongs to the Family JM of Argentina. Written at Claudine's Baptismal Feast, 2020.

But your hand continues to accompany us, you never tire of mothering and walking.

Even if I go far away,

You awaken in me once again the desire to make Jesus and Mary known and loved,

To play for others and everything falls into place again and I find my place I encourage you to continue being home.

Your life, Claudine, was and is a light for all of us who took your hand and remained attached to your heart.

Maybe that's what your baptism party is all about.

Having let yourself be illuminated by the love of God the Father

So you made your life a baptism,

Sacrament of love with the Father

And of our lives, the Encounter.





Fingerprint 5

GOD'S PROJECT



1. FROM OUR REALITY

To reflect on:

- ~ Can you divide your life into large periods? What place has God occupied in all of them? What is the image you have of that God?
- ~ Do you believe that God has a plan for you, a dream?
- ~ Are there times when you wish you had confirmation of what God is asking of you, of what pleases Him most?
- ~ Do you think that your goal is to be happy and develop all your abilities?

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

Extract from the publication “Claudine Thévenet, Witness Today”.⁷

VI. GOD'S PROJECT

Claudine combined her apostolic work with caring for her mother, who increasingly demanded the affection of her only daughter left at home. She told her about her activities and dreams, but her mother's sadness was stronger than her will and often hurt Claudine. She feared that one day her daughter would feel called to follow Jesus Christ more radically and leave home. She could not demand that her mother understand the situation, which made it more difficult to continue walking where God wanted to take her.

During the first two years of the Association's life, there were already 24 of them in the group. Father André Coindre, reading through the events the project that God was revealing, proposed to Claudine and her companions that they take a further step in their dedication to God and to others. On July 31, 1818, he told them of his idea: They were all perturbed.

⁷ Continuation of the “Con Él” brochure, offprint of Vida Nueva, 1987, pages 5-8.

Without giving them time to react, he explained to them the general lines of his project, based on the rule of Saint Augustine and the Constitutions of Saint Ignatius. The apostolic goal, expressed in the language of the time, was to "form souls for heaven through a truly Christian education." Father Coindre appointed Claudine as the person in charge of the group to carry out a mission, and told her: "God has chosen you, respond to his call." Claudine was already 44 years old. This response gave rise to the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary.

In order to carry out its specific mission, the community decided to open a workshop for the production of silk fabrics. This was a new Providence of the Sacred Heart. To set it up, they rented a property in Pierres-Plantées, at the gates of the Croix Rousse district. The work began with an abandoned girl, a worker and a loom. Claudine's nephew, Claude, later recalled the anguish he felt when he saw that dark room, almost without furniture and with a worker for only company; he understood that the work of God is based on poverty and nothingness.

The house, although small, was sufficient for the moment. Claudine visited the construction site every day. Jeanne Burty, a worker chosen by her to teach silk weaving, also taught catechism, prayers and some sewing. At the moment, none of Claudine's companions were free to live at Pierres-Plantées. Neither was Claudine. She would need a lot of courage to prepare her mother, who did not quite understand why she left her so often.

Claudine found herself increasingly alone. Some thought she was proud, others, reckless. The closer the moment came, the harder it became for her to take the step, the more doubtful she became. It was not a question of joining an already formed congregation, but of opening the way for a work whose end was still uncertain.

Certain of God's call, Claudine decided to leave home and settle in Pierres-Plantées on 5 October 1818. She herself confessed that, that first night away from home was terrible: "I felt that I had embarked on a crazy and presumptuous enterprise that had no guarantee of success, but on the contrary, everything suggested that it would end in nothing." In the following days, five of her companions joined her. The Congregation was beginning to live.

However, not everyone was happy about it. She was often misunderstood, mocked and insulted, and was even pelted with stones by children in the street. Despite this, the number of girls continued to increase. The number of orders for the loom was increasing. There was no longer enough space to carry out the work.

On 28 May 1820, Marie Antoinette, Claudine's mother, died. It was a hard blow for her, but nothing could keep her there any longer and she began to make arrangements to find a larger house. A house was put up for sale on Fourvière, opposite the Marian Shrine in Lyon. The property was beautiful and capable of housing the current building and of expanding it in the future. This property is now the mother house of the Congregation.

VII. NEW PATHS: THE WORK IS CONSOLIDATED

Claudine continued to work at the Providence of Saint Bruno but lived with her community in Fourvière. There she also realised her desire to educate girls. She was very sensitive to the situation of poverty and ignorance in which many families lived due to the lack of education of women. The first objective was education in the faith but the girls had to be helped to forget and to eradicate the traces that the mistreatment received in their families had left on them.

Providence was supported mainly by the work carried out on the looms. The weaving was becoming more and more perfect and important orders continued to arrive. Claudine wanted her pupils to become accustomed to collaborating in their own education, to acquire a sense of solidarity and fraternity. The work of each pupil was remunerated and the amount was kept for each one to be given to her when she left Providence. In 1821, a boarding school was opened to educate daughters of well-off families.

The community was already living an structured life. However, the group wanted to obtain official recognition from the Church. The conflictual situation in the Church of Lyon meant that their first request was refused, although they were allowed to have a chapel. To signify their complete change of life, they decided to change their names. Claudine took the name of Mary of St. Ignatius.

While waiting for approval, they began to outline the features of an appropriate pedagogy for youth. Claudine knew very well which women she wanted to train to transform French society. She wanted women of

living faith, so she gave them good religious instruction. She wanted women capable of earning an honest living, for which she awakened in them the sense of a job well done. And she wanted women capable of forming happy homes through their selfless dedication to others. That is why in her educational project she opted for certain values: faith in God and in people, collaboration, responsibility, gratitude, gratuitousness... She formed strong personalities capable of facing the inevitable difficulties of life. She gave each student particular attention and aimed to promote them humanely. The only preferences she could allow were for the most disadvantaged, those with the most defects. Claudine proposed a way to put her pedagogy into practice: prevention, which avoided the faults of the girls and therefore, the punishment. This involved following up of each student, not only during their stay at Providence but also after their education had finished. She personally welcomed the new orphans, and took care of washing, combing and dressing them.

Two months after the opening of the boarding school in Fourvière in 1821, two teachers from Belleville, a town near Lyon, proposed to Claudine that she take charge of an educational establishment they owned in that town. The Foundress accepted this opportunity to expand her mission and opened a school for girls and a shelter in Belleville. However, the work in Belleville did not last long. After eight years, the Diocese called another religious congregation for the education of girls and, as the school population was not sufficient for two centres, Claudine and her companions decided to withdraw from that work. This was the best way to avoid friction and maintain peace. She wanted things to be done as well as possible but did not seek to be the centre of attention.

In 1822, Father Coindre accepted a mission from Bishop de Salamon of Saint- Flour. He saw in this circumstance the possibility of obtaining the acceptance of the community of Fourvière. Shortly after settling there, he asked permission to introduce the "Ladies of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary" of Fourvière into the diocese. Authorization was granted and from January 1823 a group of future nuns settled in Monistrol. Immediately afterwards, Father Coindre asked the Archbishop for approval of the Congregation for the entire diocese of Le Puy. On February 4, 1823, the Archbishop approved the new Congregation for this diocese and asked that it also be established in Saint- Flour.

The Sisters were delighted to receive the news and prepared to make the definitive consecration of their lives to God. In order not to leave the girls alone, they split into groups from Fourvière and from Belleville. The first group, headed by the Mother Foundress, arrived at Monistrol and on 25 February 1823 they made simple and perpetual vows of poverty, obedience, chastity and stability in the Congregation. Father Coindre received the vows .

The following day the small Congregation held its first General Chapter, where Claudine, now Mother Mary of St. Ignatius, was elected Superior General. The second group of Sisters took their vows on March 16, almost a month later.

In the same year, Monsignor de Bonald was appointed Bishop of Le Puy and asked the Foundress to settle in Le Puy. During the holidays of 1825, the Community of Monistrol moved to Le Puy. The house grew and the reputation of the boarding school grew.

When Monsignor de Pins was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Lyon, Mother Foundress asked him for approval for her Congregation. On 18 July 1825, the Bishop signed the Decree of Diocesan Approval. Claudine, grateful, hoped to obtain Rome's approval soon.

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and deepen the words of the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 4, 16-21:

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing".

4. LET US PRAY

Open our eyes

Lord, open our eyes,
that we may see you
in our brothers and sisters.

Lord, open our ears,
that we may hear the cries
of the hungry, the cold, the frightened,
the oppressed.

Lord, open our hearts,
that we may love each other
as you love us.

Renew your spirit in us.
Lord, free us and make us one.

Amen.





Fingerprint 6

A LIFE THAT FADES AWAY



1. FROM OUR REALITY

To reflect on:

- ~ Do you know of any painful stories of suffering that led to a better life? Do you know of any painful stories that have caused bitterness and desolation?
- ~ What is the difference between the two? Have you had both experiences in your life?
- ~ Have you considered what to do in the face of the suffering around you? What questions does it raise? Do you have any answers?

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

Extract from the publication “Claudine Thévenet, Witness today”.⁸

VIII. THE WAY OF THE CROSS

The cross appeared in the life of the Congregation. Father Coindre lefts Lyon for good to settle in Blois. Mother Mary of St. Ignatius accepted this separation with great sorrow. The Father, given over to an increasingly demanding task, fell seriously ill with a brain fever which caused him, in a delirium, to die by throwing himself out of the window. He was then 39 years old. Mother Foundress had foreseen this death. It was a new experience of solitude and uncertainty. Her contemporaries recounted that, during those days, she was often seen in the chapel unloading her immense pain on Christ.

Shortly afterwards, Claudine and two sisters from the Community fell seriously ill. She thought she was going to die, but she was shocked to see

⁸ Continuation of the “Con Él” brochure, offprint of Vida Nueva, 1987, pages 8-10.

the death of her two companions, who were much younger than her. They were two of her best collaborators.

But the most difficult moment came when she saw that her own congregation was in danger. The Vicar of Lyon, Monsignor Cattet, seeing the proliferation of female congregations dedicated to the education of young people, wanted to merge the congregation founded by Claudine Thévenet with that of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, of Madeleine Sophie de Barat. The Foundress, because of her fidelity to the Church, did not want to oppose the suggestion of the Vicar General, but she sincerely believed that it was God's will that she defend her work, despite the difficulties and suffering that this might bring. The merger did not take place.

In 1830, a new revolution broke out in Lyon, which fortunately did not have the violence and anti-religious character of the first. When the city had already regained calm, in 1832 cholera appeared in Paris. The people of Lyon turned to the Virgin of Fourvière. Miraculously, the city was spared of the epidemic.

In 1834, the silk workers, who had been asking in vain for a wage increase, decided to use force to achieve their demands. They barricaded themselves in the church of Fourvière; Claudine helped them by giving them food and warm clothing. The danger to the girls and the Community in the midst of the shooting was grave, but not a single bomb hit the Providence or the Basilica. The army arrived at Fourvière and realised the strategic position of the nuns' building for the fight against the insurgents, and decided to settle there. Later, when the uprising ended with the surrender of the workers, the Ministry of War wanted to buy the building to build a fort to defend the city. The Mother Foundress refused and was threatened with expropriation. The people of Lyon were also strongly opposed to this plan to fortify their sanctuary. The project was finally abandoned with the resignation of the Minister of War.

IX. A LIFE THAT FADES AWAY

Despite the serenity and strength of Mother Foundress, her physical strength was failing. However, trusting in the good God who watched over her work, she continued to care for the Congregation. Claudine asked Monsignor de Pins for a priest to help her, since the previous chaplain had been transferred. As they were preparing to draft the Constitutions and

Rules to present them to Rome for approval, he said that it would be good for this priest to know the way of life and the spirit of the Congregation well in order to be able to advise it. The Archbishop sent Father Francisco J. Pousset, whom he believed to be prepared because he had spent two years with the Jesuits, whose Constitutions had inspired the Congregation from the beginning.

The new chaplain arrived in 1836. Claudine quickly became aware of the bitterness and rejection that Father Pousset felt towards everything connected with the Society of Jesus. The chaplain often overstepped the boundaries of his duties and rights. Mother Foundress had to fight to maintain the spirit of the Congregation; in this struggle she would give her life. Faithful to God's plan, she remained firm in her convictions. She could not allow Father Pousset to become the absolute superior of the Congregation. This fidelity cost her many reproaches and suffering. Although she did not say anything, some of the nuns reported what was happening. In October 1836 Claudine's health worsened; she felt death was near and she began to put things in order. In December she had to stay in bed and would not get up again.

What she regretted most was that she had not finished the work of the Constitutions to present to Rome. But she entrusted everything to that good Father whom she has felt close to all her life. She left everything in his hands. On January 29, she received the Anointing of the Sick and here she also received the last great blow. When Father Pousset approached her, all the nuns who were there expected him to say words of encouragement. However, they were astonished to hear this reproach: "You have received graces to convert an entire kingdom, what have you done with them? You are an obstacle to the progress of the Congregation, what will you answer to God who will ask you for an account of everything?" Claudine said nothing. Only later did she confess to the nursing Sister that she had been on the verge of bursting into tears. Once again, no doubt, those words of her brother resonated within her: " Gladly forgives as we forgive." Now too, as so many times in her life, she accepted the challenge and forgave.

On January 29, she became paralyzed and alternated between periods of unconsciousness and periods of lucidity. At one of these moments, the nuns around her heard her say clearly: "How good God is!" Her words

indicate the character of this great woman who allowed herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit to make known to everyone, especially to her students, the love of Jesus, sent by the Father to save the world and reveal the goodness of God; to bring knowledge of Mary as a Christian model.

Claudine died on 3 February 1837. It was a simple path that started from the merciful love of the Father and led to men, to the poorest, to those who were not fortunate enough to know God. A path faithful to daily tasks, without brilliance, without protagonism, with the sole purpose of pleasing Him. There was nothing extraordinary in her life, only the naturalness of a life dedicated, without reservations, to Christ, through the Christian education of young people, especially the most disadvantaged. Attentive to the needs of her time, she sought, throughout her life, a way to solve them.

X. IF THE GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS TO THE GROUND AND DIES...

"If a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn. 12, 24).

When Mother Mary of St. Ignatius died, her Congregation was a small seed in the soil of France. Only five years after her death, it bore fruit: the Sisters settled in India and thus opened up their missionary dimension. The Bishop of Agra (India) asked a group of French Sisters to carry out an education plan for girls: they would be taught religion, but also to work in order to earn an honest living in the future. During their education they would be able to earn some money which would be given to them upon completion of their education.

Mother Saint Andrew, now General, and her advisors recognized the project that Claudine had outlined and that she had set down in the Constitutions. The answer was affirmative. Once again, they put their trust in God; for Him they were going to leave their homeland and launch themselves into the missionary adventure.

Before leaving France, they wanted to find a suitable name for the congregation. The name of the Religious of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary was difficult to approve because there were already other congregations with similar names. One day, one of the General Councillors, who was to lead the first expedition to India, simply suggested

that the name be the Religious of Jesus and Mary. This name was accepted by all. The French Church confirmed the change of name.

The first group of missionaries left Lyon on 17 January 1842 and, after a journey full of difficulties and dangers, arrived in Agra in November of the same year. The early days of this foundation were particularly difficult because many of the Sisters, all of them very young, died of illness. The situation was so alarming that at one point they considered leaving India. However, once again, their total trust in God helped them to continue, despite all the difficulties...

In December 1847, Mother General, M. St. André, received the Decree of Approval from Rome. Precisely because of its length, the Church suppressed the brief laudatory letter that normally precedes the definitive approval. She also immediately granted approval of the Constitutions.

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of the Gospel of St. John, chapter 12, 24-26:

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will also be my servant.

4. LET US PRAY

Worship and trust, by *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

Don't worry about life's difficulties,
for its ups and downs, for its disappointments,
for its more or less bleak future.
Desire what God desires.

Offer him in the midst of concerns and difficulties
the sacrifice of your simple soul that, in spite of everything,
accepts the designs of his providence.

It doesn't matter that you consider yourself frustrated,
if God considers you fully realized; at his pleasure.
Surrender with blind trust in this God who wants you for Himself.

And that he will reach you, even if you never see him.

Think of yourself as being in their hands,
more strongly sustained,
when you are at your lowest and saddest.

Live happily. I beg you. Live in peace.
Let nothing disturb you.
May nothing be able to take away your peace.
Nor psychic fatigue. Nor your moral failures.
Make it emerge, and always keep it on your face,
a sweet smile, a reflection of that which the Lord
continually directs you.

And in the bottom of your soul place, before anything else,
as a source of energy and criterion of truth,
everything that fills you with the peace of God.

Remember:
Everything that represses and worries you is false.
I assure you in the name of the laws of life.
and of God's promises.
Therefore, when you feel sad,
worship and trust.





Fingerprint 7

A PATH AHEAD - THE MISSION



1. FROM OUR REALITY

Ti reflect on:

- ~ What religious works and communities of Jesus and Mary do you know in your Province/Delegation or in the world?
- ~ Have you ever experienced the multiplier effect of a service done with simplicity and love?

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

A. A. Extract from the publication “Claudine Thévenet, Witness today”.⁹

XI.A PATH AHEAD

Just as in the society of your time, the world today suffers in an alarming way from war, hunger, violence, senselessness and distance from God. Today, too, young people are the best agents for achieving a more just and committed society. Men and women are needed who accept the challenge of forgiveness, solidarity and the safeguarding of all evangelical values, in the midst of a consumerist, manipulative and competitive society.

Today, as then, it is urgent to transmit the experience of that good God who comes close to people, even in the midst of darkness, to save them. The Religious continue to want to discover the needs of our time in order to try to remedy them.

Today, Claudine's experience and the strength of her charism are present in many countries: France, India, Spain, Canada, Pakistan, England, the United States, Italy, Mexico, Ireland, Argentina, Cuba, Germany, Equatorial Guinea, Uruguay, Colombia, Gabon, Bolivia, Lebanon, Syria,

⁹ Continuation of the “Con Él” brochure, offprint of Vida Nueva, 1987, page 10.

*Peru, Nigeria, Cameroon, Haiti, Ecuador, the Philippines, Morocco, Timor-Leste and Kenya.*¹⁰

"Claudine, who made her religious life a hymn of glory to the Lord, imitating the Virgin Mary, whom she loved deeply, reminds Christians that it is worth risking everything for God, confirming to them that it is necessary to know how to "lose one's life" so that others may come to love and know God." With these words, John Paul II and the entire Church supported the work and charism of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, proclaiming, with the beatification of Claudine Thévenet on 4 October 1981, that the path she opened is also valid today for following Christ and announcing his Word of Life. Today, in some corner of every continent, the song of praise that expresses the motto of the Congregation is still repeated: "Praised forever be Jesus and Mary".

B. JM Commitment to the Global Compact on Education¹¹

"When we go alone on a long journey we soon grow tired... but when we travel together we walk with assurance, courage and fresh support."
(Positio, page 54)

The Global Compact on Education challenges us to a new humanity, ... to put the person at the centre, ... to heal broken relationships, ... to work together to build a more equal world where all feel welcomed and included". (Pope Francis, GCE)

We, Companions in Mission, Lay and Religious of Jesus and Mary, a total of 187 persons, from the four corners of the JM world, gathered in Mexico City from July 5th to 9th, 2023, for an International Conference to actively encourage Shared Mission, drawing inspiration from the charism of our foundress St. Claudine expressed in the JM Preferences and the Church's document - Global Compact on Education (GCE).

¹⁰ The countries in which the Congregation is present are updated to the present, year 2024, named according to the date of its foundation. In the year 2023, it was founded in Kenya.

¹¹ At the end of the Shared Mission Meeting that took place in Mexico City, from July 5 to 9, 2023, this commitment was agreed upon.

During these five days together, we were enriched by the various inputs, presentations, and testimonies from our diverse JM ministries. At the end of each day, we gathered the fruits through Spiritual Conversations. This, together with times of formal and informal sharing, led to a deeper connection, thus building greater communion and a conviction to journey TOGETHER.

St. Claudine is a woman for all peoples, places and times. Guided by her charism and her pedagogy, we desire to creatively build a new culture.

*We felt her presence in our hearts and minds, as we discerned the way forward and we desire to continue her heritage by committing ourselves to work **together**:*

- ***To place the person at the centre**, with the hope and confidence for what she/he can become, by forming an alliance with others, to create a 'village' of education.*
- ***To educate for service**, to form a culture of solidarity and to develop networks with other people to serve together at the peripheries.*
- *To enable the person to discover **the meaning of life and of the Transcendent**, by providing time, space and opportunities for interiority.*
- ***To build just and healthy relations** between self, others and our common home through the ethics of care, forgiveness, reconciliation and trust in a good and merciful God.*
- ***To grow in discernment**, as a way of living and working, through dialogue, listening, and praying together.*
- ***To nurture a revolution of tenderness**, by recognizing our own vulnerability and woundedness, that leads us to empathise with others and moves us to compassionate action.*

*We, Companions in Mission, Lay and RJs, commit ourselves to invest our energies creatively and take responsibility to live and transmit the charism of St. Claudine, **TOGETHER**, so as to create a more just and humane culture.*

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 21, 1-4:

When he looked up he saw some wealthy people putting their offerings into the treasury and he noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins. He said, "I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood."

4. LET US PRAYS

Take, o Lord, and receive... (Sp. Ex. 234)

Take, o Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding and my entire will.
All that I am, and all that I have,
you have given it all to me. To you, O Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours;
do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace
that's enough for me..





Fingerprint 8

CHARISM



1. FROM OUR REALITY

To reflect on:

- ~ Do I know people with gifts/charisms? How would I define these people and their charisms? Why am I attracted to them? What do I like about them?
- ~ What do I discover as a gift of Claudine and of Jesus and Mary today? Why does it attract me?
- ~ Do I perceive in my life an inclination to live from this gift/charism?

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

Texts from “The Charism of Jesus and Mary: a way of letting God be present”:¹²

How does a person, whom we today call a founder or foundress, receive the charism?

The Spirit becomes present in the history of humanity through openness to God and through the inner disposition of a person in that history, and it triggers a spiritual experience in that person. This experience is decisive in the life of the person and directs all her/his subsequent existence in the direction of the unique call.

In reality, this is an indefinable experience, since it is a “source” or origin experience, and is rather described by its effects. It is of a totalizing nature since it encompasses the entire human being: sensitivity, intelligence and project. It links to the “personal center”, that is, the person feels touched in his or her deepest subjectivity. However, it is not measured by the

¹² Lizbeth G. Vega Pasos, “El carisma de Jesús-María: un modo de dejar a Dios hacerse presente.” (Presentation at the Education Congress: “The legacy present in the educational mission of today.” February, 2002. Centenary year of the presence of Jesus and Mary in Mexico).

psychological intensity with which it sometimes occurs, but by the radical change of meaning that it gives to existence.

This experience begins a path of conversion, that is, it drives the person to deeply transform his or her life towards the model of new humanity that is Jesus. In this way it is evident that it implies a committed response to God, and a conscious, responsible and progressive option for Him.

It is important to clarify that this experience, although timely in its origin, is actually progressive in the development of all its potential, and in its very assimilation.

In the process that begins with this fundamental spiritual experience, the person advances in a relationship with God that becomes the most important one in his existence, something like a knot that binds all other relationships. Through this relationship of intimacy, God gives himself to the person and enables him to understand him in a certain way, that is, he captures the being of God with particular nuances that become a message for humanity.

This means that the person acquires the capacity to understand God through living together with him, through association with him in daily life, in such a way that what the person comes to know about God is, above all, a consequence of his intimate relationship.

...

In summary, we can say that what we have explained as a fundamental experience of God in a person opens a process of relationship between God and that human being that allows the latter to advance in a particular understanding of God, which leads him – as in a single movement – to listen to him within his reality and to find him involved in it. All this is already shaping a charism.¹³

Discovering some elements of charism

...Some elements that, it seems to me, can help us to better contemplate what makes up the charism of Jesus-Mary.

This is something like admiring a figure from the various parts that make it up. Certainly the figure is each of its parts but as a whole.

*1) An experience of God as **fundamental Goodness**, let's say that this is the basis.*

¹³ Ibid, pages 4-5.

2) A commitment to **forgiveness** as the only possibility of recovering happiness and health in personal and social life.

3) **Unlimited trust in the human being**, in the person. Conceiving God as active goodness means an unshakeable faith that God's goodness is constantly at work, and is capable of transforming reality because it is capable of transforming the human being. With this outlook, one cannot but hope in the other, that sooner or later the person will be capable of bringing out the best in themselves, even as castles are not built in a day.

4) A **strong trust in the community** because the God Claudine encountered is a God who manifests himself by creating community. That is to say, her experience of God led her to realise that human beings can only emerge from their selfishness when they are capable of looking beyond themselves, when their thirst for transcendence and their openness to the Absolute make them see the world and people in all their dignity and not as objects at their service. It is this gaze that makes possible the rejection of everything that separates human beings and leads them to confront each other, and provokes the decision to engage with others that allows fraternal communities to develop. I believe that it is this understanding of human dynamics that is at the heart of the family spirit that permeates as a characteristic element of our charism. It is the affirmation that, despite all the differences, we can recognise ourselves as a family.

5) A **vision of hope in the face of reality**, because it is possible to discover in it the signs of God's presence. Behind this vision is the perception of the novelty of the God who acts in history, who surprises and destroys discouragement and pessimism. In other words, God is discovered as the One who emerges and manifests himself through people and events; He is a real and concrete God who lives in the heart of the world but also beyond it, within it but without being exhausted there. I believe that this vision of hope is closely related to the trust that Claudine had in the Provident God.

6) Finally, and closely linked to this vision of hope in the face of reality, it seems to me that there is an important element of **praise**, the most widely expressed expression of which is the motto of the Congregation: "May Jesus and Mary be praised forever." When we are able to believe that God can open up new possibilities in reality because he is intimately linked to it, then the strength necessary to overcome the desolation that closes us off and blinds us can emerge, and thus prepare us to discover the new

things that are silently finding their way on this earth. Thus, it is possible to express hope in an attitude of praise, just as Mary did in the Magnificat.¹⁴

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 11, 25-30:

At that time Jesus said in reply, "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him. "Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.

4. LET US PRAY

Fall in love! attributed to *Pedro Arrupe SJ*

Nothing is more practical than finding God,
Than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.
It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,
what you do with your evenings,
how you spend your weekends,
what you read, whom you know,
what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in Love, stay in love,
and it will decide everything.



¹⁴ Ibid, pages 14-15.



Fingerprint 9

THE VOCATION AND MISSION OF THE LAITY



1. FROM OUR REALITY

To reflect on:

- ~ Who/what mobilizes my life and my actions?
- ~ Do I feel any commitment to the world, to others, to my “places” in life?
- ~ Do I feel I can express my faith alongside other companions?

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

A. A. Text from “The Charism of Jesus and Mary: a way of letting God be present”:

*I could say that Claudine's experience became a sending, **a mission** to be fulfilled. This mission consisted fundamentally of:*

- *To help human beings discover the goodness of God at work in history.*
- *To witness the God of Goodness in a world where there was widespread ignorance or contempt for this God.*
- *To be the word of the God-Goodness in a reality that refused to listen to him.*
- *To be an instrument of forgiveness and reconciliation between those wounded by violence and sickened by revenge.*
- *To be a revealing presence of the kind, tender and maternal face of God, constantly snatched by the environment of dehumanization that surrounded Claudine.*
- *To be a bearer of a message of hope, especially to those who were most in danger of succumbing to meaninglessness.*¹⁵

¹⁵ Ibid, page 16.

B. From Pope Francis' monthly prayer: The mission of the laity¹⁶

Lay people are on the front line of the life of the Church. We need their testimony regarding the truth of the Gospel and their example of expressing their faith by practicing solidarity.

Let us give thanks for the lay people who take risks, who are not afraid and who offer reasons for hope to the poorest, to the excluded, to the marginalized.

Let us pray together this month that the lay faithful may fulfil their specific mission, the mission that they received in Baptism, putting their creativity at the service of the challenges of today's world.

C. Message of Pope Francis on the laity¹⁷

In this unitary vision of the Church, where we are first and foremost baptized Christians, the laity live in the world and at the same time belong to the faithful People of God. The Puebla Document expressed this nicely: laypersons are men and women "of the Church in the heart of the world", and men and woman "of the world in the heart of the Church". True, the laity are called to live their mission chiefly amid the secular realities in which they are daily immersed. Yet that does not mean that they do not also have the abilities, charisms and competence to contribute to the life of the Church: in liturgical service, in catechesis and education, in the structures of governance, the administration of goods and the planning and implementation of pastoral projects, and so forth....

The lay faithful are not "guests" in the Church; it is their home and they are called to care for it as such. Laypersons, and women in particular, must be better appreciated for the skills and for the human and spiritual gifts they bring to the life of parishes and dioceses. They can assist, with their

¹⁶ Pope Francis. The mission of the laity. The Pope's video. May 2018. By the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.

<https://thepopevideo.org/the-mission-of-the-laity/?lang=en>

¹⁷ Pope Francis, Speeches to the Participants in a Congress organized by the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life. Synod Hall, 18 February 2023. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/february/documents/20230218-convegno.html>

“everyday” language, in the proclamation of the Gospel by engaging in various forms of preaching.... Together with their pastors, laypersons must bring Christian witness to secular life: to the worlds of work, culture, politics, art and social communications...

With these few observations, I have wanted to point to an ideal, an inspiration to help us in moving forward. How I wish that all of us might cherish in mind and heart this lovely vision of the Church! A Church that is intent on mission, where all join forces and walk together to proclaim the Gospel. A Church in which what binds us together is our being baptized Christians, our belonging to Jesus. A Church marked by fraternity between laity and pastors, as all work side-by-side each day in every sphere of pastoral life...

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of the Gospel of St. Matthew chapter 13, 33:

The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened.

4. LET US PRAY

Blessed...! by *Laurentine Chiasson RJM*¹⁸

Yes, blessed are you, Woman, whose trusting heart
bent every effort, every hope, even life itself
upon the One Necessity, assured that God,
Master of the impossible, foresees everything...
"GOD WILL PROVIDE!"

Blessed are you, Woman, whose faithful heart
chose the better part, seeking God in all things
and all things in God,
with the desire of pleasing Him...
"LOVE YOUR DUTY"

¹⁸ Laurentine Chiasson RJM, *Unless a wheat grain dies...* (1981), page. 139-140.

Blessed are you, Woman, whose apostolic heart
burned with missionary zeal for God:
you consumed all your energies to make
Jesus and Mary known and loved...
"FORM SOULS FOR HEAVEN!"

Blessed are you, Woman, whose motherly heart
bestowed the best of your care and tenderness
upon the young in an endeavour
to promote their human and spiritual growth...
"BE TRUE MOTHERS!"

Blessed are you, Woman, who in kindness of heart
granted total forgiveness and allowed
the goodness of God
to act in you and by you...
"LET CHARITY BE AS THE APPLE OF YOUR EYE"

Blessed are you, Woman, whose heart marvelled
as you lived your life in joy of heart,
liberty of soul, confidence and generosity
entirely open to the Spirit...
"HOW GOOD GOD IS!"

One in heart and soul,
in the joy of gratitude and of praise,
united in the Church,
we thank God because of you,
and with you, we sing:
PRAISED FOREVER BE JESUS AND MARY!"





Fingerprint 10

AFJM DECALOGUE AS A LIFE COMMITMENT



1. FORM OUR REALITY

We have come this far and after having followed in the footsteps of St. Claudine we have also come to know the footprints of our path, of our life, of our reality.

To reflect on:

- ~ Do we wish to continue to delve deeper into the identity of the AFJM?
- ~ Do I want to participate in its mission and charism?
- ~ If I have felt in tune with the style, the charism and the group, we can then read the AFJM Decalogue that contains the keys to a way of life in the style of Claudine.

2. WE READ AND REFLECT

We present to you the AFJM Decalogue. It was developed at the 2018 General Assembly, with the desire to have a document that expressed in a few words what the AFJM is, what its mission is, what its dreams and desires are. In this way, the Decalogue can help us express our desire to belong to the AFJM and the responsibility we assume by being part of a group with others.

La Asociación Familia Jesús María es:

- 1) *A group of people who want to learn to live “going out”, from oneself towards others, receiving the spiritual support from the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and offering collaboration and trust to the religious.*
- 2) *To share the Charism of Saint Claudine in a true family spirit: faith, goodness, pardon, reconciliation and healing.*
- 3) *To live as a lay person committed to the mission of the Church and the mission of the Religious of Jesus and Mary.*

- 4) *To humbly contribute to live in a more humane world.*
- 5) *To promote or provide fraternal spaces for help, listening, prayer and service.*
- 6) *Express sensitivity and closeness with children, young people, with those in greater need.*
- 7) *Interiorize the spirit of joy and the attitude of thanksgiving as a style of life.*
- 8) *Take care of our environment or milieu and live in harmony with nature.*
- 9) *Receive spiritual and human formation and promote communion with others.*
- 10) *To encourage ourselves to live our faith in the AFJM groups in order to give life to the charism with the personal commitment to live in harmony with what is expressed in this Decalogue.*

3. WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Read and delve into the words of the Gospel of St. Matthew chapter 5, 3-12:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

4. LET US PRAY

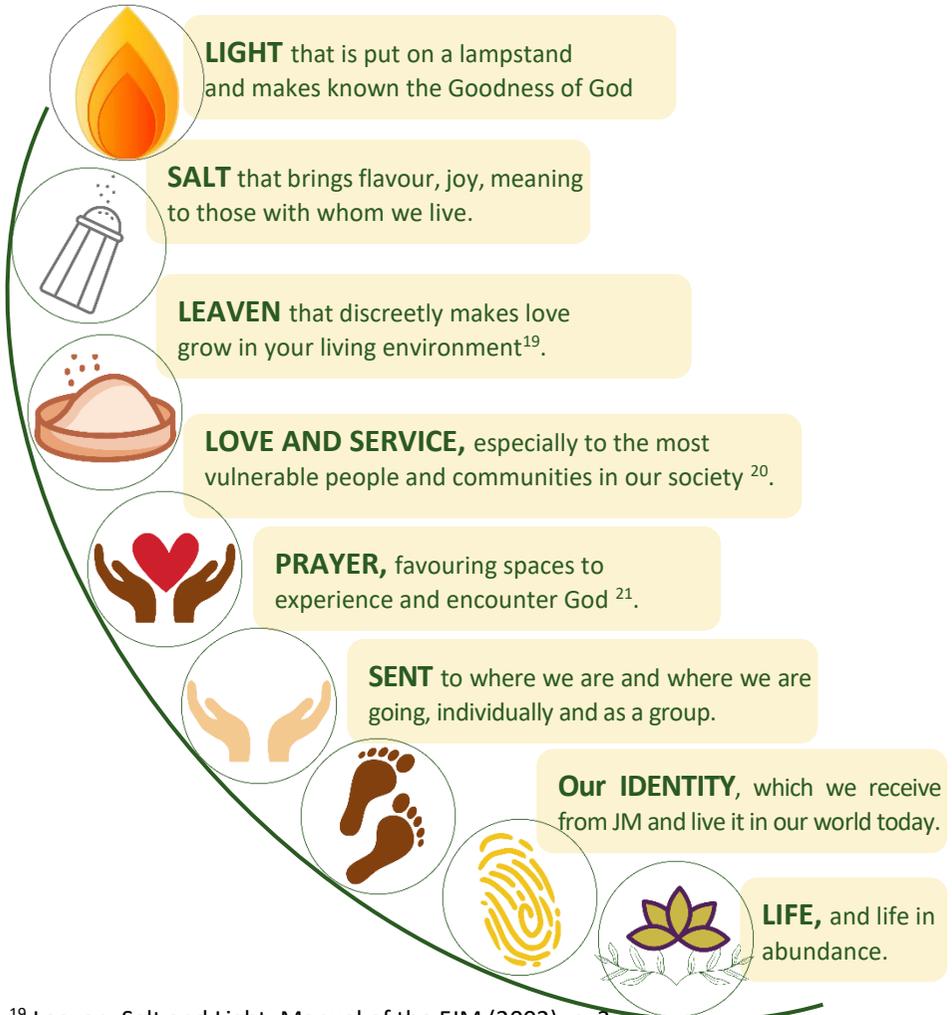
Prayer to obtain a grace through the intercession Of St. Claudine Thévenet

God our Father,
You granted St. Claudine Thévenet
an intimate experience
of your merciful goodness
and you called her to dedicate her life
to the education of the young,
giving her the grace
to draw from the Heart of your Son
an ardent zeal
to make Jesus and Mary known and loved.
Help us, like her,
to be witnesses to your love,
given over to the action of the Spirit
and open to the needs
of our brothers and sisters
especially the most deprived.
Grant us, through her intercession,
and for the praise of your glory,
the grace for which we now pray.
Amen.



OUR MANDALA

Throughout this text in which we wanted to follow Claudine's Fingerprints, we have been accompanied by a mandala, in which we put different signs that speak of the AFJM.



¹⁹ Leaven, Salt and Light, Manual of the FJM (2002), p. 3.

²⁰ Project AFJM, 2019-2025, page 8.

²¹ JM Preferences.

We invite you to complete this mandala, adding a new circle with those signs that you discover in your own personality and personal vocation.



We invite you to create TOGETHER, a *mandala* of the AFJM group of which you are a part.

www.afjminternacional.org





Association Family of Jesus and Mary
September 2024