

Claudine Thévenet (1774 -1837)
Virgin, Foundress of the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary



CLAUDINE THÉVENET was born in Lyon 30 March 1774, the second of a family of seven children. "Glady" as she was affectionately known had a strong influence on her brothers and sisters ...

The French Revolution broke out when she was fifteen. In 1793, she experienced the tragic 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 ... 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 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.

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. On July 31 1818 Father Coindre told some members of the Association to form a community without hesitation. "God has chosen you", he said to Claudine. **And so the foundation of the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary at Pierres Plantees on the hill of the Croix Rousse took place on October 6 1818.**

The first aim of the young Institute had been to receive poor children and care for them until they were twenty, giving them working skills and elementary education, as well as a solid religious and moral formation *servng all social classes*, especially for children and young girls and among them the poor.

"To see God in all things and all things in God" is also to live in a spirit of constant praise. In a world in which hope is all too often absent, the rediscovery of God's goodness, both in His creation and in people, restores purpose to life and leads to thanksgiving.

The strength of a building is revealed only with the passage of time. Barely five years after the death of Mother Claudine, her daughters set out for India (1842).

175 years after the foundation of the Congregation, there are now more than 1800 Religious of Jesus and Mary institutions in 180 communities across the five continents.

source: http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints *adapted*

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