



EXTERIOR ASSOCIATION OF THE SACRED HEARTS

*"We will always have a grand Society,
under another form, which will be a kind of "Third Order."
Henriette Aymer, 3/02/1802*

I. ORIGINS

Since its origin the Congregation has had an Exterior Association.

"It is not a Work, but a Branch of the Congregation. It is the Congregation outside of the Religious House, and its extension in the world." P. J. Proust

"It has the same foundation: the consecration to the Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, and the retracing of the "four ages" of the life of Christ, according to the Preliminary Chapter of the Rule.

It follows the same purpose, the same mission, in the same spirit, and through the same essential ways."

The Exterior Association has never been the object of a special decree. (If sometimes, a decree referring to the Exterior Association has been mentioned, it concerned only the gaining of indulgences).

It has been approved at the same time as the Congregation. Four articles referring to it are contained in the Constitutions presented to the Holy See by the Founders in 1815.

The approbation was given by His Holiness Pius VII on January 10, 1817 and confirmed by the Bull "Pastor Aeternus" on November 17, 1817 where the Preliminary Chapter and the 107 articles of the Constitutions were inserted.

This original Rule was common to the Brothers and to the Sisters. 1 of the 9 chapters and 4 of the 107 articles that it contained pertained to the Exterior Association, indicating that it was part of the SS.CC. Family, as the Founders had intended.

Texte de 1817: Ile partie. Ch. V: De la société extérieure

46. Les Supérieurs de toutes les Maisons de la Congrégation peuvent admettre à la communion spéciale de prières, les fidèles qui, vivant au milieu du siècle, désireraient cependant mener une vie plus chrétienne.
47. Les hommes qui seront admis à cette communion spéciale de prières, formeront une Association qui aura des assemblées réglées dans la Maison des Frères du lieu où ils résident.
48. Les femmes auront aussi leurs assemblées dans les Maisons des Soeurs.
49. Le chapitre général de 1819 règlera les conditions nécessaires pour faire partie de cette Association; mais dans tous les cas, il n'y aura aucune obligation sous peine de péché, même véniel. Seulement ceux ou celles qui n'observeraient pas le règlement de l'Association, après avoir été avertis 3 fois, seront censés y avoir renoncé et ne seront plus regardés comme en faisant partie.

This Rule had to be completed by the following General Chapters. The Exterior Association was among “the important questions” to be regulated.

In 1819, it was not an opportune time to determine regulations.

The Chapter of 1824 that divided the Rule for the Brothers and the Sisters stated the articles for the Exterior Association precisely in two points:

-- “Since one of the principal purposes of the Institute is the propagation of the true devotion to the Sacred Hearts, as it was approved by the Holy Apostolic See, to extend the devotion and to propagate it more easily, the local superiors...” (preceding article 46)

--“Everywhere that the Exterior Society will be established, it will have for its Patron St. John Francis Regis.”

Having been well informed about the origin of the Exterior Association, before we go any further, let us go back to the day of its painful beginning, to the day of its separation from the Society of the Sacred Heart of Poitiers at its General Assembly of February 10, 1801.

The situation within the Society of the Sacred Heart became confusing. That day, the Priests of the Council, with the exception of Mr. Perrin, and two thirds of the extern Associates withdrew from the Association. The minority accepted the reasonable conditions proposed by Mother Henriette who, on the following days, gave an account of the entire situation to the authorities of the diocese, and asked them for “the little group” that remained, the same privileges it enjoyed before the separation. This request was granted on April 20, 1801.

The Exterior Association of the Sacred Hearts began and was recognized as an integral part of the new religious Congregation when it became autonomous.

One cannot understand the Congregation well without going back to its historical source and without knowing where the Society of the Sacred Heart originated, “a good ground” it might have been, that through the Revolution and through the Spirit was so fruitful.

Our Founder, our Foundress, the first Sisters and Associates took root there, grew together, and each one according to the grace received, absorbed the ardent sap that flowed from the Heart of Jesus leading them to a total love, amid trials.

The Society was founded by Suzanne Geoffroy in 1792 and was known by Father Coudrin since he returned to Poitiers in 1793, after the decisive experience he had in the granary of the Motte d’Usseau. There he set up his general headquarters in 1794. Henriette Aymer was received there as an extern in 1795 and as an intern in 1797.

P. Marcel Bocquet makes a presentation of this Society in two well documented articles that were published in “NOUVELLES” of 1955 (nos. 55 and 56) under the title: “The Prehistory of the Exterior Association.” Here is an excerpt:

“At first, the Society seemed to us to be a spontaneous Movement of young adults to defend themselves and to oppose a persecuting government. Very soon it became a wide Movement to hide priests, to promote their ministry, and to seek help through the apostolate of the laity who would dedicate themselves totally to the Movement.

Consecrated to the Sacred Heart, these generous persons understood the need to oppose the persecution not only through action, but above all, through perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to make reparation for the crimes committed. Little by little, some of them desired to consecrate their lives to silent adoration and to create a religious institution to assure that adoration would continue.

Young women took the initiative to unite and to remain together as a group, although there were among the members “a great diversity of ages, of social and economic status.”

In reality, the Society consisted of a “reception office” and a “charity office”, each composed of 8 Associates (4 older women and 4 young women). An instruction office of 12 members was also added. All the tasks were distributed according to aptitudes and needs to help numerous people in the different districts of the city. Each office was presided by one or several priest-associates and by the Superior of the Society.

The priest-associates themselves formed a group with their own regulations. They elected a Dean and his Council in charge of directing the entire Society. The role and the influence of Father Coudrin quickly took on great importance, especially in spiritual direction.

The house where the intern associates resided in community, without vows, was really “the center, the home, the source” for all the Associates. Masses were celebrated in hiding, adoration continued, monthly assemblies were held, and the work of the Offices was carried out. There they also found the spiritual help they searched for in vain elsewhere.

It was important for all the members to live in communion to be able to fulfill all their commitments during these troubled times. Animated by the same spirit, sharing the same mission of reparative prayer and apostolic activities, they also had their regulations that assured them of a strong unity evident in their daily prayers. They had to pray for one another and especially for the priest-associates and for the deceased of the Association. They also had to help one another, to visit their sick ... In reality, they formed a very large charitable community (and in secret!).

Aware of such a life led by the Associates and our Founders, we can understand what the simple phrase in their Constitutions “to admit to special communion of prayer all those who wanted to lead a more Christian life” meant to our Founders.

However, this was not an easy life. Complications arose when “a small religious group,” the Solitaires, joined with Henriette Aymer to live in another manner that called for special direction under Father Coudrin, who was later appointed Superior of the Sisters on October 28, 1800.

The successive appointments of Henriette as superior of the Solitaires, of the interns, and then Superior General of the Society did not create unity, but the contrary.

During these difficult times, there were often influencing conflicts. However, there were serious questions of intermingling aspirations and different vocations, and for some the choice of a decisive way of life.

“These were the days of painful awakening of a new world and the beginning of a new form of religious life. The Association of Poitiers had been one of the crucibles where the renewal of Christianity was forged.” (P. M. Bocquet, 1955)

It is not surprising that Father Coudrin maintained in his Congregation not only some elements of spirituality that came largely from him, but also some numerous practices of the Associates, for example, the Patronage of St. Francis Regis.

Documents à consulter sur les Origines:

Les Mémoires de Melles de la Barre, de Prin. S. Geoffroy et une notice à son sujet.

"La lettre à mon frère" d'Hélène de la Barre.

Le règlement de l'Association du Sacré-Coeur (1794) appelée l'Immensité.

Le règlement des Prêtres de la Société du Sacré-Coeur

Le Projet du Doyen M. Perrin (1798)

La Règle des Solitaires.

De nombreux articles dans les Annales de la Congrégation.

II. THE HISTORY (An Overview)

THE FIRST STEPS

There is no doubt that the Exterior Association always existed in the mind of the Founders. For them there was a need to restore in the Society the Reign of the Sacred Hearts to be extended through the laity.

This desire was present in each new foundation since Father Coudrin's arrival at Mende in June 1802. On the eighteenth, he writes to Poitiers: "We will have people for the Exterior and the present Association, but it may be difficult to have people for the novitiate." On the twenty-second, he writes, "I believe that we will succeed well here because the people are good. It will not be difficult to have 50 Associates immediately, if we wish."

In his approbation of the establishment of the "zélatrices" in his diocese, Monsignor de Chabot permitted them on 8/12/1802 "to establish a Society of the Sacred Heart with ordinary indulgences and to associate with them all those they would consider suitable." (Art.5)

On April 23, 1803, Mother Henriette writes to the superior of Poitiers, "It is necessary to have the Assembly on the Feast of Francis Regis, in honor of that saint who protects us in a special manner. It is not by chance that we have been established in the diocese, where his tomb is greatly venerated."

Because of the situation in which they were living, the members of the Exterior Association were forced more or less to disguise themselves. From the beginning they experienced difficulties as did each House that was opened in this period: Cahors, Paris, Laval, Le Mans, Seez.

Undoubtedly, the lay people were primarily called to associate themselves to perpetual adoration which began immediately with only some Sisters.

No other document was found until 1814.

1814: RESTORATION (and with it, a new hope)

Father Hilarion was called to go to Rome with the first embassy of Louis XVIII when Pius VII was the Pope. He took advantage of this occasion to negotiate for the approbation of the Congregation.

First, he asked for indulgences "for the 7 confraternities erected in 7 cities of France under the invocation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Holy Heart of Mary." There were double confraternities, one for the Sisters, for the older and younger women associates, and the other, for the Fathers, the Brothers, and the men associates. Through prudence, they lived under the guise of these confraternities.

Shortly after, in a Supplication, Father Coudrin spoke openly about the "Congregation," Brothers and Sisters, that he had founded, and asked to extend the indulgences "to all the faithful who each day would make at least a half hour adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, would recite the Salve Regina, and who are or would be admitted to the communion of prayers with the Congregation."

An important rescript was granted on December 18, 1814.

What was the approximate number of Associates at that time? In a letter dated October 25, 1814, Father Coudrin spoke about "900 persons who belonged directly or indirectly to the Congregation." It was thought that there were about 700 Associates, about a 100 for each

house. The eighth house was opened only in July 1815 at Sarlat.

The dissemination of a leaflet: “The Call of the Good Mother” in November 1816

To propagate the devotion to the Sacred Hearts and to obtain graces from Heaven for the Church and for France through reparative adoration, Mother Henriette, in agreement with Father Coudrin, decided to have 3,000 copies of a leaflet printed in which she invited all the faithful to unite themselves to the “Zélatrices of the Love of the Sacred Hearts,” admitting them to communion of prayers, mentioning the indulgences granted and their conditions, and giving the addresses of the 8 houses of the Sisters where they could be inscribed.

She wanted each community to disseminate the leaflet everywhere and to do everything possible to make an appeal to the parish priests so that the Exterior Association would become parochial as well as Congregational. What an extensive vision and project! She also made a distinction between those who formed part of the Association by assuring a half hour adoration each week only and those who wanted to gain indulgences.

This clarification was important because the clause introduced by the Good Father in his request to the Holy See for indulgences often caused difficulties, and Rome did not want to make an exception.

The success of the campaign was rapid and complete. Everywhere people asked to be inscribed.(Annals F, no. 2 of 1956, pages 61-67)

AFTER THE APPROBATION (By the Holy See in 1817)

The Exterior Association continued to propagate itself where the Fathers and the Sisters had established themselves, and sometimes even in the countries where they were not present, as in Colombia (and at the present time in Benin and Togo).

The Association presented itself in diverse ways according to the relationships it had with the Congregation and its mission, that is to say, as a pious union, as a confraternity, as a Third Order.

As time went on, it took on different appearances according to the emphasis placed on one or other aspect of our multiform charism, and according to the personality of those who, full of zeal, would be the promoters.

The Exterior Association had its “ups and downs”, varying according to different areas. We can follow its vitality, its movement, its developments, especially from the reports presented at the General Chapters. To give a concrete picture of the life of the groups with all its richness and its specific characteristics is not possible here except with some brief information.

Most of the General Chapters were confronted with the same two questions: (1) the organization and the determination of the regulations; (2) the development of the Association.

The General Chapter of 1843 decided to work on these questions and proposed some Statutes developed in 22 articles. In general, this attempt showed considerable progress. Each House must have Associates. Each Center must have a Council with real powers. There must be a solemn ceremonial for the reception of the Associates. The imitation “of the four ages” of Our Lord Jesus Christ, with attention given to the poor, to the sick, to prisoners must be adapted for the laity. There must be assemblies, meetings, and certain prayers. However, there was a serious omission. Perhaps to avoid any problems the obligation of adoration was not mentioned.

These regulations (Statutes) were not promulgated, probably, because of the difficulties of the

last years of the Generalate of Monsignor Bonamie.

PERSONAL INITIATIVE

Did the failure of the Chapter of 1843 dissuade the following General Chapters from committing themselves again to determine the Statutes for the Exterior Association?

In 50 years, with the exception of the creation of a General Direction in 1868 with a General Director residing at Paris, nothing significant was done.

During half of a century, the Exterior Association was not idle. On the contrary, it expanded greatly. However, this was the time when individuals with strong personalities were at work, following their own initiatives, as listed:

-- in 1862, at Paris, the regulations written by Very Rev. Father Euthyme Rouchouze that did not take into account the work of the General Chapter of 1843.

-- in 1858, at Valparaiso, the Statutes of Father Desmarais, revised in 1877 and sent to Miranda de Ebro in 1881.

-- in 1872, at Picpus and at Versailles, a little manual written by Father Perdereau.

-- in 1855, at Louvain, the regulations written by Father Tardieu, mentioning the "four ages." It was re-edited in 1879 by Father Rapsaet.

Father Jacques Bund deserves to be mentioned in a special way because of his authority as a canonist. In 1898, he presented to the General Chapter a magnificent work on the Exterior Association. The Chapter members filled with enthusiasm decided to have it printed under the title of "Manual of the Exterior Association of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary and of Adoration." This Manual was re-edited several times and completed in 1924 with a doctrinal section taken from the "Religious of the Sacred Hearts."

Here mention can be made of the very appreciated support given to the Associates and to the manuals written for the Association.

During the Commune at Paris, the Fathers had to suffer a great deal. After this persecution, Father Perdereau, appointed General Director, published in 1872 the "Annals of the Sacred Hearts" destined for the Fathers, as well as for the Sisters and the Associates, as members of the same family. He writes, "We need to open our ranks to the auxiliary troops of the "Exterior Association."

A new enthusiasm was awakened. The Exterior Association became widespread in France and stronger in Latin America. In Chile, for example, the provincial obligated the local superiors to establish the Exterior Association where the Congregation was present.

Father A. Jamet writes (3/09/1872), "The Exterior Association developed remarkably at Santiago. In four of the churches in the capital, perpetual adoration was begun. The last Thursday, in the name of the Reverend Father Provincial, I added 250 persons as adorers in the Church of the Lazarist Fathers. I was invited to enroll 600 other adorers on the First Friday of October at St. Ann. Soon, we will do the same thing at the Cathedral."

Father Donat Loir transmitted from Lima, to all of Peru, Boliva, and Colombia where the Exterior Association began in 1888. We will see what "the jewel of the Exterior Association," as it was called, would produce later.

In all these attempts, the main concern appeared to have been the adaptation to be made to the mentalities and possibilities of the different countries. There was never an official text of the Statutes.

The French edition written by Father J. Bund, a German, intended especially to give the Associates a personal and clear formation and to teach them to see in the Sacred Hearts and in the Eucharist, the source of the spirit of love, of prayer, and of reparation.

The Spanish version written by Father D. Loir, a Frenchman, tried, above all, to establish centers or “coros,” solidly organized for a collective cult including the public recitation of the “Little Offices of the Sacred Hearts,” the organization of successive adoration, Masses, and solemn processions. The direct apostolate is unknown.

TOWARD OFFICIAL STATUTES (valid for all)

After the War of 1914-1918, the Congregation lived through a period of great expansion. The creation of new provinces and the reorganization of the existent provinces absorbed all its energies.

Moreover, filled with enthusiasm, the Congregation was drawn to the ENTHRONEMENT that spread so much that it broke the boundaries in which it was confined until then.

However, little by little, the Congregation became aware of the requirements of Chapter XII of the Rule and desired to revive the Exterior Association, realizing that the Enthronement and the Association should not oppose, but support one another.

Then, the Congregation confronted a serious problem. If each province and each country were permitted to establish their own Statutes, wouldn't there be a risk of having different and unreasonable interpretations? On the other hand, the mentality of the faithful, their life situations, their spiritual needs had changed. Therefore, it was necessary to adapt the Statutes to make them more effective. All this was the center of the discussions and motions during the Chapters of 1933, 1938, 1947.

Father Ignatius Baños was the person appointed to prepare a plan. This was the situation when Father Jean-Baptiste Proust was appointed Director General in 1949. He began to work with eagerness and on February 2, 1950 he published “The General Statutes and the Ceremonial of the Exterior Association” with the approbation of Very Reverend Father Jean d'Elbée who promulgated them “ad experimentum” for 4 years, before submitting them to the General Chapter and presenting them to the Holy See for definitive approbation.

A copy was sent to each House in June 1951. The Chapter of 1953 appointed a Commission to study the new Statutes, a true Summary of the Exterior Association. Considering them more suitable to guide the directors than the faithful, the Commission asked for an abbreviated edition that contained the essential points and would be easy and practical reading.

This “Excerpt of Statutes” was edited and re-edited after consultation with the Directors and the Superiors of both branches in 1955. It was to be the work of the entire Institute to offer to the Associates a clear doctrinal redaction with flexible, firm, and inspiring directives.

The document was presented to the Holy See in March 1957. The Ceremonial was approved on October 10, 1957 and the Statutes on June 7, 1958. This was the result of more than 10 years of efforts and the cause for rejoicing at the Chapter of August 1958.

Upon this solid foundation, it was time to make the Exterior Association known among the laity who became aware of their apostolic responsibility. “The Exterior Association was the desire of

the Church in its approbation, the desire of the Congregation since its origin, and the desire of the Sacred Hearts themselves. Would that it would be everyone's desire!"

It was the time to begin anew because the delay to write the Statutes, the succession of three General Directors (Fathers Proust, Bocquet, and Lavanant) in a few years, and the numerous oppositions slowed the progress of the establishment of the Exterior Association, especially in Europe.

The cult of the Sacred Heart was devaluated. Pius XII responded in defense of the cult with his Encyclical "Haurietis Aquas."

In other parts of the world, the Exterior Association did not encounter opposition. In 1957, Colombia had 500 "coros" with 15,000 Associates. The Association was favored by the clergy and was accepted among other works. It maintained close relationship with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and with the vocation ministry for the greater good of the parishes.

In Ecuador, there were more than 400 fervent Associates at Quito and the Exterior Association was established in most of the 26 provinces of the country.

The regional director (a secular priest) gave a report on the Exterior Association at CELAM, expressing the hope for its extension.

When the Association was in the process of renewal, Very Reverend Mother Zenaide Lorier wrote a letter on August 15, 1958 to the Father General. In the name of the superiors, she expressed the desire "to see the Exterior Association revive and develop, especially in the boarding schools of the Congregation." She asked for the support of the SS.CC. Fathers and for Statutes adapted to the students.

It was thought that the Association could perhaps be a link between the two branches (Sisters and Brothers) of the Congregation.

The SS.CC. Fathers made some dynamic suggestions for apostolic schools, scholastics, preachers, and parishes. They were supported, for example, by the exemplary "lay missionaries of the Sacred Hearts" at the schools in Chile.

A SHORT TIME AFTER THE IMPORTANT EVENT OF VATICAN COUNCIL II (1962-1965)

In the light of the Council, on the lay apostolate, Very Reverend Father Henry Systemans wrote a letter in June 1967 to the Associates of France gathered by Father Luc Berra to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the approbation of the Congregation and of its **Association**. He wrote enthusiastically on the laity's ecclesial mission within the Congregation. This letter is worthy to be read and used for meditation.

However, at the Chapter of 1970, negative opinions concerning the Association were expressed. Some considered the Association to be outdated and not adapted to the needs of the Church and of the world. Such views were discouraging for those who with faith continued their work with the Association in Colombia, Peru, Togo, Dahomay.

Elsewhere, some valuable attempts were made to form "lay communities of young people." Although the Exterior Association was thought to be inadaptable, it was adaptable.

Proposals were made to be inspired by the new way described in the letter of Very Reverend Henry Systemans, to live according to the Rule of Life, that was approved at the General Chapter of 1970, and to profit from the experience with base communities in the work of evangelization. A Secular Institute was suggested for those desiring to live a more committed

Christian life. In a word, the Chapter members wanted to create “something new.” Vatican Council II called Congregations to renewal and the branch united to the Congregation was also called to be renewed.

2^{ème} partie: L'HISTOIRE. Document à consulter:
Etudes du P. Marcel BOCQUET dans NOUVELLES 1955, n. 54,
dans les ANNALES 1956, n. 5 et 6

- Rapports aux Chapitre Généraux de 1953, 1958 et 1970
- Lettre du TRP d'Elbée du 4 mai 1949
- Lettre de la TRM Z. Lorier du 15 août 1958
- Lettre du TRP. Systemans du 13 juin 1967
- Statuts "ad experimentum" de 1950, et Statuts approuvés en 1958
- Manuel des Associés de 1924, le dernier encours jusqu'en.... (du P.J. Bund complété par une partie doctrinale tirée du "Religieux des Sacrés-Coeurs" du P.M.-B Garric)

III. TOWARD THE FUTURE

After the Council, the Congregation like the Church experienced a profound change: a new openness to the world and a renewed way to carry out its Mission. The General Chapters of 1982 (Brothers) and 1983 (Sisters) emphasized change through striking orientations.

During this period, the situation of the Exterior Association was very changeable in different places. In countries like France, it was inactive and almost seemed to have disappeared, just when Movements of all types were springing up and spreading. On the contrary, in other areas collaboration of the laity with the Fathers and the Sisters became more committed, notably towards the poor. The laity wanted to participate more in the Congregation's Mission and spirituality.

Since 1983, Very Reverend Father Patrick Bradley drew our attention to this attitude of the laity. In 1985, he felt that the time had come to study the Statutes "to renew the Association so that it could truly become a vital branch of the Congregation."

The Chapter of 1988 would be the time to do this study. The proposal was made to send a survey to all the provinces concerning all existing SS.CC. lay communities. Twenty-two provinces and regions and four lay groups responded, as well as the Associations of Togo, Benin, Ghana, and Nigeria (accompanied for a long time by Father Larkin, and were flourishing).

The survey presented a wide and varied view of existing SS.CC. lay communities. It showed that most Associations were limited to making some form of adoration in some places through a family or parish apostolate. During past years the social aspect took on more importance. Recently, some groups seemed to be searching for a broader experience of the Congregation's Charism, but characteristically lay.

After the survey, the two general governments sent a work document and a questionnaire to all major communities on March 5, 1990. In them were presented some criteria to attain a common ground for identifying the SECULAR BRANCH in the future. (Cf. Art. 9 of Chapter I of the Constitutions)

There was no intention to channel the existing groups nor to give them new directions and unify them.

After much sharing and reflecting under the guidance of Father Louis Hermans and Sister Helene Wood, the Statutes were written and submitted by the two Superiors General for the approbation of the Holy See on March 24, 1993. They were approved on June 29, 1993 and promulgated on November 1, 1993.

“All this has opened up real possibilities for the future. If in our diverse apostolates, we could count on a really active and dynamic SECULAR BRANCH, a marvelous multiplication of apostolic energy would be freed for the service of the Mission of the Congregation.” (Father Patrick Bradley)

N.B. To have a true idea of the “life” of the Exterior Association, in time and space, it would be advisable to make a collection of articles that have appeared in the diverse publications of the Congregation. In those articles, we will see what love and glory have been shown to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, and what services have been rendered to the Church and to the world.

3^{ème} partie: VERS L'AVENIR, Document à consulter:

- Lettres du TRP Bradley, 1983, 1985... 1993
- Décisions du Chapitre Général de 1988 relatives au laïcat
- Enquête des Généralats. Document de travail de 1990 et réponse.
- Statuts de la Branche Séculière de 1993

Sister Maida Carlier, ss.cc. - June 1993