

4 September

The Founding of



in Poitiers

Moreover, on a hill, opposite the Aymer's house in the rue des Hautes - Treilles, an opportunity presented itself. Citizen Chabriel de Morière put a spacious house, off the road and surrounded by a large garden, on the market for 30,000 francs. Could there be a better "cradle" for the new community?

But where was the money to be found? Pere Coudrin did not have a penny to his name. Henriette Aymer decided to sell the properties she had inherited. It remained to find a buyer.

Mlle Irène de Viart, the daughter of the owner of the chateau of Usseau, who had recently come into contact with the Association, was asked. She hesitated for a long time, until June 23rd 1797, Feast of the Sacred Heart. On that day, at the end of her adoration, she whispered in the ear of Henriette Aymer who had come to replace her, "I accept". On the following day, the purchase of what would become the "Grand'Maison" was "done and delivered" Straight away, Henriette, who no longer had any income, was counted among the poor, so as to be dispensed from the subscription due to the Association. In the "order of the

poor", she joined Father Coudrin, who had preceded her since the time of the Incurables.

On August 25th 1797, the Solitaries took the habit, a tunic of white wool under their secular clothes. In the course of the celebration, presided by Father Coudrin, each one pronounced the resolutions they had written by hand.

In September, the Solitaries took possession of the Morière house. The transfer of the Blessed Sacrament took place by night; five or six people accompanied Father Coudrin, who carried the reserved sacrament from the Plan St Pierre to the rue des Hautes-Treilles. In a room on the first floor, which would become the oratory of the new community, the tabernacle was hidden behind a wooden panel between the two windows. A mechanical system hidden in the woodwork gave access to it. Adoration began immediately.

"At that time, five people made up our Mother's little flock", recounts Sr Gabriel de la Barre. "All that she (Henriette Aymer) had promised was done. Adoration was uninterrupted, day and night. She took on, almost alone, all the difficult work of the house. Carrying stones to make a hiding place where Father Coudrin could escape his persecutors, cooking, carrying water, procuring things that were absolutely necessary, in a house to which we had had to move so quickly that we could hardly find straw to sleep on or a bench to sit on, were occupations which nurtured her zeal, instead of discouraging her.

Mother Henriette did not disdain the lowest services. She served the sisters, washed the dishes, went to fetch hay from the field adjoining the house to carry it up to the attic, peeled vegetables, scraped the root vegetables, took care of the domestic animals and took them their food. We saw that she was not very skilled in these sorts of employments to which she was so unaccustomed. An amusing story was told about his. There was a pig in the house. Mother Henriette was responsible for feeding him and gave him food which was too hot. The animal was found dead the following day.

Everything breathed poverty in that first house. Sometimes we lacked what was strictly necessary. Mother Henriette heartened the sisters by her courage and prepared them by her example to bear the greatest hardships. I must not omit to mention that for a long time we dreaded the visits of the godless and we were afraid of being arrested. To avoid this danger, especially when we had stronger reasons to fear (and that often happened), Mother Henriette, after having remained for three or four hours before the Blessed Sacrament, spent the rest of the night in the attic, where the window gave on to the street, watching in case the police arrived. There, like a sentinel while the little community slept or prayed to God, she kept a careful watch to see if the police were prowling about to try to surprise us".

Now that the community had a house, it might have hoped to be able to organize itself as it wished. That was without reckoning with the stubbornness of Suzanne Geoffroy, who some time before, had decided to come to the rue des Hautes-Treilles with the whole Association! She would be the tenant of the community. Living together would not be a bed of roses, given the divergent aims.

(From the book *"A Man With a Heart Aflame"*, B. Couronne ss.cc.)