

**Reflections by Brother Paul Montero, S.C.,  
on the influence of Father Andre Coindre and St. Claudine Thevenet  
on his life and ministry  
Agra, India  
October 9, 2017**

Good morning, my dear Sisters. On behalf of Brother Marcel Riopel and myself, I greet you in the name of our Superior General, Brother José Ignacio and his council; and I congratulate you on the occasion of your 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of foundation.

Because Brother Marcel and I have not succeeded in meeting each of you personally, I offer this brief introduction. Brother Marcel is originally from Canada, but he currently ministers with our Brothers in Cameroun. For nineteen years, Brother Marcel lived and worked in the south of India with the Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a congregation that has a very close relationship with our congregation.

I, Brother Paul, currently live and minister in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a state in the south of the United States. I am co-director of a small center for African-American adults, ages 16 to 45 years, who did not complete their secondary school studies and who now desire to earn their diploma.

This morning, I will share with you a few reflections regarding how Father Andre Coindre and also St. Claudine influenced my life and ministry as a Brother of the Sacred Heart, even though I was not aware of their influence during much of my life as a Brother.

As we know, Vatican Council II asked religious congregations to return to their roots and to their founding charism, as part of the renewal called for by the Council. The exact circumstances of the death of our founder, Father Coindre, are mostly unknown. Time does not permit me to discuss this topic at length. However, I know that some of the younger Sisters here are not aware of this part of our history. Therefore, I will say simply this: our founder, filled with incredible zeal, especially for young people who were in need, died as a result of physical and mental exhaustion. A few years after founding our congregation, he developed a fever that caused delirium. One night, in an attack of delirium, he either fell out of or jumped out of a window and was killed. Because of the circumstances of his death, he was not buried with other deceased priests of the diocese.

Little effort was made by us Brothers through the years to remember his life or his ministry. The Sisters of Jesus and Mary kept the memory of André alive much more than did we Brothers; and we are grateful to you for that gift. It was not until the 1980's that we Brothers of the Sacred Heart began seriously to study and to appreciate the life, the ministry, and the charism of our founder. And as we did so, we also came to know and appreciate St. Claudine, because her life and that of Andre were intimately connected; and the mutual influence that each had on the other was significant.

My life as a Brother, both personally and communally, was greatly influenced by Father Coindre, but I was not aware of that reality for many years. With many of my Brothers, I came to realize that in my ministry among young people, I was attempting to live what we have come to call Coindre's pedagogy of trust and his spirituality of compassion. A pedagogy of trust believes (trusts) that within each young person is the potential for good and for growth. Therefore, we never give up on the young person, even when his or her behavior is not what is desirable. A spirituality of compassion focuses on God's

unconditional love for every young person, a love filled with mercy, forgiveness, and compassion.

A second dimension of my life as a Brother, which I now know is an inheritance from our founder, is an apostolic spirituality, which attempts to find Christ in every young person and to bring each young person into my personal and communal prayer. We Brothers look into the pierced heart of Jesus and find there the young who are suffering, forgotten, or abandoned.

Thirdly, the importance of community, of mutual support among me and my Brothers, is another significant part of my life and ministry; and that, too, has come from Coindre.

I believe that those three dimensions of my life as a Brother were fundamental to Andre's life and ministry; and because of the close relationship he had with Claudine, I believe that she contributed significantly to those aspects of his life. I also believe that the tenderness, the gentleness, the compassionate understanding that Coindre expressed in his letters and in his preaching were sentiments that he witnessed in and learned from Claudine.

I and my Brothers of the Sacred Heart are recipients of those same three dimensions of our life as Brothers. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that I am who I am as a Brother of the Sacred Heart, not only because of our founder, Father Coindre, but also because of your foundress, St. Claudine. I am a son of Andre; but I am also a son of Claudine. My dear Sisters of Jesus and Mary, I truly am your Brother. I am deeply grateful for that gift; and I am deeply grateful to be with you today to celebrate the gift of your congregation to the Church and to the world.