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History of Faithful Companions of Jesus in France

'*This little Society*' as Marie Madeleine loved to call it, has spread far beyond Europe. In her own life-time she made foundations in five European countries and now there are FCJs in Asia, Australia and the Americas too. But no matter where there are Sisters, the French origins of the Society are never forgotten and the works started there are seen as the prototype of all our missionary endeavours.

Amiens 1820 - the first foundation



The first FCJ house, the 'cradle of the Society' is in Amiens, very near the wonderful Gothic Cathedral. It is on a street that used to be called 'rue du Puy vert', known today as 'rue Dupuis'. For many years there was a boarding school here but today the former school building is used for homeless people under the auspices of the Social Services of the town of Amiens. A statue of St Philomena still dominates the chapel building on the corner of the street.

The original house, 'the cradle' is a place of pilgrimage. Those who visit say they leave with renewed strength, transformed and energized for the greater glory of God.

[Read more about Amiens here.](#)

Nantes 1826-



Marie Madeleine was a pioneer in the education of girls, and established a boarding school for them at 18, rue de Gigant. Over the years and throughout its history, the boarding school has known many changes. Today it is a co-educational kindergarten and primary school. The children and their parents appreciate their school and its lovely chapel, just restored; all this in a green area in the centre of the city; something that is quite exceptional.

A small community of FCJ sisters live with a Fraternity of students at 'rue de Boccage'. In this lovely setting, these students find a warm welcome as well as the support and peace they need for their studies. The sisters are involved in spiritual accompaniment, retreat work and parish ministry.

See photographs of the chapel windows [here](#). Read more about *École St-Michel* [here](#).

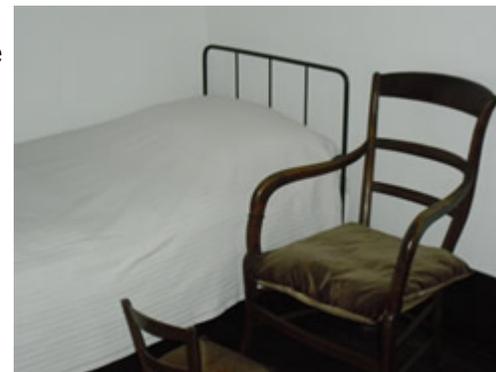
Paris 1847 —

Marie Madeleine, the Foundress, started a boarding and day school for young girls, on the street known then as 'rue de Lourcine' in what was Sector V of the city of Paris. This is where the Foundress spent the last years of her life and where she died in 1858. The foundation predates the 'La Santé' prison which is just across the road from the property.

Read more about the Paris house [here](#).

An FCJ community still lives in the Paris house. The room where Marie Madeleine died has become a place of prayer and of pilgrimage. The small museum beside it holds things precious to her memory.

See pictures of the Foundress's room and the museum honouring her memory [here](#).



The school established in 1847, **Notre Dame de France**, continues to thrive. Compared with La Santé prison across the road, the school and its grounds are like a little bit of heaven.

Read more about the school [here](#).

FCJ Fraternity, rue Falguière, Paris 15ème

The small FCJ Fraternity in Rue Falguière has students from all over France. The personal touch, training in group living, and spiritual support are all part of the day in this 'foyer'.

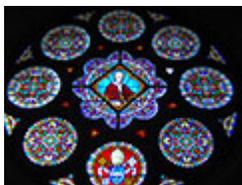
Other FCJ houses in France

Marie Madeleine opened other houses in France. For various reasons some were closed during her lifetime, others were closed by the national government. ... *'In 1904, the radical socialist government of Emile Combes, very hostile to the church, forbade the existence of all catholic teaching religious, even those who already had legal recognition. Like their men and women compatriots the French Faithful Companions of Jesus were obliged to leave France, taking refuge in Belgium Switzerland and the Channel Islands. The French schools had to close. In 1921 the resumption of relations between France and the Holy See (they had broken off in 1904) brought a certain relaxation; religious congregations were from then on officially tolerated before being once more legally recognised by the Vichy government in 1941-2, a recognition which was confirmed by decree, at the liberation, by the government of General de Gaulle.'* (p 63, *Marie Madeleine Victoire de Bonnault d'Houët* by Michel Schepers.)

In acknowledgment of the work of the Foundress, Marie Madeleine d'Houët and of the innumerable FCJs who lived and worked in these places we list some of these foundations

Châteauroux 1823—1838,
Ste Anne d'Auray, Morbihan 1826—1929
Langres 1829—1838
Bourges 1835—1838 ; 1859—1903
Menotey, Sainte Claude 1838—1850
Nice 1839 - 1904
Camon (orphanage) 1845—1945
Gentilly, Paris (orphanage) 1849—1908
Rueil, Paris 1868—1903
Guérande, Loire Atlantique, 1875 - 1903
Henriville, Amiens, 1885—1905

Ste Anne d'Auray, Morbihan 1826—1929



Ste Anne d'Auray is a village in Morbihan, Brittany. Until Lourdes grew in popularity Ste Anne d'Auray was the most favoured place of pilgrimage in France. A vibrant centre of prayer, to this day it continues to attract numerous pilgrims. The Foundress wanted her Society to be involved in retreat work and Ste. Anne d'Auray was an excellent place for this ministry. Here, with the support of the Jesuits, she established a retreat centre and subsequently developed it as a novitiate and generalate.

Because of its somewhat unique history we give more about the history of this foundation [here](#).

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