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Identity, Architecture, and Spirituality: The Ursulines of Bordeaux Decorate a Chapel

Mity Myhr

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article examine la communauté des Ursulines de Bordeaux, en France, entre 1606 et 1625. Il intègre l'histoire sociale et institutionnelle de cette communauté à une analyse des pratiques dévotionnelles de ce couvent, ainsi que de son architecture. Il s'agit là d'une approche qui n'a pas encore été adoptée pour étudier les ordres religieux féminins à vocation pédagogique en France. En 1608, les Ursulines, qui formaient jusque-là une association de laïques, se sont formellement constituées en un ordre religieux. Ce changement est survenu suite à des critiques de la part de la communauté, et également pour doter cette institution d'un espace calme dans lequel ses membres pouvaient s'adonner à leurs pratiques religieuses. Ayant officiellement reçu l'appui papal en 1618, les Ursulines ont décoré leur chapelle et ont écrit leur guide de dévotion. Un examen de ce guide, ainsi que de leur chapelle en tant que représentation publique de l'identité de cette communauté, illustre les ajustements effectués par cet ordre, de même que l'institutionnalisation de leurs pratiques dévotionnelles. Ces transformations ont permis à la communauté de fleurir et de jouer un rôle central dans la Réforme catholique à Bordeaux ainsi que dans les régions environnantes.

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MITY MYHR

St. Edward's University

This article examines the Ursuline community in Bordeaux, France between 1606 and 1625. It integrates the community's social and institutional history with an analysis of their convent's architecture and devotional practices, an approach that has not until now been taken for women's teaching orders in France. In 1608 the Ursulines shifted from a secular congregation to a formal religious order. They changed in reaction to community criticism as well as in response to the need for a quiet space in which to practise their religious devotions. After receiving official papal approval in 1618, they decorated their chapel and wrote devotional guides. An examination of their chapel as a public representation of the community's identity, and of their guides, illustrates the adjustments the Ursulines underwent and the institutionalization of their devotional practices. These transformations enabled the Ursulines to flourish and to play a central role in Catholic reform in Bordeaux and its surrounding regions.

Cet article examine la communauté des Ursulines de Bordeaux, en France, entre 1606 et 1625. Il intègre l'histoire sociale et institutionnelle de cette communauté à une analyse des pratiques dévotionnelles de ce couvent, ainsi que de son architecture. Il s'agit là d'une approche qui n'a pas encore été adoptée pour étudier les ordres religieux féminins à vocation pédagogique en France. En 1608, les Ursulines, qui formaient jusque-là une association de laïques, se sont formellement constituées en un ordre religieux. Ce changement est survenu suite à des critiques de la part de la communauté, et également pour doter cette institution d'un espace calme dans lequel ses membres pouvaient s'adonner à leurs pratiques religieuses. Ayant officiellement reçu l'appui papal en 1618, les Ursulines ont décoré leur chapelle et ont écrit leur guide de dévotion. Un examen de ce guide, ainsi que de leur chapelle en tant que représentation publique de l'identité de cette communauté, illustre les ajustements effectués par cet ordre, de même que l'institutionnalisation de leurs pratiques dévotionnelles. Ces transformations ont permis à la communauté de fleurir et de jouer un rôle central dans la Réforme catholique à Bordeaux ainsi que dans les régions environnantes.

In December of 1619, Françoise de la Croix, the superior of the Ursuline convent of Bordeaux, finalized a contract with Bernard Saint Gandoux, master painter of the city of Toulouse. The contract listed a series of paintings and sculptures that Saint Gandoux was to complete for the decoration of the community's new chapel.¹ The agreement settled between Mère de la Croix and

1. Archives Departementales de la Gironde (hereafter cited as ADG), notarial archives, Subercaze, 3E 11.294. Before 1608 she uses Françoise de Cazères; after, she uses Françoise de la Croix to signal her new religious status.

Saint Gandoux was not unusual for the time period; there were many convents in France and around Catholic Europe making similar plans.² However, for the Ursulines of Bordeaux, the items ordered that day represented a reinvention of the community's identity as a cloistered religious order. A study of the Ursulines' chapel and the objects they chose to decorate it illuminates important changes occurring in new and reformed women's religious communities as the Council of Trent's requirement that all women's orders be enclosed was being enforced by bishops across France. It was particularly important that the convent's renovation and decoration inform the citizens of Bordeaux of their new status, because their identity and mission had been challenged repeatedly since their foundation in 1606. The process of transforming the formerly active congregation into a cloistered religious order was not easy or rapid.

This article contributes to the growing appreciation of the diversity of responses to the Council of Trent's 1563 reaffirmation of *Periculoso*, the 1298 papal bull that determined the only appropriate form of religious life for women was in the cloister. The desire to cloister religious women was not simply held by church leaders, because in this case there were disagreements among clergy and church leadership.³ The evidence from Bordeaux demonstrates that there was intense social pressure to regularize the community's status from congregation to religious order. Additionally, some of the Ursulines may have preferred it because it allowed them to continue their educational mission, as well as embrace ascetic, and potentially mystical, devotional practices.⁴ Thus the transition to the cloister, similar to that experienced in other Ursuline

2. Mère Marie de Chantal Gueudré, *Histoire de l'Ordre des Ursulines en France*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions Saint-Paul, 1958/1960), 2:27. The first volume is subtitled *De l'institut séculier à l'ordre monastique* (1958); the second, *Les Monastères d'Ursulines sous l'Ancien Régime* (1960).

3. There has been a debate over the question of cloistering. Consensus is now shifting from the view that it was led by bishops, whether as a misogynistic attempt to control and confine women, or in obedience to the decrees of the Council of Trent: for example, for France see Gueudré, 1:101 and for Italy and Spain see Silvia Evangelisti, *Nuns: A History of Convent Life 1450–1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 42–46.

4. Scholars are now emphasizing the local and regional variations. For Ursulines in France, please see Elizabeth Rapley, *A Social History of the Cloister: Daily Life in the Teaching Monasteries of the Old Regime* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2001), 111–18 and Barbara Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 128 and 133. Laurence Lux-Sterritt, in *Redefining Female Religious Life: French Ursulines and English Ladies in Seventeenth-Century Catholicism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 38–45, presents the diversity of

communities in France, reflected local preferences as much as Tridentine or Roman demands.

The change in status from congregation to religious order required the Ursulines to more carefully define themselves and present their teaching mission and spirituality to the *bordelais*. The careful division of public and cloistered space assured families that their Ursuline daughters were secure and that the convent was an appropriate place to educate them. The imagery and objects in the Ursuline chapel offer a look behind the walls and grills of the cloister at the intense spiritual lives led by the Ursulines. The devotions that both inspired and were inspired by the images displayed in the chapel were taught to novices, nuns, boarding students, and members of the Ursulines' lay confraternity. The chapel and its décor, combined with manuscript and published devotional guides, reveal the important role the Ursulines played in Catholic reform in Bordeaux and offer insight into the important process of institutionalization of devotions that occurred in the community's second decade. The emphasis shifted from intensely individualistic devotional practices to more standardized prayers and actions.

There are a number of challenges to this study posed by the primary sources. Although the Ursuline archives, housed in the Archives Départemental de la Gironde in Bordeaux, are remarkably complete, they lack chapter records, obituaries, and regular financial reports before the 1630s. However, when supplemented by the notarial records, they provide a rough view of the financial and moral state of the community and offer brief glimpses into the activities, cares, and concerns of the everyday lives of the nuns. In contrast, three contemporary histories are rich in details about personalities and devotional practices, but they rely upon unclear or incomplete sources and, in a couple of cases, were written many years after the events they describe. Despite these problems, they are often the only narrative sources for the events and personalities involved in the Ursulines' first twenty years in Bordeaux.⁵

Ursuline communities. His analysis of Bordeaux, however, is based upon secondary sources that are not firmly rooted in the archival sources and thus do not convey the complexity of their transition.

5. The first history of the Ursulines was written by Jean de Bertheau, *Actes de l'archevêché de Bordeaux sous le cardinal François de Sourdis*, ADG, ms 3 JG 30 (hereafter cited as Bertheau, *Actes*, ADG) and published under the same title in *Archives Historiques du Département de la Gironde* (hereafter cited as *Actes*, AHG), 49:1–305 (1914); 50:243–419 (1915); and 51:1–185 (1916–17). Two important early histories are Marie-Augustine de Pommereu's *Chroniques de l'ordre des Ursulines recueillies pour l'usage*

The most challenging problem offered by the sources is that the convent and its chapel no longer exist. The buildings, furniture, books, and other decorative objects within them were sold during the Revolution and most of the buildings were destroyed in stages in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶ The site today is a busy street and a public parking lot, with only small pieces of façade remaining. Therefore, my analysis relies upon archival documents that describe the buildings and their contents: construction and renovation contracts, Ursulines' contracts of entry and profession, and episcopal visit reports.

To explain the evolution of the Ursuline community between 1606 and 1625, this article is divided into five sections. The first sets the community in the broader context of the reform of the diocese of Bordeaux. The second and third sections illustrate the adjustments the Ursulines made to their mission and way of life in order to survive as a community. These changes not only ensured their continuation, but also helped them to thrive, and the construction and decoration of the convent and chapel represent the culmination of their efforts.⁷ The fourth section describes the chapel, its paintings, and sacred objects. The architecture and art communicated their new status as an official religious order and facilitated their religious devotions, discussed in the fifth section, which connected them to the most influential religious leaders and schools of thought of the day. Viewed from the perspective of the first quarter of the seventeenth century, the Ursulines fulfilled the hopes and expectations of their founders and played a central role in the success of Catholic reform in Bordeaux and its surrounding regions.

des Religieuses du mesme Ordre, 2 vols. (Paris: Hénault, 1673) (hereafter cited as *MDPU*), and Jeanne Cambounet de la Mothe's *Journal des illustres religieuses de l'ordre de Sainte-Ursule avec leurs maximes et pratiques spirituelles, tirées des chroniques de l'ordre et des mémoires de leur vie, composé par une religieuse du mesme ordre au monastère de Bourg-en-Bresse*, 4 vols. (Bourge-en-Bresse: Ravaux, 1684–1690).

6. The convent was sold in three lots on 23 August 1793. J. Benzacar and M. Marion, eds., *Documents relatifs à la vente des biens nationaux* (Bordeaux: Caudriller, 1911), 1:109.

7. My interpretation of the representation of the Ursuline convent through its architecture and art objects has been influenced by Helen Hills, *Invisible City: The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Neapolitan Convents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) and her edited volume *Architecture and the Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton, eds., *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); and Barbara R. Woshinsky, *Imagining Women's Conventual Spaces in France 1600–1800: The Cloister Disclosed* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

1. Reform in Bordeaux

When the new, reform-minded archbishop, François d'Escoubleau de Sourdis (r. 1598–1628), arrived in Bordeaux in 1600, he found a city undergoing many changes. After the destructive Wars of Religion, Bordeaux became an increasingly important and wealthy city, and over the course of the seventeenth century underwent significant social, political, and economic changes. The church, too, was transformed as Sourdis sought to rebuild his diocese, both literally and figuratively. The Ursulines and the other new and reformed religious orders he helped to establish in Bordeaux were central to these plans. He also brought with him assumptions about episcopal leadership and its proper relationship with municipal and royal authorities. He both worked and came in to conflict with the other leaders of the city—the merchant and parliamentary elites. These groups jealously defended their rights, not only against Sourdis but also against the centralizing monarchy. As the daughters of these elites, the Ursulines were often caught up in the negotiations between the church and local authorities over their rights and privileges.

In the early seventeenth century, Bordeaux was a bustling Atlantic port, thanks to its position on the Garonne River. Its population was around thirty thousand, and a 1629 visitor estimated that its port could accommodate as many as five hundred ships at a time.⁸ Although the wars of the sixteenth century had dampened trade, the city remained an important market for grains and wine and its economy grew over the course of the seventeenth century. Merchants, from the wealthy and powerful wine *negociants* to the modest shopkeepers and small manufacturers, were the majority of the city's *bourgeoisie* and controlled the city government, the *jurade*. As the capital of the Guyenne, Bordeaux was also an important administrative and judicial centre. The parliament, founded in 1462, was served by a wealthy and prestigious group of well-trained men who jealously guarded the traditional political, juridical, and economic rights of Bordeaux against the interests of a centralizing monarchy, symbolized by the appointment of an intendant in 1618. They were joined in this resistance by a significant group of lower-level lawyers and prosecutors and the *jurade*. Although there was a small Protestant community in Bordeaux and a larger one

8. Bernard Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique à Bordeaux (1600–1719): Le renouveau d'un diocèse*. (Bordeaux: Fédération Historique du Sud-Ouest, 1995), 20.

in the surrounding regions, the city as a whole had remained solidly royalist and Catholic during the sixteenth century.⁹

The church of which Sourdis assumed leadership was a large and wealthy institution. The archdiocese contained nine dioceses. The diocese of Bordeaux included sixteen parishes in the city and 407 in the surrounding countryside.¹⁰ However, it faced many challenges recovering from the wars. The archdiocese had, with two exceptions, been poorly led by frequently absent archbishops.¹¹ During periods of absence, members of the parliament, the landed nobility, and to a lesser extent, the *jurade* became accustomed to assuming leadership of church institutions. While these groups of men were zealous supporters of the church and of reform, they resented what they perceived as the interference of outsiders, particularly archbishops, whom they viewed as representatives of royal or Roman power.¹² Church leaders also faced the extensive physical destruction of church property during the wars. Of 209 churches visited between 1614 and 1618, only thirty-seven were reported to be in a relatively good state. The others ranged from unusable (eighty-four) to merely in need of repair (118). Mirroring the physical destruction were problems with monastic communities and the secular clergy.¹³ The only convent in Bordeaux, the *Annonciade*, was both physically and morally in poor condition as the cloister was not respected and their rule not enforced.¹⁴ In his eulogy at the funeral of Archbishop de Sourdis in 1628, the *Théologal* of the cathedral chapter, Gilbert Grymaud, summed up the condition of the diocese in 1600 by comparing it to

9. Helpful sources for the history of Bordeaux at this time include Robert Boutruche, *Bordeaux de 1453–1715* (Bordeaux: Fédération Historique du Sud-Ouest, 1966), part 2; Michel Figeac, ed., *Histoire des Bordelais. La modernité triomphante (1715–1815)* (Bordeaux: Mollat, 2002); Roland Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy, 1598–1789: Society and State*, vol. 1, trans. Brian Pearce (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 565–74; and C. Boscheron des Portes, *Histoire du parlement de Bordeaux*, vol. 1 (Bordeaux: Charles Lefebvre, 1877).

10. Boutruche, 506; Éric Suire, “Les sensibilités religieuses,” in *Histoire des Bordelais*, ed. Michel Figeac, 196–204.

11. The only exceptions were Jean du Foix (1500–28), who introduced the reformed Franciscans and held a council in 1528, and Antoine Prévost de Sansac (1560–91), who first attempted Tridentine reforms in a council in 1582. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 44–46.

12. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 87–94.

13. Charles Chauillac, *Histoire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix de Bordeaux* (Bordeaux: Lugugé, 1910) and quoted in Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 65.

14. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 422–423.

Jeremiah's description of Jerusalem in *Lamentations*: "The most sacred stones from the sanctuary lay scattered at every crossroad, in the most unholy places."¹⁵

Made cardinal in 1599, Sourdis was energetic and focused, as well as autocratic and stubborn. A Tridentine bishop, Sourdis, like other reformer bishops, consciously modelled himself on the example of the archbishop and cardinal of Milan, Charles Borromeo (r. 1564–84). Like Borromeo in Milan, Sourdis saw reform in Bordeaux as an episcopal responsibility.¹⁶ He called diocesan synods, established regular pastoral visits of clergy, and generally asserted his right to control and discipline members of the church in his diocese.¹⁷ Not unlike Borromeo, his ambitious program also brought him into conflict with local, parliamentary, and even royal authorities.¹⁸ Finally, Sourdis's admiration for Borromeo also influenced his decision to bring the Ursulines to Bordeaux in 1606.

Angela Merici (1474–1540) originally established the Ursulines in Brescia, Italy in 1535. Her company, as expressed in the original *Regola* (Rule) and in her *Testamento* (Testament), was a completely lay community dedicated to a variety of activities and almost entirely directed by women. This organization received episcopal approval in 1536 and papal approbation in 1544, nineteen years before the Council of Trent required all women's orders to be cloistered.¹⁹

15. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 17–18. "Les pierres les plus sacrées du sactuaire estoient dispersées sur les carrefours emmy les lieux les plus profanes."

16. Giuseppe Alberigo, "The Council of Trent," in *Catholicism in Early Modern History: A Guide to Research*, ed. John O'Malley (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1988), 216–17 and 220–21; Jean Delumeau, *Le Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), 52–65; Keith P. Luria, *Territories of Grace: Cultural Change in the Seventeenth Century Diocese of Grenoble* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Philip Hoffman, *Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon, 1500–1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Dominique Julia and Denis McKee, "Le clergé paroissial dans le diocese de Reims sous l'épiscopat de Charles-Maurice le Tellier, origine et carriers," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 29 (1982): 529–82; and Henry Phillips, *Church and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

17. Bernard Peyrous, "La réforme institutionnelle de l'archidiocèse de Bordeaux au temps du Cardinal François de Sourdis (1599–1628)," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 1 (1981): 5–47.

18. Examples of Sourdis's conflicts can be found in R. Darricau, *Le diocèse de Bordeaux* (Paris: Fédération historique du Sud-Ouest, 1974), 115–16, and most recently in Stéphane-Marie Morgain, OCD, *Pierre de Bérulle et Les Carmélites de France. La querelle du gouvernement, 1583–1629* (Paris: Cerf, 1995), 413–14.

19. Luciana Mariani, Elisa Tarolli, and Marie Seynaeve, *Angela Merici: Contribution towards a Biography*, trans. M. Ignatius Stone (Milan: Editions Ancora, 1986), 234–39. Querciolo Mazzonis, *Spirituality*,

As the Ursulines spread to other Italian cities, however, families and the clerical hierarchy were unsettled by their independence. As a result, in Milan they were almost completely reorganized by Borromeo's 1567 *Regola di Milano* (Rule of Milan). Most historians agree that Borromeo's reforms violated the original spirit of Merici's organization, but also allowed the Ursulines to spread more quickly to other cities in the region and abroad. Borromeo's *Regola*, although still allowing internal female leadership, firmly placed Ursuline communities under the control of local bishops, narrowed the scope of the virgins' activities to the education of girls and young women, and encouraged communal living, which was later enforced.²⁰

In the diocese of Bordeaux and elsewhere in France, teaching basic prayers in preparation for first communion as well as more sophisticated devotions was the primary focus of the Ursulines and other teaching orders, like the Filles de Notre Dame. The secular clergy in Bordeaux and in rural areas in the diocese were a work in progress during the episcopates of Francois de Sourdis and his brother, Henri, who succeeded him as archbishop in 1629 (–1645). The diocese invested significant resources in developing effective priests because the Sourdis brothers understood that reform would not ultimately succeed without their support. Their efforts included, but were not limited to, the publication of instruction manuals, the renovation of the diocesan seminary, and the organization of diocesan conferences focusing on pastoral care and preaching. However, the renewal of parish clergy was slow, particularly for rural areas.²¹ In the meantime, male and female religious orders played an essential role

Gender, and the Self in Renaissance Italy: Angela Merici and the Company of St. Ursula (1471–1540) (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2007).

20. For example: Charmaine J. Blaisdell, "Angela Merici and the Ursulines," in *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation*, ed. Richard L. DeMolen (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), 121; Mazzonis, 197–212; Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1990), 49–50, and R. Lemoine's *Le Droit des Religieux, du Concile de Trente aux Institutes Séculiers* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1955). The *Regola* of the bishop of Ferrara, Paolo Leone, was less specific about the role of male administrators than Borromeo. It was this *Rule* that was taken to Provence and published in Tournon in 1597; see Mariani, et al., 403–05, 464 and 514.

21. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 520–22. The first book Sourdis introduced to his diocese modelling the ideal priest, J.-B. de Constanzo's *Avertissement aux recteurs, curez, prestres et vicaires qui désirent s'acquitter dignement de leur charge et faire bien et saintement tout ce qui appartient à leur office*, was first published in Italy in 1606 and published in Bordeaux in 1613.

in introducing and supporting reform of the diocese. In order for these new communities to survive, however, they needed to attract enough recruits and their dowries, or find wealthy patrons, to finance buildings and enroll students.

2. The Ursulines and reform in Bordeaux, 1606–08

Between 1600 and 1645, thirty-one new or reformed religious orders were established in Bordeaux.²² Eight foundations for women were made during the tenure of Archbishop Sourdis, and the Ursulines were one of his first. Returning from a trip to Rome in 1605, Sourdis encountered Borromeo's reformed Ursulines in Milan. Impressed, he decided that a congregation of Ursulines with their education mission could assist him in rebuilding and renewing his diocese. In her *Chroniques*, Mère de Pommereu credits an intense period of prayer before Charles Borromeo's tomb in Milan for the inspiration.

Returning from Rome, he passed through Milan to honour with his prayers the tomb of St. Charles Borromeo, & consult again after his death that Oracle of the Ecclesiastical discipline. He stayed for seven hours before the sacred tomb, as in ecstasy; during which God made his will known that he [François] will establish an Order of Virgins in his Diocese, exactly like the one that St. Charles founded in Milan, following the Institution of the Blessed Mother Angela, so that young girls in Bordeaux may be better educated and so that he may imitate the virtues of the great Saint.²³

22. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 309, 313 and 421–517. Eighteen of these were masculine, including Capuchins (two), Recollets (two), Jesuits (two additional), Minimes (two), Reformed Carmelites (two), Observant Franciscans, and several others devoted to education, preaching, and charity. The thirteen feminine orders included the Filles de Notre Dame (founded in Bordeaux), Ursulines (five), Reformed Carmelites (two), Reformed Dominicans, Benedictines, Visitation, and two dedicated to charity work among orphans and prostitutes. All but one of the female communities were cloistered. Les Orphelines de Saint-Joseph, 1613, included a few women and struggled financially. It was transformed into a religious order in 1638.

23. *MDPU*, 2:150. The archbishop's secretary credits visits in Milan and Avignon with the inspiration. Nevertheless, the vision gives divine force to Sourdis's decision and parallels the visions of Françoise de la Croix, which occurred at critical moments in the community's development: "Celuy-là (Sourdis) revenant de Rome, passa à Milan, pour honorer de ses vœux le tombeau de S. Charles Borromée, & consulter encore après sa mort, cet Oracle de la discipline Ecclésiastique. Il demeura sept heures auprès de ce sacré deposit, comme ravi en extase; en laquelle Dieu luy fit connoistre que sa volonté estoit qu'il

His positive impression of the Ursulines was reinforced during a stop in Avignon on his way home from Milan. There, Bertheau reports, he visited the Ursulines' school and became determined to establish a similar school in Bordeaux.²⁴

The Ursuline community, organized soon after the archbishop's return from Italy in 1606, looked much like that of Milan—an uncloistered secular congregation dedicated to the education of girls. The community's co-founder, Françoise de Cazères, and the two young women who assisted in the establishment of the Ursulines, took three simple vows—poverty, chastity, and obedience—when they made their professions in December 1606.²⁵ During their first two years in Bordeaux they lived in a modest house in the crowded, working-class quarter of Puy-Paulin where, it was hoped, their catechizing could improve the morality of the neighbourhood. Described by contemporaries as a “theatre of constant disorder,” girls living in Puy-Paulin were seen as particularly at risk of falling into prostitution or attending one of several Protestant schools located throughout the city.²⁶ The *congrégées* wore modest habits, took simple vows, which were renewable each year (and were not associated with any of the four great medieval Rules), and were under the immediate direction of their parish curate, M. Torel.²⁷ They taught, at least in their first two years, from the catechism of Charles Borromeo.²⁸ To the people of Bordeaux, they probably

établist un Ordre de Vierges dans son Diocèse, tout conforme à celui que S. Charles avoit fondé dans Milan, suivant l'Institution de la B. M. Angele, afin que les jeunes filles de Bordeaux fussent mieux instruites, & qu'il imitast en tout les vertus de ce grand Saint.”

24. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 440. The various Ursuline communities in France evolved independently of each other under the direction of local bishops and with different Rules.

25. *MDPU*, 2:151.

26. L. W. Ravenez, *Histoire du Cardinal François de Sourdis, du titre de Sainte-Praxède, archevêque de Bordeaux, primat d'Aquitaine, abbé de Mauléon et d'Oyroux* (Bordeaux: G. Gounouilh, 1867), 129 and 149. “[...] le théâtre de désordres continuel.”

27. Which Rule they followed in these early years has been much debated. Gueudré reports that in 1606 they followed the *Rule of Tournon* used by the Ursulines of Provence (Gueudré, 1:30). However, there is nothing in the archives to support her opinion. Bertheau refers [*Actes, AHG*, 49:263] to a Rule similar to that of Milan, which Sourdis brought back with him from that city early in 1606. A Rule written for the Ursulines in Bordeaux, based upon the *Rule of St. Augustine*, was published in 1609, after their transition to the cloister.

28. *Actes, AHG*, 49:263. It is not clear how long they used his catechism. The 1609 *Rule* requires the catechism of Cardinal Bellarmine. ADG, G 532, 1609, *Des règles et constitutions données aux collèges de*

looked like Beguines or members of a third order community, associations which carried with them old fears of heresy and disorder. Bertheau, in fact, mentions that a group of young men mocked the first three Ursulines at the service of their profession at St. André Cathedral.²⁹ The circumstances of their communal life opened the congregation up to community disapproval. Without a formal Rule and the financial settlements it required, they lived in almost destitute circumstances without regular sources of income. They depended, instead, upon the financial support of the archbishop and occasional gifts from the surrounding community.

The new uncloistered and foreign congregation was vulnerable to community criticism because, aside from Archbishop Sourdis, they were not associated with any powerful noble family or well-established male religious order. Unlike the new teaching order of the Filles de Notre Dame, founded in Bordeaux at about the same time, the Ursulines did not have a noble patron and protector. Patronage of the royal family as well as of traditional and magisterial elites was important for the new religious orders, including the Ursulines, in Paris and elsewhere in France.³⁰ The Filles de Notre Dame, for example, were founded by Jeanne de Lestonnac (1556–1640), who was the widow of a prominent noble and parliamentary official in Guyenne, Gaston de Montferrand, and a niece of Michel de Montaigne (1533–92).³¹ Nor were the Ursulines under the patronage of a male religious order. In Milan and Provence, they were associated with the schools of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine. Jesuits, who supported Ursuline communities in other cities, were associated with the Filles de Notre Dame in Bordeaux. Instead, the Ursulines' primary supporters were Sourdis and Françoise de Cazères's confessor, the Feuillant Dom de Berty.³²

Ste-Ursule, pièce 726. St. Charles Borromeo was canonized in 1610, following a process begun in 1602.

29. *Actes*, AHG, 49:263–65. Other founders experienced similar harassment, for example, Françoise de Xainctonge in Dijon. *MDPU*, 3:5.

30. Diefendorf, in *From Penitence to Charity*, gives examples such as Michel de Marillac, a *superintendant* of the king's finances and keeper of the seal (79); Madeleine Luillier (Madame de Saint-Beuve), founder and patron of the community, daughter of a president of the *Chambre des comptes*, and the widow of a counselor in parliament (125–26); and other noble and royal patrons (130).

31. Auguste Bouzonnie, *Histoire de l'Ordre des Religieuses Filles de Notre-Dame* (Poitiers: Chez la Veuve de Jean Baptiste Braud, 1697), 1:68–70.

32. Dom de Berty introduced them and suggested that Sourdis work with Françoise de Cazères on the foundation of the Ursulines in Bordeaux. The Feuillants were not the community's spiritual directors.

Despite these disadvantages, they attracted young women of “pious families” who wanted to dedicate themselves to the education of girls.³³ Because of the group’s unofficial status and difficult financial circumstances, however, some Bordeaux parents did not always support their daughters’ interest in the Ursulines and their mission. In one case, in 1607, the Ursulines were confronted by the mother of a young woman who joined the congregation without her parents’ approval. According to Bertheau, Isabeau Chatar, wife of the wealthy merchant Mathurin Salomon, “violently retrieved her daughter, as if drunk, or out of her mind, [and hurled] all sorts of the most disgusting injuries against the purity of these decent girls [...]” The Salomons maintained that because their daughter had not received their permission to become an Ursuline they had the right to take her back. For several days following this event, other families retrieved their daughters from the school as well. The archbishop’s secretary, who is the sole source for this episode, continues, “But God who laughs at the enterprises of worldly people [...] maintained the small and chaste troop [...]”³⁴ According to Bertheau, the archbishop viewed these attacks and the ones that followed as not just a crisis for the Ursulines, but as a test of his control over religious vocations and of his authority in the diocese in general.³⁵

Parents continued to complain that the congregation had not yet received official papal approval and that “[their daughters] could leave the community and take another condition of life, whenever it pleased them.” Their complaints turned into lawsuits. In response, in late January or early February 1607, the parliament initiated a formal investigation.³⁶ The archbishop’s version of events is made clear in a letter to Henry IV (r. 1589–1610) dated 12 February 1607. In

33. Charles Devienne, *Histoire de la Ville de Bordeaux* (Bordeaux: S. de la Court, fils, 1862), 2:108. Gueudré offers examples of similar hardship around France (1:61–96).

34. *Actes, AHG*, 49:264. “...en tira violemment sa fille, débacchant, forcenée qu’elle estoit, toutes sortes d’injures des plus sales contre la pureté de ces bonnes filles [...]” “Mais Dieu qui se rit des entreprises des mondains [...] maintint si bien sa petite et chaste troupe [...]” It is possible that there were records of these events in the parliamentary archives, but most of those have been lost.

35. *Actes, AHG*, 49:264–65. Sourdis shared this perception with other bishops of his era. Barbara Diefendorf, “Give Us Back Our Children: Patriarchal Authority and Parental Consent to Religious Vocations in Early Counter-Reformation France,” *Journal of Modern History* 68.2 (June 1996): 265–307.

36. *Actes, AHG*, 49:301. “[... celles cy] pourons sortir d’icelle et prendre une autre condition de vivre, quand bon leur sembleroit.”

the letter, Sourdis denounces Salomon and complains about the first president's poor judgment in calling Françoise de Cazères to appear before the parliament (which she had modestly refused). The archbishop then politely demanded the king's support and asked him to lend him money to pay for his legal expenses.³⁷ Throughout both Bertheau's history and Sourdis's letter, the modesty and humility of the young *congrégées* is cited in contrast to the inappropriately public and aggressive behaviour of Isabeau Chatar and the parliamentary officials. In order to end the controversy, the archbishop persuaded the first president of the parliament to drop the suit by offering to seek official papal approval for the Ursulines.

Within a year of that letter, however, Sourdis and Françoise de Cazères decided to transform the Ursuline congregation into a cloistered religious order. The Salomon confrontation demonstrates that uncloistered women's congregations were unacceptable to those families from whom the Ursulines were trying to recruit. Congregations did not have formal Rules that regulated their everyday lives or ensured their financial support or their families' financial obligations towards them. They were all concerned with family honour, and the behaviour of women was central to guaranteeing respectability.³⁸ In Bordeaux, office holders and *parlementaires*, who were defending their political and social roles against the ambitions of wealthy merchant families and the centralizing policies of an increasingly absolutist monarchy, felt that the unregulated nature of their daughters' lives threatened their social status and financial stability. Ambitious merchants like the Salomons feared that allowing their daughters to enter an uncloistered and unapproved religious community threatened their reputation and kept them from making good business or marriage connections.

37. *Actes, AHG*, 10:542–43.

38. Christine Adams, in "Defining État in Eighteenth-Century France: The Lamothe Family of Bordeaux," *Journal of Family History* 17.1 (1992): 25–45, notes that in families of the liberal professions women played an important role in ensuring family honour and reputation. Sarah Hanley, in "Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France," *French Historical Studies* 16 (Spring 1989): 4–27, 21–25, connects good marriages (or a good convent), financial security, and social success; and Colin Kaiser, "Les cours souveraines au XVI^e siècle: morale et Contre-Réforme," *Annales* 37.1 (1982): 15, sets these concerns in the specific context of parliamentary and office holding elites. Rapley, in *A Social History of the Cloister*, emphasizes that French families associated clausura with respectability (114). See also Linda Lieber, "Redefining Convent Space: Ideals of Female Community among Seventeenth-Century Ursuline Nuns," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society of French History* 24 (1997): 213–15.

The language used in the Salomon conflict reflects these deep concerns. Parents, as well as church officials, valued *propriété*, *honnêteté* (proper social behaviour, or honourable), and *civilité*.³⁹ Moreover, to be considered good teachers as well as good nuns, the Ursulines' conduct had to be above reproach. The proper behaviour of *bordelaise* daughters and the financial security and respectability of their families could be assured by papal approval, a formal Rule, and ultimately, by monastic enclosure.⁴⁰

Thus, in the case of the Ursulines of Bordeaux, it was secular society, rather than church officials like Archbishop Sourdis, who championed the cloister.⁴¹ It is difficult to know if the archbishop intended from the beginning to transform the Ursulines into a formal religious order; initially, after all, he had been attracted to the uncloistered communities of Milan and Provence. Upon his return to Bordeaux early in 1606, he was frustrated by Jeanne de Lestonnac's refusal to lead the Ursulines because they were not a traditional religious order.⁴² No matter how he had felt in 1606, in 1609 Sourdis published a pastoral letter at the conclusion of the Salomon scandal.⁴³ The letter makes it very clear that the holy calling to a religious life, for both men and women, is best carried out away from the evil world, in a convent or a monastery.

Occasionally the advice [of the Gospels] cannot be kept while in frequent contact with the world. Our Lord said to his disciples in St. John, chapter 15: "If you were of the world, it would love you as its own. However, because you are not of this world, but because I chose you from the world, nevertheless, you hate the world." [This] teaches us that those who want to be his true disciples and embrace his counsels, will find repugnance and

39. Gaston Cayrou, ed., *Le Français classique, Lexique de la langue du dix-septième siècle* (Paris: Henri Didier, 1924), s.v. "civil," "honnête," and "propre."

40. Rule, AHG, 50: 357–58. John Bossy argues, in *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 120–212, that these two concepts could not be separated. Henry Phillips emphasizes, in *Church and Culture*, that girls' schools were expected to teach religious doctrine and "normative behaviors" (81).

41. Barbara Diefendorf, "Contradictions of the Century of Saints: Aristocratic Patronage and the Convents of Counter-Reformation Paris," *French Historical Studies* 24.3 (2001): 469–99, 471 and 486–89, indicates that this was also the case for Paris.

42. Bouzonnie, 1:68–70.

43. ADG, 3 J G 30. Printed copies are in Gueudré, 1:330–42 and *Actes*, AHG, 50: 378–403.

contradiction, very often in the richest relatives, brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers.⁴⁴

Sourdis also used this Gospel passage to defend the rights of children to follow their religious vocations despite the objections of family (or parliament or king). The sources explaining the changes were written after the fact and, therefore, defend choices already made. Ultimately, the transition must have been acceptable to him given that the Council of Trent had reaffirmed the 1298 bull *Periculoso*.

The reasoning of Françoise de Cazères is equally complex and suggests that she may, in the end, have preferred the cloister to the unstable life of a secular congregation.⁴⁵ After she moved to Bordeaux in 1605 to find a religious order, she chose as confessor the Feuillant Dom de Berty, indicating her attraction to an ascetic religious life. She also received invitations, through family connections, from the Carmelites of Paris and another “reputable” convent in Agen. The offers were compelling because these communities’ rich devotional lives were made possible by the quiet austerity of the cloister. However, she rejected enclosed orders because she also wanted to pursue her interest in teaching literacy and Catholic doctrines to children.⁴⁶ But, a brief biography of Françoise de Cazères found in Mère de Pommereu’s *Chroniques* suggests that it was, in the end, the need for quiet space for individual devotions that influenced her change of heart. After all, the cloister had long been considered the ideal setting for women to live a religious life. The barn-like atmosphere of their quarters in Puy-Paulin with little separation between private and public space and the unwanted attention caused by the Salomon controversy may have made her

44. Sourdis, *Lettre Pastorale*, 1609, in Gueudré, 1:332–33: “Mais quelquefois ces conseils [les Ecritures] ne se peuvent bonnement garder avec la fréquentation du monde. Nostre-Seigneur le disoit à ses disciples en saint Jean, chap. 15: ‘Si vous eussiez été du monde, le monde aimeroit ce qui seroit sien. Or, parce que vous n’êtes point du monde, mais que je vous ay esleu du monde, portant vous ayt le monde,’ nous enseignant que ceux qui voudront ester ses vrayes disciples et embrasser ses conseils, trouveront de la repugnance et de la contradiction, et bien souvent des plus riches parens, frères, sœurs, pères et mères[...].”

45. Similar considerations were made by Marguerite de Vigier of Toulouse, in Lux-Sterritt, 66–67. In Bordeaux, there were more cloistered orders than uncloistered congregations. Peyroux, *La Réforme Catholique*, 488–91. Most new foundations in Paris before 1650 were also contemplative convents. Diefendorf, *Contradictions*, 474.

46. Gueudré, 1:226–27.

willing to combine her two vocations—teaching and an ascetic religious life. Other female founders of Ursuline communities around France made similar decisions. Madeleine Luillier, one of the founders of the Ursulines of Paris, and Catherine de Montholon, an important patron in Dijon, agreed that becoming a formal religious order would “raise the Ursulines to a higher and more perfect form of religious life.”⁴⁷ At the same time, it is important to note that in several Ursuline communities in France, the decision to adopt the cloister was made in opposition to the will of the Ursulines and caused significant conflict.⁴⁸

No matter what finally convinced Françoise de Cazères, after the decision to transform the congregation was made, she experienced a long rapture in the company of her Ursuline companions that confirmed for all of them that God approved of the changes.

In the year 1608.[sic] She [Françoise] had a rapture lasting five hours, in which Our Lord communicated with her as a brilliant light that visibly illuminated her & showed her His designs for the establishment of her Congregations, with assurance of the papal bull that would be granted by the Holy See, to perfect them as Religious Monasteries. She [...] heard these words in her head: *You will become the Mother of an Order, & you will suffer many crosses.*⁴⁹

One hint that the change was not universally accepted, however, was a break with her confessor, who preferred that the Ursulines remain a secular congregation. In 1609, dom de Berty was replaced by Pierre de Lurbe, a Jesuit and vicar general

47. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 127. Their choices were made despite the opposition of Michel de Marillac and Francois de Sales (133).

48. Claude-Alain Sarre, “Le Difficile Passage à la Clôture des Ursulines Provençales et Comtadines (1624–1658),” *Revue Mabillon* 8 (1997): 264. The article indicates that a few Provençale communities chose to join other orders, rather than abandon their original status as *congrégées*. The Ursulines of Dôle, under Anne de Xaintonge, never accepted the cloistered life; see Rapley, *The Dévotes*, 56–57 and 218n60. Other examples can be found in Lierheimer, “Redefining Convent Space,” 214.

49. *MDPU*, 1:151. “Dans l’année 1608. Elle eut un ravissement de cinq heures de suite, où Nostre-Seigneur se communiqua à elle comme une brillante lumière qui l’éclaira d’une façon admirable, & luy fit voir ses desseins sur l’établissement de ses Congrégations, avec assurance de la Bulle qui luy seroit octroyée du S. Siege, pour les perfectionner en Monastères Religieux. Elle [...] entendit ces paroles interieures: *Tu seras Mere d’un Ordre, & tu souffriras de grandes croix.*”

to the archbishop.⁵⁰ Thus while the late seventeenth-century biographers and chroniclers tried to characterize the transformation of the Ursulines as one that had been decided from the beginning and accepted by everyone, in Bordeaux it was an evolution, and it did not happen without conflict.⁵¹

Still, once the decision was made in 1608 to transform the Ursulines into a cloistered religious order, they moved quickly to reorganize their community. The Ursulines purchased an appropriate *hôtel particulier* in the quiet parish of Ste. Eulalie and converted it into a convent. Unlike their previous quarters in Puy-Paulin, the architecture of the new building on the Fossées des Tanneurs symbolically divided public space from private religious space with bricked-in windows, high walls, and two parlours, each divided by a wall with a shuttered window where monitored conversation could take place. Additionally, the courtyard, classrooms, and chapel were designed so that day students could pass in and out of the cloister without too much disturbance to the quiet routine within. Even the interior space was regulated so that boarding students, novices, lay sisters, and regular nuns could be separated from each other.⁵² They quickly wrote a Rule based upon the monastic *Rule of St. Augustine* and petitioned Rome for official approbation. The new Rule dedicates the Ursulines to teaching Christian doctrine and good manners. The combination of a larger, more well-defined space and a narrower, more well-defined mission attracted broader public support, and they welcomed a large number of students as well as novices to the community in the next decades.

50. Pierre de Lurbe's reputation is somewhat mixed. He was dedicated to the Ursulines; however, he could be difficult to get along with. See Henri Pourrat, ed., *Mémoires de la Mère Micolon (1592-1659): recueil de la vie de la Mère Antoinette de Micolon dites sœur Colombe du Saint Esprit, première Ursuline d'Auvergne, fondatrice du couvent d'Ambert, de Clermont, de Tulle, de Beaulieu, d'Espailhons et d'Arlence où elle est décédée* (Clermont-Ferrand: La Françoises d'Édition et d'Imprimerie, 1981), 169. See also Gueudré, 1:228.

51. The Ursulines of Dôle, under Anne de Xainctonge, never accepted the cloistered life. Rapley, *The Devote*, 56-57 and 218.

52. *Rule*, AHG, 50:352, 354, and 361. Rapley, in *A Social History of the Cloister*, notes that once clausura was in place, bishops and their representatives enforced it. At the same time, as was the case in Bordeaux, they issued exceptions to their rules, allowing some lay people access to the convent (114-17).

3. Construction of a convent and reconstruction of an identity

On 24 April 1608, the Ursulines moved into their new building on the Fossées des Tanneurs in Ste. Eulalie. The archbishop led a service honouring the changes and encouraged all loyal Christians in Bordeaux and in two other towns with daughter communities to support the Ursulines. He granted one-hundred-day indulgences to anyone visiting the Ursuline churches, chapels, or oratories on major holidays and fifty-day indulgences for a number of lesser holidays. For each of these indulgences, Sourdis was very specific about the required prayers—five *Paters* and *Ave Marias*, and prayers for the church, for the extirpation of faithlessness and heresy, for the union of Christian princes, for the pope and king, and for the advancement of the Ursuline mission in the community.⁵³

Despite all the construction and legal changes, until the official papal and royal letters of approbation arrived, the Ursulines' status remained somewhat unclear. The Salomon family, for example, continued its attacks on Sourdis and the Ursulines. Their anger had increased because a second daughter wished to join the order, threatening several "great alliances" they had planned for the aggrandizement of their family fortunes. They argued that their daughters "would receive nothing but disgrace and shame, attached to the Institute of Saint Ursula which still had not been approved by the Holy See [...]" Later in 1609, this crisis was settled after much negotiation, partially in the archbishop's favour, when the Salomon daughters were allowed to join the Feuillantines of Toulouse.⁵⁴ In his public published pastoral letter, Sourdis responded to these critiques and others by defining the Ursulines' work more carefully and associating them with well-respected figures in the church. They were not, he assures his readers, preaching publicly, a masculine activity; rather, they taught members of their own sex Christian doctrine and good morals,

53. *Actes, AHG*, 50: 317–18.

54. *Actes, AHG*, 50:338–39, 370–77 and 403–06: "[...] des grandes alliances [...]" "[...] elles n'en recevroient qu'une honte, joint que l'institut de Sainte-Ursule n'estant point approuvé par le Saint-Siège [...]" Bertheau reports they had already forced other daughters to marry against their will. The Feuillantine convent of Sainte-Scholastique in Toulouse had an excellent reputation for their ascetic practices and attracted elite women from Paris (often despite the objections of their families). This may explain why it was acceptable to the Saloman family. See Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 49–50 and 61–64.

which he adds, were sorely needed in Bordeaux. Their work was supported by the “blessed Charles, cardinal Borromeo, archbishop of Milan [...] and their founder [...who] was declared blessed by the Holy See, called the *beata* Angela, who has apparently worked several miracles.”⁵⁵ He goes on to remind parents in his diocese that although there were papal bulls written for Ursuline communities in Italy, those of Toulouse and Paris had not yet received their letters of approbation from the pope or the king either. Sourdis concludes by reconnecting the Ursulines to the broader goals of reform, which he assumes they all share: “I ask and encourage you (my children) not to be the enemies of your own good and not to reject the help and means that God sends to you to instruct your children and your families in piety.”⁵⁶

Some of the community concern about the state of the Ursuline’s cloister and their mission, though, was understandable. Despite the emphasis placed by Trent and many reforming bishops on circumscribing the activities of religious women, before 1618 the Ursulines’ cloister was not an impermeable wall. Day students moved in and out of the convent mornings and afternoons, and as early as 1612 the Ursulines rented rooms to women, usually widows or elderly unmarried women.⁵⁷ In Bordeaux, at least some nuns continued to go in and out of the cloister. Françoise de Cazères, now Françoise de la Croix, travelled almost constantly during her entire career, founding and visiting daughter communities. She was joined by a small number of Ursulines who assisted her in this work, most remaining in the houses they founded. Between 1606 and 1637, when she finished her travels, Françoise de la Croix founded seventeen communities directly and sixty-nine indirectly.⁵⁸ Additionally, beginning in

55. Sourdis, *Lettre Pastorale*, 1609, *AHG*, 50: 399–400: “[...] le bienheureux Charles, cardinal Borromée, archevesque de Milan [...] et la première institutrisse [...] qui déclarée bienheureuse par le Saint-Siège, appelée la *beata* Angela, qui semblablement a fait plusieurs miracles.”

56. Sourdis, *Lettre Pastorale*, 1609, *AHG*, 50: 400–01: “[...] je vous prie et vous exhorte (mes enfans) de n'estre point ennemis de vostre proper bien et ne rejeter point les aides et moyens que Dieu vous envoie, pour instruire vos enfans et vos familles à la piété.”

57. *Rule*, *AHG*, 50: 361 and *ADG* notarial archives, Subercaze, 3E11.288. Barbara Woshinsky notes in *Imagining Women's Conventual Spaces in France* that the reality was much more complex in France and elsewhere in Europe (6–24). Elizabeth Leffeldt's *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 2, explores the many connections between cloister and community in Valladolid, Spain.

58. *MDPU*, 3:152–55.

1613, the archbishop used at least a few of the Ursulines and many of their students in his campaign to combat the unruly and immoral behaviour in two neighbourhoods of Bordeaux. In an effort to put an end to “*les saturnales nocturnes*,” and brawls that took place on Sundays and religious holidays in the poorer parishes of St. Michel and St. Croix, Sourdis sent parish curates, Ursulines, and a few members of the society of the Ladies of Mercy to teach catechism lessons, and more publicly, to lead processions. The girls “went to [St. Croix] in procession in a strict order, the oldest at the head of that blooming troop of lilies, carrying and holding up a crucifix in her hand[...],” while the groups processed separately to St. Michel, where a Jesuit led the lessons.⁵⁹ Why the archbishop was willing to place at least a small number of Ursulines in the public eye in this manner is unclear, however; after the papal bull was received in 1618, this kind of flexibility became unthinkable. The community’s teaching mission was narrowed to the confines of the cloister walls.

Enough families were convinced, nevertheless, of the propriety of the new religious community and the value of their educational mission that the Ursulines enjoyed steady growth after 1608. Between 1608 and the year the papal bull arrived, 1618, notarial records indicate that twenty-seven young women signed contracts as novices and nuns. They came primarily from “good families” of merchants (eight), members of parliament (eight), nobles (four), and various royal and city officers (five).⁶⁰ The archbishop’s secretary bragged, in particular, about the high social status of one new recruit, Claire d’Albret. The daughter of Henri d’Albret and Antoinette de Pons, from two of the most notable families in southwestern France, broke her marriage engagement and entered the Ursuline convent soon after the publication of Sourdis’s pastoral letter in 1609.⁶¹

59. Ravenez, 267; Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 574–75; Bertheau, ADG, ms 3 JG 30ADG, 314v–315r. Bertheau concludes that the drunks did not change their habits and ridiculed the processions: “[...] y viennent processionnellement en un bel ordre, la plus grande à la tête de cette florissante troupe de lys, portant et élevant un crucifix en sa main [...]”

60. ADG, Subercaze 3E 11.284 – 3E 11.293. The Ursulines’ archives are incomplete for entries in religion and death notices; therefore, the totals could be higher. Two contracts did not mention the father’s profession.

61. *Actes*, AHG, 50:404–05 and ADG, notarial archives, Subercaze 3E 11.295, 20 avril 1620. Claire d’Albret’s first contract was signed in 1613.

Recruitment accelerated after the arrival of the 1618 papal bull. Between 1618 and 1625, fifty-eight young women signed contracts of novitiate or of entry into religion. Between 1626 and 1642, another 115 women took final vows at Bordeaux. Their social backgrounds were similar to the first group, although parliamentary and government officials (thirty-one) were more represented than merchants (eight), and nobles continued to remain important (fourteen).⁶² Based upon these incomplete records, the new convent was soon filled by new nuns. The notarial files also include a growing number of contracts for boarding students, usually from the same families or social backgrounds as the nuns. Some of these girls remained in the convent as Ursulines, but many stayed for one to two years to complete their educations and then returned to the secular world.⁶³ The presence of women from elite families as novices, nuns, and boarding students increased the pressure to create the appearance of a proper convent and gave the Ursulines the means to define their identity in the public space of the chapel.⁶⁴

Their success at recruiting and housing new Ursulines, however, brought with it financial pressures. Between 1608 and 1618, dowries were invested in small additions and renovations to the convent and the purchase of small farms in the area. Continued growth led to the acquisition of two larger houses, a shed, stable, and garden situated next to the convent in 1624 for 24,000 *livres*.⁶⁵ The houses required significant renovations to make them an appropriate convent. Dowries, which were set at 3,000 *livres* at entry to the novitiate and 3,000 *livres* at final vows, were stretched thin to accommodate these purchases and renovations.⁶⁶ In addition, the Bordeaux Ursulines founded many new daughter houses in the diocese and around the region. Each of the seventeen

62. ADG, Subercaze 3E 11.294 – 3E 11.307. A few contracts are also found in ADG, G628, *Ursulines*, the notarial files of Antoine Chadirac, 3E 3155, Pierre Lafite, 3E 15.239–15.242, and G 631–32, *L'examen des novices*, and H 2093, *pieces constitutives*.

63. ADG, Subercaze 3E 11.294–3E 11.307.

64. Sandra Weddle, "Women in Wolves' Mouths: Nun's Reputations, Enclosure and Architecture at the Convent of the Le Murate in Florence," in *Architecture and the Politics of Gender*, ed. Helen Hills, 119.

65. ADG, H 95, *Titres de propriété*. These houses were located at the corner of rue Sainte Eulalie and rue Segur. Additional properties were added along rue Segur throughout the 1630s, and in 1640 parts of the original convent were sold to the Order of the Visitation.

66. ADG, Subercaze 3E 11.294 – 3E 11.307 and ADG, G 628 *Ursulines*. Dowries varied: for example, Mere de la Croix's dowry was 1,800 *livres* and Clair d'Albret's dowry was 18,000 *livres*.

new foundations required the absence of their superior, Mère de la Croix, and several nuns who might or might not return to Bordeaux. The records are incomplete, but some thirty-five to forty-five Ursulines and their dowries permanently left Bordeaux to help establish and lead new communities between 1609 and 1637. The Bordeaux Mother House contributed funds for the purchase and renovation of houses to the diocesan foundations, but not those beyond.⁶⁷

4. The decoration of the chapel, 1618

The construction of a convent after 1608 and the ornamentation of the chapel after 1618 signified not just the survival of the Ursulines but also their success in maintaining the support of the archbishop and the acceptance of Rome. Mère de la Croix invested time and resources in its design and decoration because it reassured elite families of the community's stability and ensured their ability to recruit from the "best" and most "respectable" families of Bordeaux. The chapel, as a space that was both public and private, was symbolically important. Ideally, the chapel would be a rare space in the convent that was open to the public and thus served as the public face of the community.⁶⁸ Its paintings and sculptures represented to any person who entered who these women were, where they were from, and what their mission was in Bordeaux. The objects were also didactic in that they illustrated the devotions practised and taught by the community. Taken together with the high social status of the novices, the convent and chapel projected the nobility and sanctity of the new community and its mission.⁶⁹

67. The foundation of new communities in the diocese can be traced in the Ursulines' archives, ADG G628 *Ursulines* and H 98 *Couvents* between 1606 and 1615. *MDPU*, vol. 1 describes their expansion into the Loire River Valley (1616–20) and then in Southwestern France and Belgium (1622–37). See Gueudré, 1:231–36.

68. Gueudré, 1:46. The parlour was only open to visiting church officials and family.

69. In Helen Hills's *Invisible City*, she refers to this contradiction as both "concealment and advertisement" (139–40). See also Helen Hills, "'Enameled with the Blood of a Noble Lineage': Tracing Noble Blood and Female Holiness in Early Modern Neapolitan Convents and Their Architecture," *Church History* 73 (March 2004): 1–40, 4, and Ulrike Strasser, "Bones of Contention: Cloistered Nuns, Decorated Relics, and the Contest over Women's Place in the Public Sphere of Counter-Reformation Munich," *Journal of Reformation Studies* 90 (1999): 255–88, 279. The Franciscan nuns of the Pütrich convent considered their church an extension of the cloister, and their bishop viewed it as an extension of the public sphere.

The chapel was first built in 1608, but, evidently, paintings were not ordered until after 1618 and it did not take its final form until the early 1620s. Contracts of entry between those dates refer to gifts of altar clothes and liturgical vessels, but none of the surviving contracts mentions gifts of paintings or sculptures. There are no contracts or records of gifts of art works from patrons, as was common for other religious communities.⁷⁰ The building itself, however, must have been attractive because elements of it were copied in the construction of a church for the Filles de Notre Dame.⁷¹ The long period of time between building the chapel and decorating it, would have allowed the superior, Françoise de la Croix, to save money from dowries to pay an artist to adorn the chapel as she saw fit. In her survey of the Ursuline convents constructed in the seventeenth century, Mère Gueudré comments that the construction and enhancement of a chapel were important to Ursuline superiors, and they usually closely directed the process.⁷²

The first general description of the chapel appears in 1684, long after its initial period of decoration, but it is useful, nevertheless, for setting the general scene. The chapel, which could be entered from the street through large doors, is described as “of good size, stone with wood paneled wainscoting and a painted sky blue ceiling scattered with gold stars along the central nave.” The central nave led to the richly ornamented main altar. Above the altar was a large retable decorated with twelve columns of veined marble, flanked by two gilded statues, one of St. Augustine and the other of St. Ursula. Also on the altar were six gilded candlesticks, reliquaries and in the centre, a gold cross of “decent” quality. To the right of the main altar was a grille separating the public part of the chapel from the Ursulines’ private choir. The grille was broken by a small

The Ursulines did not have this conflict with Sourdis; however, the divisions between private and public had to be clear.

70. Christian Taillard, *Bordeaux Classique* (Paris: Ech , 1987), 37–40. The Filles de Notre Dame’s church was supported by wealthy laymen. The chapel has survived, but is no longer in its original form.

71. Taillard, 37–38. See *AHG*, 24, for the construction contract.

72. Gueud , 2:39 and 43–46. This has been well studied in Italy, but not in France. See for example, Marilyn Dunn, “Spaces Shaped for Spiritual Perfection: Convent Architecture and Nuns in Early Modern Rome,” in *Architecture and the Politics of Gender*, ed. Helen Hills, 154–55; Aislinn Loconte, “The Convent of Santa Maria della Sapienza: Visual Culture and Women’s Religious Experience in Early Modern Naples,” in *Wives, Widows, Mistresses and Nuns in Early Modern Italy: Making the Invisible Visible through Art*, ed. Katherine A. McIver (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 207–34 and Evangelisti, 149–61.

window through which the Ursulines received communion and by a door that was usually locked. The choir contained an oratory and confessional. On the other side of the choir, in a side chapel, was an altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The grill was constructed so that the nuns could hear Mass at this altar. Above the Virgin Mary altar hung one of the paintings ordered by Mère de la Croix in 1618, a depiction of the Assumption of Mary (which will be discussed in detail in section five). This altar was most likely used by the confraternity of the Interior Life of the Virgin, sponsored by the Ursulines.⁷³

The division of space in the chapel between public and private was made clear by grilles and trellises. For example, at the back of the chapel, above the street entrance, was a second-floor gallery enclosed by a trellis, which was for the Ursulines' use and did not have a public entrance.⁷⁴ The balcony allowed them to face the main altar, which was used for public services and formal convent occasions, and remain in private cloistered space. While seated in this gallery, the Ursulines' presence would have been heard but not seen. The gallery improved the Ursulines' view not only of the altar, but also of the lay people seated below, thus enhancing their sense of separation and privilege.⁷⁵ For public events held in front of the main altar, such as when young novices were received into the community or when they made their formal vows, the trellised gallery was essential because it allowed them to participate in the rites without violating the cloister.⁷⁶ For private events, such as when the bishop celebrated Mass at the main altar, presided over elections, and ruled in disciplinary matters from a chair placed in front of it, this was convenient. The choir to the right of the main altar was separated by similarly thick grilles. The nuns could participate in the Mass without entering the public part of the chapel. The grilles and trellises did not prevent the Ursulines from viewing the

73. ADG, G628, *Ursulines, pièce 37*, 28 Avril 1684. "L'église est assez grande lambrissée et peinte de bleu au haus avec des estoiles parsemées au fond de l'église [...]" "[...] un croix d'argent mediocre [...]" ADG, Q 1534, *Etats de biens*, 20 decembre 1790.

74. ADG, G628, *Ursulines, pièce 37*, 28 Avril 1684.

75. Hills, *Invisible City*, 139–160. Hills emphasizes how important this separation was for the aristocratic families of Naples to enhance/maintain their social status. This was just as important for the families of Bordeaux, which included minor nobles, newly ennobled families, and wealthy merchants and artisans. See also Dunn, "Spaces Shaped for Spiritual Perfection," 152 and 153.

76. For example, ADG, G14, *Actes de l'archevêché le siege vacant*, 6 Aout 1646 or G 628 *pièce 97* for elections and disciplinary actions.

statues, paintings, and relics, but they reassured the families and members of the Bordeaux community that the nuns were carefully protected from the dangers of the public sphere. Although the architecture separated the nuns, as required by Trent, the paintings and objects in the chapel symbolically communicated their presence and their communal identity.⁷⁷

Françoise de la Croix was very specific in her directions to Bernard Saint Gandoux about what subjects should be depicted in his paintings, and the first group deliberately constructs the Ursulines' identity as a formal religious community of teaching virgins, closely associated with the structural and leadership reforms of new women's religious orders required by Trent. The gilded statue of St. Augustine connects the Ursulines to the source of their Rule, the *Rule of St. Augustine*. Gandoux was requested to paint a large panel to be placed over the door to the right of the main altar. This painting and a gilded statue firmly connect the Ursulines to their patron saint, St. Ursula. A large panel depicts her "dressed as a queen with her royal mantle, under which there are a number of Ursulines on their knees."⁷⁸ This painting is similar to a sculpture of St. Ursula found in the local Basilica of St. Michael, and it depicts a popular iconic image of her. Popular legends of St. Ursula emphasize her decision to remain a virgin and to instruct her eleven thousand virgin followers in Christian doctrine before leading them to their martyrdom at the hands of a Germanic army.⁷⁹ By 1665, the centrality of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins was reinforced on the main altar of the chapel. On the right side of an elaborate tabernacle containing the Holy Sacrament was placed a large gilded statue of St. Ursula. Beneath the statue of the saint was a silver pyramid-shaped reliquary containing the relics of St. Ursula and the eleven thousand

77. Marilyn Dunn, "Invisibilia per visibilia: Roman Nuns, Art Patronage, and the Construction of Identity," in *Wives, Widows, Mistresses and Nuns in Early Modern Italy: Making the Invisible Visible through Art and Patronage*, ed. Katherine A. McIver (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 181–205, 182–84. Even before Trent there had been a tension between protecting cloistered nuns from public view and the nuns' ability to view the celebration of the Mass. For example, in Clarissan convents either built or remodelled before 1340, the nuns could not see the altar from their choir. See Caroline Bruzelius, "Hearing is Believing: Clarissan Architecture, ca. 1213–1340," *Gesta* 31.2 (1992): 83–91.

78. ADG, notarial archives, Subercaze, 3E 11.294: "[...] habite en forme de reine avec son manteaux royal soubz le quel manteaux y aura nombre de religieuses a genoux [...]."

79. The most popular legend was the *Passio Sanctarum XI Milium Virginum* "Regnante Domino." Mariani, et al., 261–67.

virgins, most notably a piece of leg bone from one of the virgins.⁸⁰ The painting and relics highlight for the viewers, whether secular or religious, important elements of the Ursulines' identity: they were virgins who chose to dedicate their lives to the Christian education of girls.

The last series of paintings Françoise de la Croix ordered depicted scenes from the life of the recently canonized St. Charles Borromeo. This is not surprising as it was Cardinal Borromeo's reformed version of the Company of St. Ursula that inspired Sourdis to bring the Ursulines to his diocese. The paintings depict Borromeo engaged in the pastoral activities that made him so admired by bishops and Tridentine Catholics, such as administering the sacraments, specifically the Eucharist, as well as performing miracles. Another painting illustrates a famous assassination attempt on Borromeo, demonstrating the close relationship between the Bordeaux Ursulines and their patron, Archbishop Sourdis. A piece of the bullet used in the failed attempt was the archbishop's most prized relic. Sourdis, like Borromeo, prided himself on the firm direction of church affairs, and those of women's orders in particular, in his diocese.⁸¹ Thus, the paintings connect the new and foreign Ursulines and their reforming patron to an unassailable figure of Catholic reform.

5. The chapel and Ursuline devotions

The careful division of public and private space in the Ursuline convent and chapel communicated not only that the nuns would be protected from the outside world but also that they were a religious order that dedicated much of its communal life to the traditional monastic schedule of services, ascetic and penitential devotions, meditation, and contemplation. The chapel and its contents present the devotions that were most important to Françoise de la Croix and the first generations of Ursulines in Bordeaux. In addition to their important public roles of providing a history and explanation of their mission, the paintings placed on either side of the main altar and the image and relics of St. Ursula connected the Ursulines to admired missionary saints and respected figures of Catholic reform. Taken in conjunction with examples from *The*

80. ADG, G628, *Ursulines*, pièce 37, 28 April 1684.

81. ADG, notarial archives, Subercaze, 3E 11.294. The Cardinal Sfondrato of Milan gave the bullet fragment to Sourdis. Cardinal Sourdis was later buried with the relic in the Church of the Chartreux in Bordeaux. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 365.

Chroniques and their devotional guide, it is possible to understand how the images, sacred vessels, and relics displayed in the chapel might have been used or understood by the community. The guide, images, and objects also offer insights into how devotional practices were changing in the first half of the seventeenth century and the important role that teaching orders, such as the Ursulines, played in the spread of devotions associated with Catholic reform.

The use of images for devotional practices had been the subject of debate in the late Middle Ages and was attacked by Protestants during the Reformation. However, the Council of Trent in its last session in 1563 defended their use and determined their moral and spiritual ends. Images were not magical objects, but rather should be used to inspire a reverent attitude and reinforce orthodox belief. The council assigned to bishops the important role of assessing the legitimacy of religious images in churches: "Let so great care and diligence be used herein by bishops, as that there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing indecorous, seeing that holiness becometh the house of God."⁸² In practice, images needed to conform more to scriptural sources, leaving artists little room to include imaginative details. As a result, church art in general became more austere. Images from the apocryphal tales and episodes from the *Golden Legend* did not disappear, however, as there was little consensus among bishops about how to enforce Tridentine decrees concerning church art.⁸³ If the visions described in the *Lives* and the meditations prescribed in the devotional guide are any indication, the Ursulines used images and read devotions imaginatively. However, in the end, it is impossible to determine if the "visions [were] inspired by the art, or the art by the visions?"⁸⁴ The evidence suggests that the two were mutually reinforcing. Françoise de la Croix ordered images that were significant to her and the women of her community. At the same time, paintings, sculptures, or other sacred objects or scenes suggested by their devotional guide helped to direct meditation and, perhaps, for the most exceptional women, facilitated a mystical experience.

82. Quoted in Phillips, 47–48 and John Dillenberger, *Images and Relics: Theological Perceptions and Visual Images in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 186–88.

83. Phillips, 50–51.

84. Jeffery F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 115–31. Hamburger's work influenced my understanding of how religious women might have used devotional art.

The chapel's art and sacred objects, the lives described in *The Chroniques*, and the *Rule* written for them by Sourdis in collaboration with Françoise de la Croix in 1609, indicate that the Bordeaux Ursulines participated in the broader devotional trends in France. The *Lives* and instructions regulating daily life in the convent, for example, are similar to those written in Paris in the same time period. In many ways, they are characteristic of devotions practised by women in France during the late Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. They are also influenced by the spirituality of the leaders of Catholic reform in Paris, which was rooted in the traumatic experiences of the Wars of Religion and the Catholic League. Both pro- and anti-Leagueurs in Paris understood their suffering as God's punishment and responded with profoundly introspective, Christocentric, penitential, and mystical devotions. The goal of these mystical devotions, however, was not simply union with God; rather, the mystical experience became a "means of activating oneself to serve as God's tool or agent." The most important moment was not absorption, but rather the action that resulted from the unitive experience.⁸⁵ These devotions blossomed in the ascetic reformed religious orders for men and women founded in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the vast majority of which were enclosed.⁸⁶

Although most of the archdiocese and diocese of Bordeaux did not endure the same level of crisis as Paris, its proximity to important Protestant centres meant that the region suffered from periodic fighting, which destroyed or severely damaged several cities, and the pillaging of passing armies. As noted earlier in this article, the destruction of churches and monasteries was important, particularly in the northeastern section of the diocese. Although the first generation of Ursulines was born after much of the violence had ceased, they grew up in families and areas of the diocese that had been materially and psychologically impacted by it. Françoise de la Croix, for example, grew up in La Sauve, a town that was heavily damaged by Protestant armies. In addition, Ursuline convents and schools were established in many cities in the diocese, most notably Bourg and Libourne, that at one time had included significant

85. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 24. I have chosen to use Diefendorf's chronology of devotional change in France rather than the one developed in Mazzonis's *Spirituality, Gender and The Self*, as it more accurately reflects the situation in Bordeaux (Diefendorf, 178–88). Mazzonis's broad characterization of Renaissance spirituality in Italy as individualized, interiorized, and focused on morality applies generally here as well.

86. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 47–48.

Protestant populations, although by 1609 they were quite small.⁸⁷ It is not surprising, then, to find similarly penitent and missionary-oriented devotions in Bordeaux.

The similarities may also be credited to the Bordeaux Ursulines' two early spiritual influences, which connected them to two important sources of French Catholic reform: Archbishop Sourdis and the Feuillant monastery. Sourdis's spirituality was a product of Barbe Acarie's circle in Paris, which was introspective, Christocentric, penitential, and mystical. The circle's influence can be seen in his individual devotions as well as in the new and reformed religious orders for men and women he encouraged in Bordeaux.⁸⁸ The founding of the Feuillant community of reformed Cistercians in 1589, just two years after their recognition by the pope, predates the arrival of Sourdis in Bordeaux. By 1600, they were a small and poor community, counting just eleven men, but enjoyed a profound spiritual influence, deeply admired for their austere lives. Peyrous characterizes them as "one of the spiritual hearts of the city [...] founded, above all, on meditation [and] penitence [...]"⁸⁹ In Bordeaux, people attended their chapel to hear sermons on feast days; they served as confessors, and were sought out as spiritual directors by men and women, including by Sourdis and Françoise de la Croix upon her arrival in Bordeaux in 1606. The Ursulines also had important family connections to the Feuillants. Anne de Beauvais's brother, for example, became a Feuillant around the same time she joined the Ursulines. Marie de Gaufreteau's parents worked with Feuillant spiritual directors and were important financial supporters of the community. The day of Marie's entry-into-the-congregation service, in 1608, her family organized a public procession from the Feuillants' chapel to the Ursulines' in Puy-Paulin, which reportedly impressed and inspired many in the city.⁹⁰ As the following examples will demonstrate, the first Ursulines were influenced by Sourdis's emphasis on penitential self-mortifications and

87. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 47–48. Overall, by 1600 the number of Protestants in the diocese was small; they were generally isolated and poorly led.

88. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 117–24.

89. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 316–20: "[...] l'un des coeurs spirituels de la ville [...] fondée surtout sur la meditation, [et] la penitence [...]"

90. *MDPU*, 3: 441–42.

the Feuillants' asceticism as well as by their understanding that action grows out of prayer.⁹¹

The first three women who wished to become Ursulines established the model of devotional practices that would become characteristic of the first generation. Before formally agreeing to become Ursulines, Françoise de la Croix and two others spent six months on spiritual retreat in Libourne.

The life of these holy servants of God was so saintly, & their self-mortification so continuous, that every day of their solitude, fasting, [wearing] hair shirts and physical discipline, was exercised in a strict silence, & assiduous prayer, during which God called them to the pathway of a perfect death to all things, in imitation of Jesus Christ in his poor and abject states.⁹²

This commitment to self-mortification, self-abasement, and the imitation of Jesus's suffering is reinforced in the *Rule*, which encourages an austere life:

We must [...] abhor and despise all and not a half that this world loves; to embrace and to love with all our heart all that Our Lord has embraced and loved. And as citizens of the world follow and pursue worldly things and search with great diligence for the honours and glories of men, those who advance with spirit and follow the good advice of Our Lord, must ardently desire the opposite and dress in the same robe and livery of their Master, for his love [...], they wish to suffer all sorts of hatreds and judgments [...].⁹³

91. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 447.

92. *MDPU*, 3:151: "La vie de ces Servantes de Dieu estoit toute sainte, & leur mortification si continuelle, que tous les jours de leur solitude, le jeûne, la haire, & las discipline estoient en usage avec en étroit silence, & une oraison assidue, où Dieu les attiroit par la voye d'une parfait mort à toutes choses, à l'imitation de Jesus Christ dans ses etats pauvres & abjets."

93. *Rule*, *AHG*, 50:343: "Il faut [...] d'abhorrer et mespriser du tout son Coeur tout ce que le monde ayme; d'embrasser et aymer de tout son Coeur tout ce que Nostre-Seigneur à embrassé et aymé. Et, comme les mondains suivent et purchassent les choses du monde et cherchent avec si grande diligence les honneurs et la gloire entre les homes, ainsi ceux qui cheminent en esprit et suivent à bon escient Nostre-Seigneur, doivent ardemment desirer tout le contraire et se vestir de la mesme robe et livrée de leur Maistre, pur son amour [...] ells voudroent souffrir toutes sortes de mespris et opprobres [...]"

The *Rule* continues that Ursulines must be able “to empty themselves” in order to allow God to act through them in service to their students and the church. A strong sense of humility and self-abasement allowed individual Ursulines, especially the leaders, to accept the most “vile” assignments in the convent.⁹⁴

The young women who followed Françoise de la Croix and her companions into the community between 1608 and 1618 practised similar penitential, Christocentric self-mortifications. They were inspired, as well, by Archbishop Sourdis, who often retired to the confessor’s room in the convent and “exercised secret mortifications.”⁹⁵ Marguerite de Berty, for example, asked permission to flagellate more frequently than recommended in the *Rule*. Soon after her request, she was found in her cell covered with blood because, she explained, she hated sin.⁹⁶ Anne de Beauvais flagellated regularly, slept on large nails she had placed on her bed, which after 1608 was made of two tables formed in the shape of a cross, and mutilated her hands with needles in order to ruin their beauty. After she became superior at Bourg, she wore a shirt made of rough tin. Eventually she was forced to give it up because the points became lodged in her skin and a doctor had to be called to remove them. Anne explained to her confessor that her mortifications helped her to strengthen her faith and led to union with God. “I no longer live for myself, but for Jesus-Christ in me, I lead a life that I no longer know.”⁹⁷ These and other spiritual gifts and mortifications gained Anne de Beauvais a reputation as a holy woman and gave her the strength to convert “a great number of sinners, & Huguenots, & even a man who was an Atheist [...]” while serving as superior in Saumur.⁹⁸

94. *Rule*, AHG, 50:344–45.

95. Cambounet de la Mothe, 1:414: “[...] il alloit exercer des mortifications secretes.”

96. MDPU, 3:443.

97. Hermann Crombach, Jean-Hugues Quarré, and Pierre Villebois, *Abrégé de la vie de la V. Mère Anne de Beauvais religieuse Ursuline, tiré d’un livre de sa vie, compose par m. Pierre Villebois tire de La gloire de s. Vrsule divisée en deux parties, La première contient l’histoire & martyre des onze mille vierges, avec quelques considérations la dessus; La deuxième est vn abrégé de la vie d’aucunes filles de s. Vrsule, signalées en sainteté...* (Valentiennes: I. Boucher 1656) (hereafter cited as *Abrégé*), 178; MDPU, 3:447–52; Cambounet de la Mothe, 2:533, maxim no. 14. “Je vis non plus moy, mais Jesus-Christ en moy, je mene une vie que je ne connais point.” The story is repeated in Henri Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1967), 6:443–44.

98. MDPU, 3:450: “[...] un grand nombre de pecheurs, & l’Huguennots, & mene un homme Athee, [...]” Inspired, Anne de Beauvais’s music teacher in Bourg decided to martyr himself by joining the Feuillants; see *Abrégé*, 208.

As in Paris, the spiritual intensity that characterized the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Bordeaux was difficult to maintain over time. By mid-century, in Paris, for a variety of social, political, and economic reasons, a transition away from the more theatrical physical mortifications to more internalized mortifications was underway. Nuns emphasized the sacrifice of their personal inclinations, rather than the physical punishments of the body. The charitable elements of their service were emphasized over the penitential.⁹⁹ In Bordeaux, the construction of the chapel and the publication of a devotional manual for novices and students demonstrate a similar transition to a more carefully controlled and orderly environment that appealed to the elites in Bordeaux and elsewhere in France and Catholic Europe.¹⁰⁰ As in Paris, it is difficult to place exact dates on the transition and certainly there was a great deal of overlap between early- and mid-century devotional practices. However, as the following examples demonstrate, that transition had clearly begun in Bordeaux by the 1630s, and perhaps as early as the 1620s, as the first generation of Ursulines were joined and replaced by a second generation that entered after the 1618 papal bull gave the community official recognition as a formal religious order.

The Ursulines' devotional guide for the use of students, novices, and nuns was first published in 1636, but probably was put together much earlier because parts of it are credited to the convent's first spiritual director, Pierre de Lurbe, who served between 1610 and 1623.¹⁰¹ Taken in combination with the chapel, they give order and direction to the spiritual fervour (or even a lack of it) of the many students, new novices, and nuns, and indicate new directions in the Bordeaux Ursulines' spirituality. As discussed earlier, most of the women highlighted in the *Lives* had been transferred to newly founded communities

99. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 241.

100. Dunn, "Spaces Shaped for Spiritual Perfection," 152.

101. *Exercices des actions journalier pour les Ursulines* (Bordeaux: Nicolas Brun, 1636). I could not locate a copy of the original 1636 guide, and am referencing instead a 1717–18 manuscript, *Pratique des exercices spirituel et journalier pour une religieuse ursuline*, found in the Municipal Library in Bordeaux, and a published copy, *Formulaire de prières avec une conduite pour se préparer à faire une bonne confession & Sainte Communion. Et plusieurs Méditations & Oraisons pour se disposer à une bonne mort. Nouvelle Edition. Augmentée d'une Instruction sur l'Oraison Mentale. A l'usage des Pensionnaires & Externes des Dames Ursulines de l'Institut de Bordeaux* (Rennes: J. Vatar, s.d.). The manuscript copy refers to Pierre de Lurbe as the author (28).

in Western France; therefore, it was important to provide guidance to those who remained in Bordeaux. The growing number of women's orders in the city made providing them all with adequate male spiritual direction a challenge.¹⁰² Additionally, Pierre de Lurbe, although dedicated to Françoise de la Croix, was reported to have a difficult personality and was not always available as the demands of the growing community increased. In 1623, Robert de Beauvais succeeded Pierre de Lurbe, and although he is described as a "*saint prêtre*," and engaged in similar penitential self-mortifications as the first generation of Ursulines, he travelled frequently in support of newly founded Ursuline communities in the diocese and in Western France.¹⁰³ It is also possible that the newer generation of women entering in the 1620s were not as attracted to the physical mortifications characteristic of the pre-1618 Ursulines. There was more competition for devout girls and young women in Bordeaux by the 1620s, so those who wanted a more ascetic life could also choose the Carmelites, as at least a few of the sisters and cousins of Ursulines did.¹⁰⁴ However, the institutionalization of devotions in the chapel and the guide did not eliminate the possibility of mystical or ascetic practices; they simply helped to direct them and provided balance to their lives as teachers. Sixty years later, Mère de Pommereu emphasized the importance of balancing prayers and work.

As for raptures and ecstasies, Ursulines do not need them. On the contrary, it seems that if they happened frequently, they would be incompatible with their principal duties which oblige them to continual care of and attention to girls. How would it be to find an Ursuline lifted up from the earth and out of her senses when she was supposed to be teaching catechism or serving the children.¹⁰⁵

102. Joanne McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 506. McNamara refers to the explosion of devotional guides as a "do it yourself" system of spiritual development.

103. Pourrat, 170; Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 566; MDPU, 1:156–57.

104. For example, the sister and one daughter of Henri de Massip, a *conseilleur* in parliament, became Ursulines, and a second daughter joined the Carmelites. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 448.

105. MDPU, 1:8–9, quoted in Rapley, *The Dévotes*, 235. Mère de Pommereu weaves the theme of Mary and Martha of Bethany throughout her history of the Ursulines. See also Linda Lieheimer, "Female Eloquence and Maternal Ministry: The Apostolate of Ursuline Nuns in Seventeenth-Century France" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1994), 93–95; Rayer and Baumgartner, SJ, *Dictionnaire de*

The influence on the Ursulines' guide of Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* reinforces the emphasis on balance. Its practicality and action-oriented nature made it an ideal resource for a teaching order like the Ursulines.¹⁰⁶ In fact, sections of the Ursulines' guide, particularly instructions for mental prayer, come almost word-for-word from the *Spiritual Exercises*, usually with more detailed commentary and directions included. The *Spiritual Exercises* and the Ursulines' guide encouraged their readers to use all five senses and objects—paintings, for example—to help focus their prayers, thus making good use of the Ursulines' new chapel and other devotional paintings in the convent. Paintings could be used “to delight, to teach, and to move” their viewer to create mental images upon which to meditate.¹⁰⁷ The Ursulines' guide encourages the reader, in preparation for mental prayer, to select an image upon which to meditate. To do this, the reader is advised to “imagine as a Painting the Mystery, or the truth that we have chosen,” then, after several more steps, to gather their thoughts, “That is to recall in one's imagination, one's spirit, one's memory and one's will [...] to gather them in great silence deep down within ourselves, which can be done when you put yourself in the presence of God.”¹⁰⁸ Though less theatrical than the mysticism of the first generation, the ultimate goal in the new guide was the same: union with God.¹⁰⁹ Mental prayer was practised and taught by many sixteenth-century spiritual writers, including the Ursulines' Italian founder, Angela Merici. Although the Bordeaux Ursulines were very different in organization from the community originally envisioned by Angela Merici in Brescia, Italy, she encouraged her followers to become proficient in

Spiritualité (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–1967), s.v., “Marthe et Marie”; Claire Walker, “Combining Martha and Mary: Gender and Work in Seventeenth-Century English Cloisters,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30 (1999): 397–418; Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 173–201; and Lux-Sterritt, 130–52.

106. Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Anthony Mottola (New York: Image Books, 1964); Brémond, 73.

107. John W. O'Malley, SJ, and Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *The Jesuits and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2005), 314 and 125–26.

108. *Formulaire des prières*, 98 and 104. The “reader” in this case includes *pensionnaires*, novices, and nuns. “C'est de se représenter comme en un Tableau le Mystère, ou la vérité que nous nous serons propose [...]” “C'est rassembler son imagination, son esprit, sa mémoire & sa volonté [...], & les rassembler dans un grand silence au fond de nostre intérieur, ce qui se fait en se mettant en la présence de Dieu.” (My translations.)

109. *Pratique des exercices spirituel*, 1–2; McNamara, 513.

mental prayer, rather than rely too much upon outward rituals and vocal prayer. In the *Regola*, Merici advised that rituals, fasting, and vocal prayer were not an end in themselves. They were important because they prepared the Ursuline for mental prayer and an unmediated encounter with God.¹¹⁰ In contrast to the more autonomous Brecian Ursulines under the first *Regola*, however, the Bordeaux Ursulines' practice of mental prayer was mediated by the *Guide* and regular examinations by the community's superior and confessor.¹¹¹

The mystical potential of a balanced life also indicates the influence of seventeenth-century writers such as Francois de Sales (1567–1622), who, like Sourdis, was a member of Barbe Acarie's circle in Paris. His *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1608) and *Treatise on the Love of God* (1616) were not used as directly as the *Spiritual Exercises* in the Ursulines' devotional guide, but can be seen in the emphasis placed on the love of God and the individual's response to it through acts of charity. De Sales underlines the need for self-discipline in order to avoid illuminism or other excesses of self-mortification and the acquisition of virtues.¹¹² The insistence on balance and discipline can be seen in the instructions for mental prayer as well as other devotions taught in the devotional guide.

St. Ursula, for example, is the object of daily prayers in the manuscript copy of the devotional guide for novices. At the end of the day, after eight o'clock, novices are instructed to complete their daily rosary with the prayer of St. Ursula.

When you say the prayer of St. Ursula, turn the eyes of your consideration to the lamb (referencing the exposed host on the altar) and notice how closely he keeps next to him our great patron with her virginal troop who resound in his honour with the canticle of love demanding association in heaven as there is dependence on them on earth.

The painting of St. Ursula and her virgins hung to the right of the main altar; the novices physically could have turned their eyes to consider the consoling

110. Mazzonis, 168.

111. *Rule*, AHG, 50:347. *Formulaire des prières*, 99.

112. Brémond, 2:579. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 179–81. Diefendorf notes that de Sales limited, but did not eliminate, bodily mortifications (181). Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* also takes this approach to self-mortifications. See Mazzonis, 159.

image and then, as the text continues, could have returned their gaze to the sacrament exposed on the altar and completed their adoration.¹¹³

The Ursulines of Bordeaux, like other religious women in the seventeenth century, as well as during the Middle Ages, saw reflected in the martyrdom of St. Ursula and her virgin followers their own vocation. The preservation of their virginity could be seen, as it had been since the fourth century, as a “spiritual martyrdom.”¹¹⁴ One life of Anne de Beauvais describes her particular affinity for St. Ursula’s inspirational leadership. She was “completely devoted to her [St. Ursula’s] cult, & to the service of this great Queen, who inspired the 11,000 Virgins.”¹¹⁵ Marguerite de Berty’s *Life* also combines her dedication to self-sacrifice with St. Ursula’s other important role as Christian educator. Her greatest wish was “to go and die in a foreign land in support of the faith, with an all-consuming zeal to win souls who would love God eternally.”¹¹⁶ Marguerite de Berty, however, became an Ursuline in 1608, understanding that her service and sacrifice would take place in Western France within the confines of the cloister. Suzanne de Richon, an Ursuline of Bordeaux who helped to found, and then lead, the Ursuline convent of Carcassonne, emphasizes the important connection the Ursulines made between their work and sacrifice. After distributing food during a famine from the small supplies of the convent to twenty-five poor people, Suzanne defends her generosity, commenting that “[...] it seemed to her that one must sacrifice oneself in order to serve others.”¹¹⁷ The convent, which helped to ensure their purity, became for the Ursulines a missionary centre. Teaching, and other acts of charity, became an extension

113. *Pratique des exercices spirituel*, 48–49: “Quands vous dises l’oraison de Ste Ursule jettes yeux de votre consideration sur l’aigneau et voyes comme il tient bien proche de luy notre grande patrone avec sa troupe virginale qui ressonnent à son honneur le cantique d’amour demandes association au ciel comme il ya dependance d’elles en terre.”

114. Alison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover, NH: Brown University Press, 1987), 43–44. This was possible for men as well as women.

115. *Abrégé*, 196–97: “[...] qui est tout à fait dediée au culte, & service de cette grande Reine, qui a tant oblige les onze mille Vierges.”

116. *MDPU*, 3:442: “[...] d’aller mourir pour le soutien de la foy dans les terres étrangères, par un zèle qui la consumoit de gagner des Âmes qui aimassent Dieu éternellement.” For Marguerite de Berty, the world became Western France in Libourne and as superior of convents in Saumer, Nantes, Vendome, and in Chartres where she died.

117. *MDPU*, 3:425: “[...] il luy sembloit qu’il se falloit sacrifier soy-même pour assister son prochain.”

of their devotional lives that focused on self-sacrifice and penitence.¹¹⁸ The painting and relics of St. Ursula, therefore, would have reinforced for novices, religious, and the secular public these central values of the community.

The most important images ordered from Saint Gandoux depicted a central figure of Ursuline devotions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the Virgin Mary. Françoise de la Croix asked for a large gilded statue of the Virgin and two paintings of important moments in the life of Mary. One small painting illustrated the Annunciation of the Virgin. De la Croix preferred that Mary be presented standing with her house on one side and the angel Gabriel on the other. The larger painting depicted the Assumption of the Virgin. De la Croix requested that Mary be shown at the moment of the Assumption “with her tomb at the bottom surrounded by the twelve apostles and the angels together above with cherubim and seraphim.” The Assumption and gilded statue were destined for the Altar of the Virgin, placed just outside of the Ursulines’ choir in the nave. This altar, by late in the century, was as elaborately ornamented as the main altar, and the description in the episcopal visit records indicates that they frequently used it for their masses. The altar clothes were velour, edged with lace made of gold threads. It held two gilded reliquaries containing relics from the local parish church, St. Eulalie. A niche on each side contained gilded busts of Jesus and the Virgin.¹¹⁹ It is not clear where the Annunciation painting was placed; however, the 1684 episcopal visit mentions three small oratories within the cloister, and the painting could have been placed in any of these.¹²⁰

The Assumption had, at that point, a long history in Western art and literature. The Ursulines’ painting reflects the continuing importance of this story even after the Council of Trent’s admonition to take great care in depicting apocryphal stories. The Council’s insistence, however, that the written traditions of the church were just as authoritative as Scripture, helped to reinforce its continued acceptance, even though it was not made formal doctrine until 1950. After the Council of Trent, images and sermons emphasized Mary’s passive relationship to Christ as she is lifted to heaven by angels, rather than more

118. McNamara, 493–94; Lux-Sterritt, 90.

119. ADG, notarial archives, Subercaze, 3E 11.294. “[...] l’assomption de la vierge, avec sa sépulture en bas avec douze apostres alentour les anges ensembles au hauteur en plusieurs cherubins et seraphins[...].” And ADG, G640, *Ursuline*, 12 May 1684.

120. ADG, G640, *Ursulines*, 13 May 1684. Unfortunately, there is no descriptive information about how these private devotional spaces were adorned or used.

actively ascending like Jesus.¹²¹ Her assumption was a reward for her spiritual merits, her humility and obedience, not simply because she was the physical mother of God. In emphasizing Mary's spiritual motherhood, she became a more accessible role model. All Christians could seek to imitate Mary's humble acceptance of God's will in their lives.¹²² Its place above an altar used for the Ursulines' regular Mass is also significant as the image held important Eucharistic meaning as well. In his analysis of Titian's 1518 painting of the Assumption in the Frari Basilica in Venice, Timothy Verdon points out that

[the altarpiece] invites believers to see her from whom the Word took his physical body elevated in *her* body from earth to heaven [...] at Mass, celebrated at the high altar of the Frari we were meant to grasp the bond between the body of Christ, the body of Mary and the collective "body"—the Church—which Eucharistic communion nourishes, strengthens, and makes manifest.¹²³

These two elements, Mary's spiritual merits and close connection to Jesus and the Eucharist, played a prominent role in the Ursulines' devotions.

The Ursulines' devotions to Mary included the daily Rosary as well as the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹²⁴ The manuscript copy of the devotional guide written for novices reflects the centrality of Mary in the community's daily prayers and spiritual exercises. For example, the guide directs them to contemplate a scene of Mary's life at each daily office, taking care to remember that in honouring Mary, the novice is also honouring Christ. The instructions begin: "The principle goal of all prayer must be to adore God, that is why when you begin to say the office, you must produce the act with a pure heart that

121. Melissa R. Katz, ed., *Divine Mirrors: The Virgin Mary in the Visual Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 95–99, and Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 2001), 209–10. Also, Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 30–33 and 81–102.

122. Ellington, 179–81 and 211–12.

123. Timothy Verdon, *Mary in Western Art* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2004), 176. The italics are Verdon's emphasis.

124. *Rule, ADG*, 50: 356–57.

only looks to honour God and His Holy Mother [...].”¹²⁵ The guide then lists the daily offices and the appropriate scene from the Virgin’s life, beginning with the Immaculate Conception at matins and ending with the Assumption at compline. The painting of the Assumption was placed in the chapel and would have been visible to the novices as they were instructed to imagine:

At compline finally consider the triumphant Assumption of Our Lady and take pleasure in viewing her crowned by the Holy Trinity, make a small crown with this office and your thoughts and affections that you have had in reciting it [and] offer [them] to your guardian angel to present on your behalf, your homage and humble service to the Queen of Heaven.¹²⁶

The published devotional guide likewise seeks to inspire daily and weekly meditations on the scenes of Mary’s life as well as her virtues and roles as intercessor and comforter.¹²⁷

The manuscript and published guides communicate the daily regularity of prayers of the post-1618 Ursulines dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The *Lives*, in contrast, highlights the more spectacular examples of mystical connections the first generation of the Ursulines experienced. Françoise de la Croix visited a popular shrine dedicated to the Virgin at Notre-Dame-des Ardilliers near Saumur whenever she could, and it was during a visit there that she agreed to establish a community of Ursulines in Saumur.¹²⁸ Ursulines such as Anne de Beauvais also taught their students Marian devotions. As a sign of her pleasure in Anne’s prayers, the Virgin Mary often honoured her with small favours and visits, once protecting her from a violent storm and another time healing her of an “interior pain.” Because of this, Anne “imprinted this love in the souls of boarding students who were under her direction [...] encouraging them to fast

125. *Pratique des exercices spirituel*, 36: “Le principe de toute prière doit ester d’adorer dieu, c’est pourquoy en comanceant de dire l’office il faut avoir product c’est acte avec un Coeur pur qui ne cherche que d’honorer dieu et sa Sainte mère [...]” (My translation.)

126. *Pratique des exercices spirituel*, 37–38. “À complies faut finalement penser à la triomphante assumption de Nostre Dame et prendre plaisir à la voir couronnée par la très Sainte Trinité, faites une petite couronne de c’est office et des pensées et affections qu’aves eues en le recitant offers la à vostre ange gardienne pour presanter de vostre part l’hommage d’un humble service a la reyne du Ciel.”

127. *Formulaire des prières*, 97–99.

128. E. Rondeau, *Histoire du monastère des Ursulines d’Angers* (Angers: Germain & G. Grassin, 1906), 8.

on Saturdays, & to abstain from fruit on that day in her [Our Lady's] honour; something that is not a modest mortification for girls still so young." One of Anne's students in Bordeaux, Andrée de Vidau, was singled out as particularly devout because she fasted regularly with the other students and often spent quiet time in a corner saying prayers to the Virgin Mary. At a certain point in her prayers she often "extended her arms open before her, her face changed and she entered a fervor so intense that it seemed to us that Our Lady was appearing before her." Not all of Anne de Beauvais's students may have become mystics like Andrée de Vidau, but they left their classes knowing prayers and devotional behaviours dedicated to the Virgin Mary.¹²⁹

As well as being used by the Ursulines, the Assumption altar was given over for the use of the Ursulines' women's confraternity of the "Interior Life of the Virgin Mary." The confraternity, sadly, is not well documented in the Ursulines' archives. The name, however, indicates the influence of Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575–1629) and his followers, particularly Jean-Jacques Olier (1608–57), often referred to as the French school.¹³⁰ Bérulle's influence came to Bordeaux with Archbishop Sourdis who had been part of the same Acarie circle of mystics in Paris.¹³¹ Their impact on the devotions of the Ursulines and their confraternity is more subtle than the legislated reforms, but clear, nevertheless. This connection was strengthened because of Bérulle's leadership of two reformed Carmelite communities in Bordeaux, founded in 1611 and 1618, which drew from the same social milieu as the Ursulines.¹³²

The name of the confraternity, the "Interior Life of the Virgin Mary," indicates a mystical connection to the mysteries of Mary's life (the Annunciation, her permanent virginity, and the Assumption) and her intercessory relationship

129. *Abrégé*, 195–97. "Elle imprimoit cet amour en l'âme des pensionnaires, qui estoient sous sa conduite, les incitant à jeusner le samedy, & à s'abstenir de fruictes ce jour là à son honneur; qui n'est pas une petite mortification aux filles qui sont encore jeunes." "[...] elle estendoit les bras, & les tenant ouverts, son visage se changeoit & entroit en une ferveur si remarquable, qu'il sembloit à la voir que Nostre Dame luy apparoissoit."

130. Yves Krumenacker, *L'école française de spiritualité: Des mystiques, des fondateurs, des courants et leurs interprètes* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1999), 476. Krumenaker prefers the term "bérullisme" to "French school," which does not allow for the evolution of bérullian ideas.

131. Krumenacker, 111 and 75.

132. Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 474–75 and Gueudré, 1:234. This leadership was contested by Sourdis, however.

with Jesus. Typical of the “French school” and other Tridentine devotions, the importance of Mary or the Saints was their relationship to Jesus.¹³³ Devotions to Mary and the Saints emphasized the development of a rich interior spirituality and were fundamentally Christocentric in that they led to an intense personal union in Christ with God.¹³⁴ Henri Brémond reports that the devotion was spread primarily by the priests at Bérulle’s Saint-Sulpice seminary in Paris.¹³⁵ However, the presence of a similar confraternity making use of the Ursuline’s chapel in Bordeaux suggests that the devotion spread through other institutions as well as by parish priests. It also suggests that the devotion endured, at least in some form, long past the early seventeenth century when it was most popular in France. In 1790, for example, the local revolutionary committee examined the Ursulines’ sources of income and reports that the confraternity received fifty *livres* a year from a *rente* of one thousand *livres*.¹³⁶

The Marian and Christocentric elements of Ursuline devotions come together in the enduring popularity of Eucharistic devotions in the Ursuline convent. The chapel altars were richly decorated. Many of the clothes adorning them throughout the year were given to the convent as gifts or as part of a dowry contract by novices and their families. Between 1618—a year before Françoise de la Croix ordered the paintings and statues for the chapel—and 1624, the convent received six gifts of altar clothes as part of dowry contracts. In each contract, the fabric and its value are carefully described and indicate at least a modest level of patronage from prominent merchant families.¹³⁷ These clothes, and the others found in the Ursulines’ well-stocked sacristy, would have seen frequent use because meditations before the Holy Sacrament were regular parts of the Ursulines’ daily routine. The main altar, for example, was equipped with

133. Quoted in Brémond, 3:97.

134. A. D. Wright, “Berulle and Olier: Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary,” in *Church and Mary*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2004), 271–79.

135. Brémond, 3:494.

136. ADG, Q 1534, *Etats de Biens*, 20 décembre 1790 and André Rayez and Charles Baumgartner, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*, 17 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–67), s.v., Jacques le Brun, “France, 17e Siècle,” “La vie chrétienne,” “La dévotion maritale.”

137. ADG, notarial archives, Subercaze, 3E 11.293, Marguerite Dupuy 28 April 1618, 3E 11.295, Marguerite de Lux 22 March 1620, Marie de la Chabanne 12 June 1620, Marie de la Tour l’Andry 5 September 1620, 3E 11.302, Marie de Mullet 13 January 1624 and Marie de Fayard n.d. March 1624.

a large gold monstrance for the exposition of the Holy Sacrament.¹³⁸ The *Rule* called for them to receive the Eucharist at least two times a week and required a minimum of two hours of prayer before the exposed Eucharistic elements in the chapel each day.¹³⁹

According to seventeenth-century Lives, many women in the community received communion more frequently than the required twice a week and dedicated extra time to prayers before the Host. Mère de Clemenceau, for example, always spent four hours in prayer after Mass and was rewarded by a vision during the elevation of the Host. In the Host, she saw “clearly and distinctly [...] the divine Jesus as an infant, sleeping against his Mother’s breast.” The Christocentric nature of her devotions and their acceptance by God are reinforced by the scene of her death. Warned in a premonition that her end was soon approaching, Mère de Clemenceau received permission from Françoise de la Croix to lie down upon a great cross, which she kept in her cell.

Behold, she said at the same time as she lay down upon the Cross, the day of my Feast, & of my consolation. Then, taking a profound sigh from her heart, & calling upon the aid of the holy Virgin, she awaited the moment of her death, as if in an ecstasy; she rendered her soul between the hands of her loving Redeemptor [...]. And at the moment of her death, crowns of gold, silver, & of flowers were seen on her head.¹⁴⁰

The Ursulines were not unusual in their dedication to the Eucharist. The cult of the Holy Eucharist originally developed during the thirteenth century and intensified throughout the late Middle Ages. The church turned to the Cult of the Holy Sacrament with renewed vigour after the Wars of Religion as a public declaration of the doctrine of the divine presence, but also as an expiatory

138. ADG, G 640, *Proces Verbal*, 12 May 1684.

139. *Rule*, AHG, 50: 363–65.

140. MDPU, 3:445: “Voicy, dit-elle en même temps qu’elle fut couchée sur cette Croix, le jour de ma Feste, & de ma consolation. Puis tirant un profound soupir de son Coeur, & appellant à son secours, la sainte Vierge, elle attendit l’heure de son trépas, étant comme dans une extase; elle rendit son âme entre les mains de son aimable Rédempteur [...]. Et l’on vit à sa mort des couronnes d’or, d’argent, & de fleurs sur sa teste.”

process repairing the spiritual damages of the Reformation.¹⁴¹ Mission-oriented religious orders, such as the Ursulines, and seventeenth-century mystics were particularly attracted to Eucharistic devotions because they saw in them a sacramental representation of their own sacrificial activities.¹⁴² Along with Marian devotions, regular practice of Eucharistic devotions, such as forty-Hour Oratories, continued through the French Revolution and into the early nineteenth century in Bordeaux.¹⁴³

Conclusion

Women's teaching orders like the Ursulines played a central role in Catholic reform in France. Archbishop François de Sourdis viewed new and reformed congregations and religious orders as an important part of his reform work in Bordeaux. As the Ursulines' first two decades of experience in Bordeaux demonstrate, however, the implantation of new communities was not always an easy process. Originally a congregation, the community experienced both internal and external pressures to transform into a more traditional women's religious order and move into a cloister. This not only allowed them to conform to the demands of the Council of Trent, but also to the expectations of the "respectable" or "good" families of Bordeaux, whose daughters wanted to be educated by and/or become Ursulines. More importantly, perhaps, as the experience of Françoise de la Croix suggests, cloistering allowed the Ursulines of Bordeaux to fulfill their own desires for the quiet space provided by the convent to follow their ascetic and potentially mystical religious devotions. Their transformation required a new architectural setting and thus they moved from a more public space to a traditional convent, complete with high walls and grilles. Their legitimacy as a religious order and as an appropriate place for

141. Jean Viguerie, *Le Catholicisme des Français dans l'ancienne France* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1988), 242; Ann W. Ramsey, "From Ontology to Religious Experience: Civic and Sacred Immanence in the Holy Sacrament Confraternities of Paris during the Catholic League," in *Confraternities and Catholic Reform in Italy, France & Spain*, ed. John Patrick Donnelly, SJ and Michael W. Mather, SJ (Kirkville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 145–50.

142. Jacques le Brun, "France, 17e Siècle, Dévotion à l'eucharistie."

143. During the Terror, a small group of Ursulines in hiding organized a secret chapel dedicated to the Holy Sacrament where they were allowed to expose the Host. H. Lelièvre, *Les Ursulines de Bordeaux pendant la Terreur et sous le directoire* (Bordeaux: Feret, 1896), 174–76.

the daughters of Bordeaux's elites to live, however, continued to be questioned after their move. Therefore, it became more important for the Ursulines to inform the city of their new status and mission. Thus, their carefully decorated chapel demonstrated not only their history and vocation but also the reformed religious devotions they practised and taught their students. These devotions were inspired by the deeply penitential and Christocentric devotions typical of the late sixteenth century and were gradually institutionalized in the first half of the seventeenth century. Like St. Ursula and her virgin followers, the Ursulines sacrificed themselves to the education of girls, and thus they contributed to reform in Bordeaux and Western France, but from inside the appropriate confines of the cloister. Françoise de la Croix and her Ursuline daughters played an active role in the community's transformation into a formal religious order and in its public representation. This institutionalization created tension between the more spontaneous and individualized devotions of the first generation and the more accessible but regulated devotions of the following generations. Nevertheless, this was a successful undertaking. Growing numbers of religious professions and students populated the expanding convent's buildings and supported, both financially and in terms of personnel, the Bordeaux community's expansion all over the diocese and Western France. Their success is underlined in the 1632 local history, *Chronique de Gaufreteau*, as the "[...] most highly considered and the richest convent in Bordeaux."¹⁴⁴

144. Quoted in Peyrous, *La Réforme Catholique*, 448: "[...] le plus considéré et le plus riche couvent de Bordeaux."