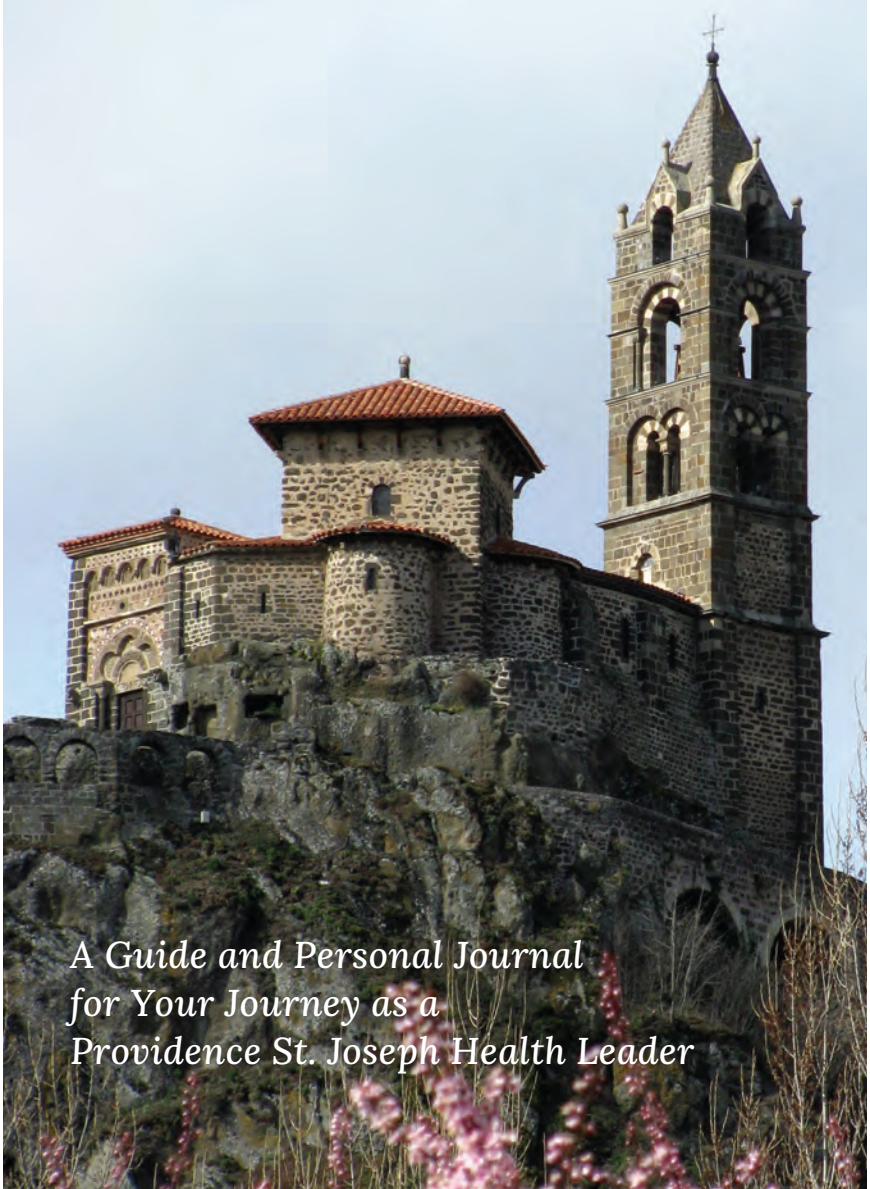


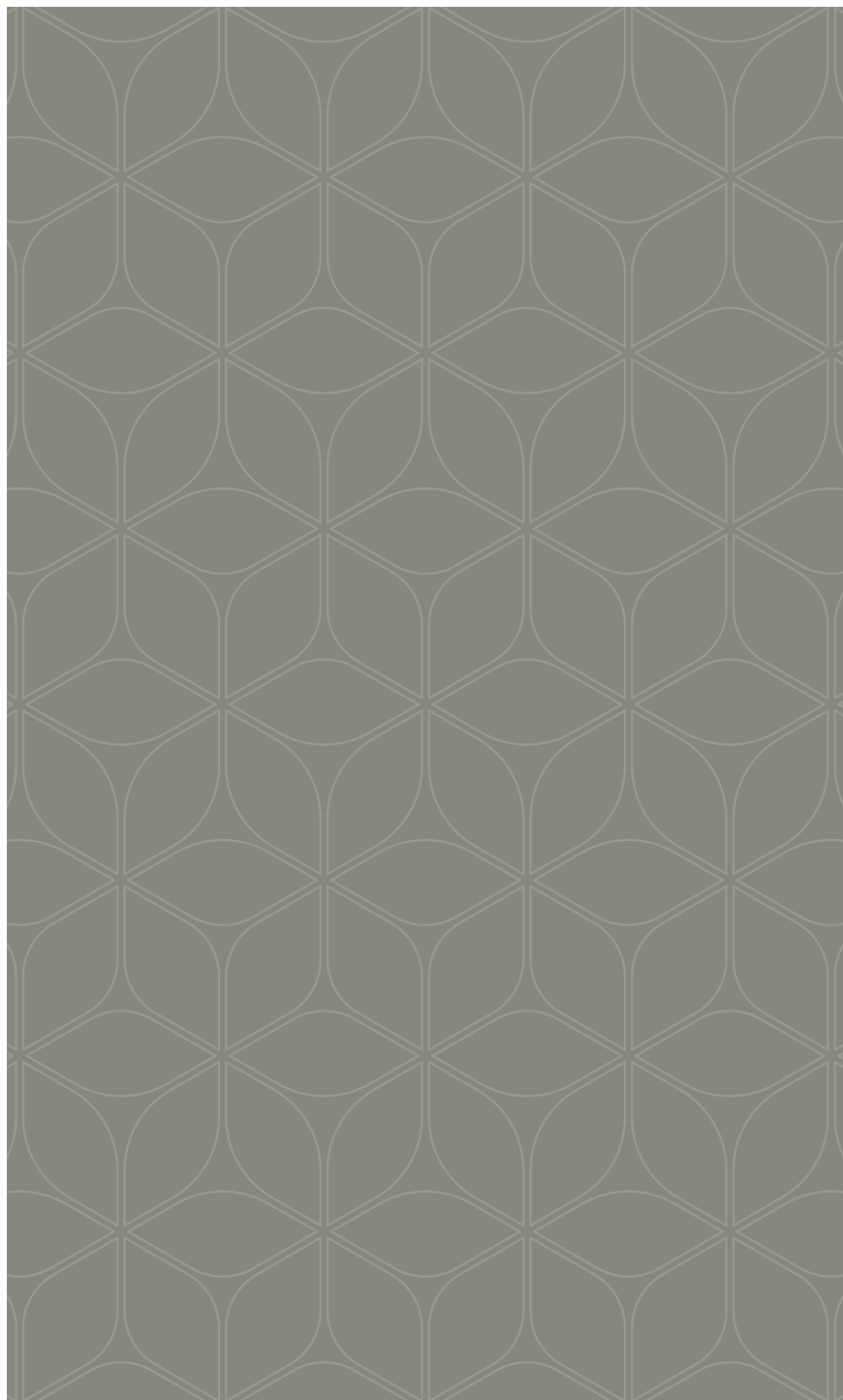


# Sisters of St. Joseph Heritage Pilgrimage

In partnership with the Mission Leadership Institute



*A Guide and Personal Journal  
for Your Journey as a  
Providence St. Joseph Health Leader*





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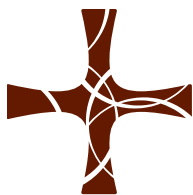
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## *Before We Depart*

### **A Blessing for the Journey**

May flowers spring up where your feet touch the earth.

May the feet that walked before you bless your every step.

May the weather that's important be the weather of your heart.

May all of your intentions find their way into the heart of God.

May your prayer be like flowers strewn for other pilgrims.

May your heart find meaning in unexpected events.

May friends who are praying for you be carried in your heart.

May the circle of life encircle you along the way.

May the broken world ride on your shoulders.

May you carry your joy and your grief in the backpack of your soul.

May you remember all the circles of prayer throughout the world.

**MACRINA WIEDERKEHR**

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# A Contemplative Reflection

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Use this reflection as you begin your pilgrimage and return to it throughout your time in France.

*Quiet, O, come to the quiet deep within your being.*

Throughout your pilgrimage, provide yourself this inner space to become a sanctuary where you and God dwell and walk together. Come back often throughout these days and sit in stillness, allowing the echoes of your experiences to settle within you.

Let your soul be fed through all your senses as you walk the streets of Lourdes, Carcassonne, Le Puy-en-Velay, and Lyon. Set aside all pretenses of what might unfold as you embrace the wonder and sacrament of the present moment and enjoy the gifts and grace that come with this pilgrimage.

As you set out each day, breathe deeply, walk slowly, and take in the beauty of the countryside. Be curious and enter the sacred spaces of prayer and worship. Slow down and tread lightly upon the cobblestone streets of villages founded long ago. Summit the ancient puy (peaks) that arise from the valleys and reach toward the sky. Allow the experiences of each day to fill and inform you.

Use all your senses. What are you taking in through your eyes? Allow yourself the gift of time to take in all that surrounds you in the environment. Reflect on your inner vision. What images, words, or sounds might be bubbling up within you? Gently allow yourself to simply be with whatever is happening within you.

As you pass by, take in the smells that waft through the streets, bakeries, food stalls, and homes. Are these smells familiar? Pleasing? Confusing? Allow your body to relax and let your senses ignite your curiosity and bring forth images, past experiences, or emerging consciousness within you.

What do you hear? In Lourdes, many languages are being spoken.

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Simply listen and take in these new sounds and words as you walk side by side with people from around the world. Listen to how your body is responding to these new sights and sounds. What emotions, thoughts, images, colors, or words do they evoke?

In Carcassonne, the birthplace of Father Jean Pierre Médaille, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph, allow your imagination to wander and picture him as a little boy in early 17th century France. How might the history and geography of his hometown have influenced his life in later years? How have your own experiences of childhood shaped who you are today? Allow your imagination free rein as you ponder these questions.

In LePuy-en-Velay, the birthplace of the Sisters of St. Joseph, meander through the cobblestone streets and let your mind's eye picture the early sisters walking these same quiet streets. Perhaps the echoes of long-ago touch something deep within you that has meaning and bearing on your life today.

Finally, the urban city of Lyon, where there are the "hill that prays" and the "hill that works," encapsulates both the religiosity of Lyon and its present-day significance as an economic and financial hub for France. The first six Sisters of St. Joseph were missioned to the United States from the small Chapel beside Notre-Dame de Fourvière Basilica. Reflect on your own mission in life. What matters? What are the values you hold dear? Why?

Ponder the mission, vision, and promise of Providence St. Joseph Health. How are you integrating your personal leadership and the essence of who you are with the purpose and mission of Providence St. Joseph? How is this pilgrimage informing and influencing you professionally, spiritually, and personally?

Finally, as you take leave of this beautiful country of France, what are your hopes and dreams as you return home? How has this pilgrimage touched your heart, mind, and soul? How have the new relationships you've experienced informed your own sense of being part of something much larger than yourself? Integrate the learnings about yourself as a leader, especially as a human being, as your journey continues back in the United States.

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# The Art of the Pilgrimage

Before setting out, remind yourself of the purpose of your journey. From now on, there is no such thing as a neutral act, an empty thought, or an aimless day. Travels become sacred by the depths of their contemplations. As in myth, dreams, and poetry, every word is saturated with meaning. Now is the time to live your ideal life.

## Reading Recommendations:

*The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker's Guide to Making Travel Sacred*, by Phil Cousineau

*Lourdes Diary: Seven Days at the Grotto of Massabielle*, by James Martin SJ

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# A Brief History of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange is a Congregation of Catholic women sharing a common foundation and mission with more than 13,000 Sisters in various St. Joseph Congregations world-wide. The mission of all Sisters of St. Joseph is a participation in the mission of Jesus: To bring all people into union with God and with one another, serving them according to their needs and their own various gifts in all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy that may be within the power of the Congregation.

## The French Foundation: 1600s

### LE PUY, FRANCE

In the beginning, there was Jean-Pierre Médaille, a French cleric who approached the local bishop, Henri du Maupas, to create a religious community of widows and single women who loved God and wanted to help their neighbors. Fr. Médaille called this project “the Little Design.” From these humble beginnings, a Congregation was born in 1650, as documented in a letter from Fr. Médaille to the Father General of the Jesuits.

At first, the Congregation was secret, as it went against the tradition of cloistering Sisters. Technically, the first group was established north of Le Puy in Dunieres, but Le Puy is considered the official birthplace of the Congregation because of Bishop du Maupas’ presence. We know that the group was composed of Françoise Eyraud and her five women companions and that they followed Fr. Médaille’s vision to go out into the city, divide up the neighborhoods, find out the needs, do their best to meet them and find lay people who want to partner in these good works.

The Sisters of St. Joseph began by helping the poor and sick in their homes, providing refuge for widows and orphans, teaching religious education and trades to girls and young women, and shouldering the burden of social work in villages where there was often no one else to do it.

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As the Congregation spread throughout central France, the Sisters served in hospitals, schools, and prisons and even maintained a pharmacy. They were determined to respond to community needs and be of service. They became “the Congregation of the most perfect love of God.”

## **The French Revolution: 1780s**

With the French Revolution, religious communities were forbidden, and Church property was confiscated, Sisters were forbidden to live in convents, and some Sisters were imprisoned or worse. The Sisters of St. Joseph dispersed, some going into hiding. Mother St. John Fontbonne was imprisoned and awaited death. Then, five Sisters were guillotined during the Reign of Terror of Robespierre.

## **The Congregation is Re-born: 1800s**

### **LYON**

In 1807, Mother St. John Fontbonne was spared from the guillotine after the fall of Robespierre and released from prison. It was a different time for the Church. Encouraged by Napoleon, bishops pressed formerly independent houses to unite in larger congregations governed by general superiors. This new centralization made missionary expansion possible as congregations began to grow.

Cardinal Fesch, the uncle of Napoleon, asked Mother St. John to go to St. Etienne to work with a group of 12 pious women known as the “Black Daughters” and to shape them into a religious congregation in the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Through Mother St. John’s leadership, the Congregation grew. In time, it became obvious they needed a new location, and Lyon seemed to be a natural and fitting place. Mother St. John Fontbonne served as General Superior from 1806 until 1839, when she resigned at 80 years old.

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## Off to The New World: 1830s

### NORTH AMERICA

Always the visionary, Mother St. John Fontbonne sent six Sisters to the United States in 1836 to meet the needs of people moving westward. They arrived in New Orleans, eventually establishing their founding site at Carondelet near St. Louis, Missouri.

In time, 25 independent Sisters of St. Joseph Congregations were established in the United States (called The U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph) and Canada, all stemming from the original one in Carondelet. Each maintained a common heritage but added a unique spirit depending on their location.

The first ministries of the Sisters in the United States were involved in meeting many needs, including establishing a school for the deaf, working with Native Americans, building hospitals and orphanages during the Civil War, and teaching immigrants and formerly enslaved African Americans.

By the century's end, the Sisters of St. Joseph, previously confined to one section of France, were in the United States, Canada, India, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Iceland, Armenia, Algeria, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

## The Founding of The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange: 1900s

### ORANGE, CA

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange trace their heritage from France through Carondelet, Missouri; Rochester, New York; Concordia, Kansas; La Grange, Illinois; and California. The trek to California was under the leadership of Mother Bernard Gosselin. She and eight sisters left LaGrange, Illinois, near Chicago to establish a school in Eureka, California. When the sisters first arrived, they had only 60 cents and just a promise of a temporary house. Yet, even with such limited resources, they could open a school within a few months of arrival. The Sisters managed to sustain themselves with the meager income the school provided by growing most of their own food and the generosity of the people of Eureka.

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The 1918 flu epidemic presented a new challenge. Although none of the Congregation members were trained in medicine, the Sisters knew that the people of the area needed practical nursing care and people to console them in the presence of the deadly disease. The Sisters realized that by establishing a hospital, they could provide a health care service that would effectively address the area's personal, social, and spiritual needs. With community support, they opened St. Joseph Hospital in Eureka.

In 1922, Mother Gosselin moved the Congregation to Orange, California, where they became the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange. The Congregation continued in the same spirit of charity, simplicity, and humility characteristic of Sisters of St. Joseph worldwide. Mother Bernard further encouraged the Sisters to respond to the needs of their neighbors with **faith, foresight, and flexibility**.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange's first ministries were education and health care. They experienced decades of effective service within a system characterized by centralized authority, limited personal choice of ministry, and structured ministerial activity. Schools and hospitals were staffed primarily by the Sisters, and in the 1940s and 1950s, the number of institutions directed by the Congregation increased steadily.

## Radical Change: 1960s

The 1960s radically challenged the environment. Rapid changes in every aspect of life brought disruption to the traditions of religious life and those of the broader society. At the beginning of the 1960s, Vatican II challenged religious Congregations to renew and adapt their mission and way of life to respond to the changing needs of society and the Church. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange responded by clarifying their mission, broadening the scope of their ministries, and changing outdated structures and customs.

## The Sisters Today

Today, the Sisters of St Joseph of Orange are part of the more than 13,000 Sisters of St. Joseph serving throughout the world. The

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congregation's commitment to education is expressed in various forms, including elementary, secondary, university, and other adult education. The commitment to extend the healing mission of Jesus is expressed through acute care hospitals, rehabilitation programs, home health care, community education, primary care clinics, and wellness programs. The works of the congregation have also expanded beyond education and health care to include The St. Joseph Justice Center; St. Joseph Worker Program; CSJ Educational Network; Center for Spiritual Development; Sisters of St Joseph Healthcare Foundation; CSJ Center for Refugee Families; and CSJ Center for Justice and Reconciliation.

When Providence and St. Joseph Health came together as Providence, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange and Sisters of Providence also began working together to support the health system. However, The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange remains an independent congregation focused on health care, education, and other endeavors to support their communities.

As with all congregations, The Sisters know their ministry is greatly enhanced through fuller collaboration with their lay co-workers. They have developed clearer roles for the laity involved in their ministries and have asked them to be partners and leaders with them in their institutions. This partnership is evident by the pilgrimage we now embark on as Providence St. Joseph Health leadership learns more about the heritage of this humble and foresighted group of founders.

## **More Facts About The Sisters of St. Joseph Worldwide**

While Sisters of St. Joseph are deeply engaged locally, we are also part of a global ministry.

The Sisters of St. Joseph has approximately 13,000 members in 32 congregations worldwide. Although our largest numbers are in the United States (7,000 members) and France (2,000 members), you will find Sisters of St. Joseph in approximately 50 countries, covering every continent except Antarctica.

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## The Sisters Have a Long History of Collaboration Across the Globe

- 1851** – M. St. Jean Boissat (Chambery) joined the Ancey Sisters in India
- 1854** – 37 Sisters of Chambery went to St. Louis (Carondolet)
- 1920** – S. Ludovica (Aosta) joined Chambery Sisters in India
- 2003** – LAC in India had a program for formation directors
- 2005** – Lyon & l'Institut collaborated for formation in West Africa
- 2006** – S. Dorothy (Springfield) joined the Chambery Sisters in Tanzania
- 2008** – Lyon and Chambery opened a community in the Czech Republic

## Who's Who in the History of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph

**JEAN FRANÇOIS REGIS, SJ • (JANUARY 31, 1597 – DECEMBER 30, 1640)** was a French Jesuit recognized as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. For seven years, he evangelized in France to more than 50 districts in le Vivarais, le Forez, and le Velay (Le Puy). Fr. Regis was a man of personal spiritual discipline and austerity, which we will see when we visit the church where he was stationed in Le Puy. He came from a recently ennobled family and was ordained a priest at 31. Yet, despite his wealthy background, he spent much of his life preaching to the poor in Huguenot-controlled areas of France. His preaching style was said to have been simple and direct, which appealed to the uneducated peasantry. During a time when prostitution and venereal disease were rampant, he tried to protect women by opening the St. Agatha Refuge for Prostitutes and providing training to young girls in the art of lacemaking to help them establish meaningful work. In time, lacemaking became an economic boon for Le Puy, and Fr. Regis became the patron saint of lace-making. Fr. Regis also worked with plague victims in Toulouse. He established the Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, which organized charity collections

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of money and food from the wealthy. He died from pneumonia on December 30, 1640, during a mission to La Louvesc, Dauphine in France, and was canonized as a saint on June 16, 1737.

**ST. FRANCIS DE SALES (AUGUST 21, 1567 – DECEMBER 28, 1622)** was Bishop of Geneva and Doctor of the Universal Church. He was born at Thorens, in the Duchy of Savoy, displaying apostolic zeal at a young age and devoting himself to incessant preaching, hearing confessions, and assisting others with spiritual direction. With his intense love for the poor, he completely dispensed with superfluities and lived simply in order to be able to provide more abundantly for the needy. With St. Jane Frances De Chantel, he founded the Visitations of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1607. He is the author of several books, treatises, pamphlets, and countless sermons and letters.

**JEAN-PIERRE MÉDAILLE, SJ • (OCTOBER 6, 1610 TO DECEMBER 30, 1669)** was a Jesuit born in Carcassonne, France. His journeys took him through the towns and villages of south-central France from 1640 to 1669. He founded the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1648, and, in 1650, he encouraged a congregation in Le Puy, France, to give themselves up wholly and unreservedly to all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The “little design” that he proposed for the Congregation was based on the spirituality of the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits.

**HENRI DE MAUPAS • (1606-1680)** was the Bishop of Le Puy from 1641-1661 and the man to whom Father Médaille, SJ, presented the concept of the Sisters of St. Joseph as a congregation of women devoted to God and the needs of the people. Educated by the Jesuits, de Maupas was a man of deep spirituality. He was very much influenced by Vincent de Paul and attended Vincent’s Tuesday Conferences for Priests, which began in Le Puy in 1633. He also established the Sulpician Seminary in Le Puy.

**FRANÇOISE EYRAUD** is considered the first superior of the first Daughters of St. Joseph. Being of the upper class, she was able to read and write. She was also Director of the Hospital of Mont Ferrand in Le Puy-en-Velay, a 17th-century refuge for orphaned and displaced children and a place for the poor to find food and medicine.

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## The other founding Sisters were:

- **CLAUDIA CHASTEL**, a widow who held property and could read and write, had a dowry of 800 livres.
- **MARGUERITE BURDIER**, who lived until 1710, had the greatest influence on the early communities and founded multiple houses.
- **ANNA BRUN**, who succeeded Françoise Eyraud as Superior in Le Puy, died at age 50. She was probably an orphan of 15 when she entered.
- **ANNA CHALAYER**, who died at 94, was a lacemaker.
- **ANNA VEY**, who had a dowry of 500 livres, had her name appear only once in the chronicles of the Sisters.

**MOTHER ST. JOHN FONTBONNE • (MARCH 3, 1759 IN BAS-EN-BASSET, VELAY, FRANCE – NOVEMBER 22, 1843 IN LYON, FRANCE)** was the Foundress and Superior General of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon. In 1778, she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph house, which had just been established at Monistrol by Bishop de Gallard of Le Puy. During the French Revolution, she was forced to disperse her community, yet she remained at her post until the mob dragged her out and the convent was taken possession in the name of the Paris Commune. She was arrested and scheduled to be guillotined, but at the fall of Robespierre, her life was spared. From there, she led the establishment of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

## Key Influences to the Spirituality of the Day in 17th Century France:

- **ST. FRANCIS DE SALES • (1567-1622) AND ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL • (1572-1641)** founded the Order of the Visitation and opened religious life to more women.
- **ST. JOHN FRANCIS REGIS, SJ • (1597-1640)**, an early Jesuit preacher and missionary

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- **ST. VINCENT DE PAUL • (1580-1660)**, who founded the Vincentians and Daughters of Charity in 1639
  - **ST. LOUISE DE MARILLAC • (1591-1660)**, co-founder of the Daughters of Charity

### **Other Religious Orders founded and rooted in the “French school of spirituality”**

- **CAPUCHINS • (1528)**, Franciscans
- **JESUITS • (1540)**, Ignatius of Loyola in Spain
- **ORATORIAN • (1575)**, St. Philip Neri in Italy
- **VISITATIONS • (1610)**, Jane Frances de Chantal
- **VINCENTIANS • (1630)**, Vincent de Paul
- **DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY • (1633)**, Louise deMarillac (Hotel Dieu in Paris)
- **SULPICIAN (DIOCEAN PRIESTS) • (1642)**, Jean Jacques Olier

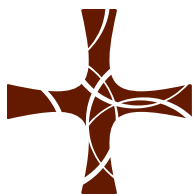
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## A Quick Guide to Traveling in France

France is a beautiful country, from its majestic scenery to its small towns to the exquisite architecture of its great cities. Be sure to take time to soak it all in.

As a traveler in France, take note of a few common courtesies:

- Many French people speak English, especially the younger people. However, a few French words are always welcome. When entering a store, say “bonjour” to the shopkeeper. Do not leave without saying “au revoir.”
- French meals are to be savored. It is preferred that you eat at a table instead of walking and eating or drinking. Tipping at a restaurant is not necessary, but it is appreciated. A few euros are fine.
- Although jeans are acceptable, certain casual outfits are less desirable. Generally, athletic gear such as sweat pants are only worn at the gym or when exercising.
- If looking for a bathroom, do not use the words bathroom or restroom. Ask for “les toilettes.”
- France is a cashless country. Most people use their phones to pay for just about everything. Credit cards are also accepted, although Visa and Mastercard (not American Express) are the most widely used.
- Don't miss out on the delights of a French bakery (la boulangerie). A chocolate croissant is called pain au chocolat and it is delicious. Buy a baguette and tear the top off to have a quick taste – it's wonderfully warm and toasty



## *Arriving in Lourdes*

The faithful come to Lourdes, hoping for miracles, healing, and transformation. Pilgrims, people just like us, have traveled to Lourdes for 150 years. As we begin the pilgrimage, may our hearts be full of hope for the days to come.

### **Welcome to Lourdes, Where We Begin Our Journey of Faith and Devotion**

Our pilgrimage begins in Lourdes, a town of 17,000 inhabitants and the most renowned Marian shrine. It is one of the largest pilgrimage sites in France and among the most visited Christian pilgrimage sites worldwide.

We start in Lourdes because it is a place of initiation, offering a first-hand encounter with the essence of “pilgrimage.” Over the course of two days, you will have the privilege to partake in a true pilgrimage experience, embracing the faith and devotion of fellow travelers who journey to a place profoundly sacred to them. We join the as seekers of hope, spiritual and physical healing, miracles, and a deeper connection with God.

### **The Miracle of Bernadette**

The town’s prominence can be traced back to a series of extraordinary visions experienced by a young girl. On February 11, 1858, a 14-year-old named Bernadette Soubirous (alternatively spelled as Soubiroux) ventured into the secluded Grotto of

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Massabielle while searching for firewood. Here, Bernadette claimed to have witnessed the Blessed Virgin Mary, who appeared to her 18 times, with the last encounter occurring on July 16, 1858.

Across the world, numerous shrines dedicated to Mary mark apparitions, miracles, or sites of enduring Marian devotion. These destinations often draw pilgrims, including Guadalupe in Mexico, Fatima in Portugal, Loreto in Italy, the Black Madonna of Częstochowa in Poland, and The Basilica of Our Lady, Queen of Ireland in Knock, Ireland.

Among these, Lourdes holds a special place as the largest and most renowned of Marian shrines. Between February 11 and July 16, 1858, Mary appeared an astounding 18 times to Bernadette Soubirous, a humble peasant girl. During these encounters, Mary, who appeared as a beautiful and youthful lady, instructed Bernadette to relay a message to the village priest, urging the construction of a chapel at the site of her apparitions, foretelling a procession of many people.

Moreover, Mary asked Bernadette to drink from a seemingly barren spring and cleanse herself in a place overgrown with weeds and dirt. Miraculously, pure, clean water subsequently gushed forth. As one writer aptly notes, "Perhaps one of the greatest miracles of the grotto of Massabielle is that none was ever promised, yet thousands have been attributed to her intercession." This water, which continues to flow to this day, has been attributed with remarkable healing properties, although no identifiable curative elements have been scientifically identified.

### **Five million come here every year**

Nestled approximately 497 miles south of Paris, in the picturesque foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains, Lourdes welcomes over five million pilgrims and tourists annually. The sanctuary encompasses 52 hectares of land and boasts 22 places of worship, including the sacred grotto, two basilicas, and various facilities designed to accommodate pilgrims and the infirm. Beyond the sanctuary, many visitors also make a pilgrimage to the former home of the young visionary, St. Bernadette.

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A significant landmark in Lourdes is the statue of the Madonna of Lourdes, erected at the site in 1864. In 1873, the grand French pilgrimages to Lourdes were inaugurated. The basilica was consecrated three years later, and the statue was solemnly crowned.

Recognizing the importance of these events, in 1883, the foundation stone for another church was laid, as the first was no longer sufficient to accommodate the growing number of pilgrims. Consecrated in 1901, this new church was constructed at the base of the basilica and received the name “Church of the Rosary.”

The Catholic Church further acknowledged the significance of Lourdes. Pope Leo XIII authorized a special office and Mass to commemorate the Lourdes apparitions, and in 1907, Pope Pius X extended the observance of this feast to the entire Church calendar. Consequently, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes is now celebrated annually on February 11, a date that holds profound significance for the town and its pilgrims.

## **What You Should Know About Devotion to Mary in the Catholic Tradition**

Mary, as the mother of Jesus, occupies a central role within the Catholic Church. It is essential to clarify that Catholics do not worship Mary; instead, they hold a deep devotion to her, akin to the affection and reverence one might feel for their own mothers. The Catholic veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary has evolved, gaining importance and artistic expression. Devotion to Mary has been nurtured through numerous apparitions, leaving an indelible mark on various art forms, music, painting, and literature.

Catholic veneration of Mary finds its roots in Scripture: “In the fullness of time, God sent his son, born of a woman.” This acknowledgment of Mary as the Mother of God underscores her honor.

The significance of Mary in Catholic beliefs, her veneration, and the development of Mariology (the study of Mary) have not solely arisen from official pronouncements in Rome. They have often been propelled from the grassroots through the Marian writings of Saints

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and the devotion of believers, as exemplified in Lourdes, and at times through apparitions. This has fostered a rich Marian culture, evident in centuries of artistic, literary, and musical expressions.

In prayer, Catholics seek Mary's intercession with her son on their behalf and for others. Mary's role as a spiritual companion and mother figure is revered, and numerous feasts are celebrated in her honor. In essence, Catholics venerate Mary, but they do not worship her.

Across the world, numerous shrines dedicated to Mary mark apparitions, miracles, or sites of enduring Marian devotion. These destinations often draw pilgrims, including Guadalupe in Mexico, Fatima in Portugal, Loreto in Italy, the Black Madonna of Częstochowa in Poland, and The Basilica of Our Lady, Queen of Ireland in Knock, Ireland. In Lourdes, however, many pilgrims find spiritual and physical healing and a deep connection with God.

## **Why Do People Come to Lourdes?**

People embark on pilgrimages to places like Lourdes to pursue the sacred, seek something greater than themselves, and yearn to connect with God. They come with hopes of healing, paying homage, praying for peace and reconciliation, and reconnecting with the spirit of their faith. Just as young people pray for peace at Taizé and pilgrims seek justice for the poor at Our Lady of Guadalupe, all forms of pilgrimage share a common thread—an intensity of intention, a profound longing that drives the journey. In Lourdes, we join those who seek cures, whether spiritual, physical, or psychological, and we embrace the pilgrimage experience, offering our prayers for healing, both for ourselves and our loved ones.

## **Our Time in Lourdes: A Prelude to Embrace the Sacred**

Our stay in Lourdes serves as a proximate preparation, enabling us to fully engage in our pilgrimage to the sacred sites of Le Puy and Lyon. It offers experiences that guide us in capturing the essence of the founding Sisters of St. Joseph in our daily lives and work. These encounters align with our goal of Sacred Encounters as Providence

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St. Joseph Health leaders, fostering a deeper connection with the sacred in our mission.

## Seeing Beyond the Surface in Lourdes

The atmosphere and surroundings of Lourdes, often foreign to 21st-century Americans, transport us back to the heart of 19th-century culture and its unique religious and cultural expression—the Romantic Movement in art, literature, and music. Think of the grandeur of a Wagnerian opera, the fervor of Tchaikovsky’s Overture of 1812, or the vivid imagery in Victor Hugo’s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. In many ways, Lourdes remains entrenched in the 19th century.

Upon arrival in this town, take in all the sights and sounds:

- We find ourselves amidst a sea of souvenir shops offering an array of gaudy and, occasionally, exquisite mementos.
- The churches within the Domain exhibit 19th-century architectural and interior design, capturing the era’s spirit.
- We witness throngs of pilgrims, many engaged in processions, clutching candles, reciting the rosary in various languages, and singing hymns.

Yet, as we explore Lourdes, we endeavor to look beyond and beneath its external trappings. Walking alongside fellow pilgrims, we observe the healthy caring for the afflicted with a gentle and compassionate touch. This experience profoundly moves us. We witness their mindfulness and unwavering faith, expressed through suffering, prayer, and song.

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## A Reflection on the Lacemakers

Lacemaking weaves deep into our heritage. Here, we reflect on its meaning.



### **THE LACE IN 1650 IS STILL UNFINISHED.**

*O Loving God of future and purpose, we call upon you in faith to weave the pattern of our days.*

*Where inspiration and guidance are needed, may we open our minds and hearts to your designs.*

*May vision and clarity be your gifts to us along our way.*

*May openness to possibilities and a cherishing of our history blend in our efforts to give shape to the future.*

*May you reveal to us the truth of today and lead us forth with courage.*

**AMEN**

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## A Visit to the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary in Lourdes

One of the most profound sites is The Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary. We recommend you take plenty of time to experience this beautiful place.

The basilica was designed by the architect Leopold Hardy and completed in 1899. Consecrated in 1901, it has a capacity of 1,500 worshippers.

In 2007, the interior and exterior of the basilica were extensively renovated, and the mosaics were restored.



The exterior facade of the basilica was also modified in 2007 to include depictions of the Luminous Mysteries, which were added to the traditional fifteen mysteries by Pope John Paul II in 2002. These Luminous Mysteries are five events of Jesus' life that are not covered by the other mysteries of the Rosary:

- The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan, where He was revealed as the Son of God;
- The wedding feast of Cana, where He performed his first miracle of turning water into wine;
- The proclamation of the kingdom of God, where He preached repentance and forgiveness;

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- The Transfiguration, where He showed his glory to Peter, James, and John;
  - The institution of the Eucharist, where He gave his body and blood as the new covenant.

### A guide to the mosaics:



#### THE BAPTISM IN THE JORDAN

The Baptism given by John is a sign of repentance and conversion. Jesus starts His public life by receiving this baptism: He has no sin to be forgiven, but He came to save men from sin and evil in them. As the Lamb of God, He carries and takes away the world's sins. To remove it, He must first carry it. He is also the Beloved who comes to accomplish the will of the Father to save us.



#### THE TRANSFIGURATION

Jesus took three of his disciples with him up the mountain: Peter, James, and John would then witness His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. At the hour of the Transfiguration, Jesus is surrounded by the light. He radiates the light in Him, the divinity He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The three disciples are astounded. Above them, Moses and Elijah represent the Old Testament: They recognize in Jesus the accomplishment of the Promise.

#### THE SALVATION

In this mosaic, Jesus appears to his apostles on the evening of Easter day and gives them, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power to forgive sins. In Lourdes, many pilgrims receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this scene, the men bring down a

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paralytic on his stretcher in front of Jesus. They remind us of the Hospitaliers of Lourdes. The scene takes place in Capernaum. "On seeing their faith," Jesus tells the paralytic: "Your sins are forgiven." The crowd is scandalized because Jesus takes on Himself a divine power. To show He is not an impostor, Jesus cures the paralytic. God wants the salvation of the entire person.



### THE WEDDING AT CANA

Of all the Luminous Mysteries, this is the only one where the presence of Mary is mentioned in the Gospels. "They have no wine," she said to Jesus, as the wine represents joy and love. Then, referring to her Son, she said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." These are her last words in the Gospel. Mary says the same thing to us today. Jesus changes water into wine, opening the doors to joy and everlasting love. Nonetheless, He opens

them by allowing a soldier to pierce his side with a spear: "And blood and water came out."



### THE SUN, PALM TREE, AND THE EUCHARIST

**The sun** is the symbol of the light. It is red, the color of blood. But also because we cannot look at the midday sun. **The palm tree** is a sign of life and abundance: its dates can be eaten all year round. **The Institution of the Eucharist** is represented at the top of the facade, on either side.

Cana anticipated the Eucharist, which Jesus institutes on the eve of His Passion: "This is my body given up. This is my blood poured out." Like the Christians of the first centuries, the apostles receive the Eucharist in their hands, covered by a veil, by respect. On the contrary, Judas holds his purse tightly with bare hands.

*This information was extracted from Lourdes Magazine, no. 156.*



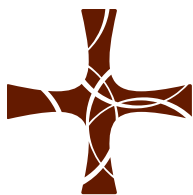


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## Getting Ready for the Next Part of Our Journey

Following our time in Lourdes, we will embark on a quest to explore the sacred in Le Puy and Lyon, delving into the roots and foundation of the mission that propels us as leaders in Providence St. Joseph Health ministry.

Now that you have left the first part of our journey consider how we can return with a renewed commitment to extend the healing ministry of Jesus through our work. How can we infuse our founding sponsors' unifying and reconciling spirit into every facet of our mission?



## *Arriving in Carcassonne*

Medieval Carcassonne is a 13th century world of towers, turrets, and cobblestone alleys. It's Europe's ultimate walled fortress city – a place to indulge your childhood games of knights and kings. As we walk through this city where Fr. Médaille was born, let us delve more deeply into his times, imagining the society and daily life that shaped the founder of the community of God's great love.

### **Getting to Know Carcassonne**

Travelers approaching Carcassonne, France, would be excused for supposing they are entering a fairy tale world. The fortified city stands majestically on a hill overlooking the lush countryside of the Languedoc and the distant Pyrenees Mountains.

Carcassonne's history goes back as far as Roman Gaul; parts of the city's fortifications date from the 1st century AD. Located at the strategic intersection of two historic trade routes, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and from Spain to the center of France, Carcassonne's defenses were strengthened by successive owners. In the 5th century, the Visigoths extended the Roman defenses, and many years later, Carcassonne Castle proved impenetrable to invaders.

Carcassonne came under the control of the French crown in 1247. King Louis IX (St. Louis) and his successor, Philip III, further strengthened the fortifications of Carcassonne Castle and built the

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“new town” outside the defenses. English troops laid siege to the city during the Hundred Years War, but the fortifications proved impenetrable once again.

Many French castles were built as places for entertainment, but Carcassonne Castle remained a fortress. For many years, Carcassonne marked the border between France and Aragon (a kingdom in modern Spain). In 1659, however, the border moved south to the Pyrenees, and the Cite de Carcassonne lost its military significance.

At the time of Father Médaille’s birth in 1610, Carcassonne had a population of about 10,000. It was a small but busy manufacturing town specializing in textiles. Like other towns of the region, it had an ever-growing number of religious houses and pious foundations, which ‘filled the streets with priests and nuns’ and caused endless conflicts over exemption and precedence.

For the next several centuries of Carcassonne’s history, the fortified walls began falling into disrepair. In the mid-19th century, the French government proposed demolishing the walls. A popular uproar saved Carcassonne Castle, which was then restored. Double walls stretch over two miles around a maze of medieval streets and museums. More than 50 towers rise from the fortifications to overlook the River Aude and the surrounding green countryside. The closest big city is Toulouse, about 60 miles to the northwest.

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## **Fr. Jean-Pierre Médaille, SJ:** **Son of Carcassonne and Founder of the** **Sisters of St. Joseph**

Let's take a closer look at the life of Fr. Jean-Pierre Médaille, born on October 6, 1610, in Carcassonne, France. Jean-Pierre had two brothers, Jean Paul, born in 1618, who later joined the Jesuits, and Jean, who inherited his Father's position and became an eminent jurist.

The Médailles were a strong Catholic family and lived in fairly comfortable circumstances. They belonged to the local bourgeoisie, thus enjoying many cultural and religious events.

At the time of Jean-Pierre's birth, Carcassonne had a population of about 10,000 and was a small but busy manufacturing town specializing in textiles. His parents donated to assist in the building of the first Jesuit College of Carcassonne. At the time, the Jesuits had 372 colleges and 123 residences scattered across France. By 1645, Jesuit membership was more than 13,000.

Jean-Pierre is described as "an extra-ordinary, ordinary man." Here is a brief chronology of his life, starting with his entrance into the Jesuits:

- 1623: At age 13, he enters grammar class at the newly founded Jesuit College in Carcassonne
- 1626: Not yet 16, he enters the Jesuit College in Carcassonne on September 15.
- 1628: Plague breaks out, and the Novices are moved to Lardenne.
- Jean-Pierre most likely makes vows on September 16, 1628, but the plague would continue until 1631.
- 1629: Jean-Pierre is a student of the humanities and philosophy at the Jesuit College in Toulouse. Here, he meets one of the most influential men of his life, Fr. Francis Regis, S.J.

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- 1633–35: Jean-Pierre returns to Carcassonne to teach the third- and fourth-year grammar classes to the young boys at the Jesuit College.
  - 1635–37: Jean-Pierre is a theology student at the College of Toulouse
  - 1637: Jean-Pierre is ordained a priest at age 27.
  - 1637–42: Fr. Médaille is appointed Assistant to the Rector at the Jesuit College in Aurillac. He looks after temporal affairs (the internal ministry), does some parish work, directs Sodalitys, gives instructions, and visits the poor, sick, and prisoners.
  - 1642: Fr. Médaille professes his final vows on October 11.
  - 1643–49: He is missioned to the Jesuit College St. Flour, where he is Minister.
  - 1643–46: Fr. Médaille is named Assistant Superior, an in-residence appointment.
  - 1646–49: He becomes Procurator (Treasurer), an on-the-road appointment collecting funds from patrons who support the College
  - 1646: Fr. Médaille has time to serve as spiritual director and confessor. Some of his directees form a “secret association,” which is the first iteration of “The Little Design” way of life for women dedicated to God but immersed in the world.
  - 1650–52: He is missioned to the College of Aurillac, where he is Assistant Superior, an in-residence appointment.
  - He is also assigned for one year as a “preacher outside the city.”
  - He then goes to Le Puy for Bishop de Maupas’ signing of the letters, which gave the Sisters of St. Joseph their civil (legal) status.
  - Fr. Médaille is in Le Puy on December 2 for the presentation of the document recording the contract between their congregation and Bishop de Maupas.

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- 1652– 54: Fr. Médaille is back in residence at Aurillac as Minister.
  - 1654–62: He is transferred to the College of Montferrand, bringing a new and permanent orientation to his work as he becomes a missionary. He joins the “mission bands” traveling in pairs to evangelize the People of God in all the parishes throughout the diocese of Clermont.
  - 1657: Fr. Médaille wrote and published *The Maxims of Perfection* for all persons aspiring to great virtue. These Maxims are still used by the Sisters of St. Joseph today, although versions are written that use present-day language for ease of understanding
  - 1662– 69: Fr. Médaille is stationed at the College of Clermont-Ferrand, continuing in active missionary work throughout the parishes of France.
  - 1662–69: Sometime during this period, Fr. Médaille composes the Constitutions for the Sisters of St. Joseph
  - 1664: He is asked to return to the College of Clermont as Minister for one year to handle a difficult situation which resulted in a one day riot.
  - 1669: Ill health brings Fr. Médaille to the College of Billom, a house of retreat for the retired Jesuits of Toulouse province. He was assigned as a confessor. At this time, this traveler on the road of God’s glory (Jesuit archives) comes to a place of rest after 15 years of active missionary service to the people of southwestern France.
  - Jean-Pierre Médaille passes away at the College of Billom on December 30 at the age of 59. He was a Jesuit for 43 years. The cemetery where he was buried was most likely destroyed.

Fr. Médaille founded the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy-en-Velay, France, in 1650. He was truly a “contemplative mystic in action.” The essence of his spirituality is simply this: *“I love Love, and I let Love, love through me.”*

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## Insights into Jean-Pierre Médaille

Like most of us, Jean-Pierre Médaille was formed by his parents, but he was also strongly influenced by the Jesuits, who educated him since he was 13. A closer look at key moments in his life will shed light on his own spiritual growth and formation and the spirit and spirituality he brought to the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

The Plague broke out during Médaille's novitiate. The Plague greatly impacted the Jesuits. Between 1628 through 1631, ninety-seven Jesuits died...one third of the Toulouse province. While the novices wanted to stay in Toulouse, the novice director took them into exile in Lardenne. Why? Because the novitiate is a time of discernment, and for the Jesuits, discernment is the core of the spiritual life. As the Jesuits write, *"Works of charity must flow from an interior life of charity. The urgency and demand will always be there for some form of active service to the dear neighbor, but care and discernment must be present to preserve the interior life of charity, the "soul of the apostolate."*

It was also during this time that Jean-Pierre met John Francis Regis, who was then a philosophy student in Lardenne. The two young Jesuits began to form the concept of "contemplatives in action."

When Jean-Pierre proposed forming the Congregation, the Jesuits were not keen on the idea, as noted in the following letter from one of his Superiors: As a February 20, 1651 letter from the Father General in Rome states, "I'm uneasy, reserved and prudently cautious with Médaille and this extraordinary undertaking, the foundation of I know not what grouping of women. I want to know the nature of his plan and from whom he obtained permission to busy himself with such matters which are hardly in accordance with our Institute."

Even though his superiors were concerned with his work founding this Congregation, Jean-Pierre saw this activity as a response to the Spirit's prompting. He wrote: *"What I find so marvelous in this new design is that it is without a visible father, mother, founder, foundress,*

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*without a house of its own.” (Eucharistic Letter p. 7-8.) A new expression came out of his contemplative core – “The Little Design.”*

Fr. Médaille’s apostolic service can be divided into two major areas:

- Eleven years in administrative and “secular” duties (finances, buildings, and practical affairs of the colleges)
- Fifteen years as a missionary – working mostly in the Massif Central region of France – giving retreats, acting as spiritual director, and preaching.

During those first eleven years of ministry, Fr. Médaille would be what we would call an “operations person.” He was responsible for collecting the money from local officials who had promised the Jesuits funding when they opened colleges throughout France. As “administrator,” he was responsible for ensuring building upkeep and contracting with locals for ongoing maintenance. In addition, he had to call on key local donors who had promised money to the Jesuits for their work in staffing the colleges in their towns.

Thus, amid the “operational mundane” and the bleakness of 17th century France, Médaille came to the mystical realization that neither poverty, nor riches, famine, wars, or different principalities or powers...no *“nothing can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus.”* St. Paul’s great hymn of love in Romans 8:31-39 was the solid faith proclamation in Fr. Médaille’s life.





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# Reflection and Prayer on Fr. Médaille

*St. Michael's Cathedral*

*Created by Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ*

## Leader

Each of us is born in a particular place and time. Between birth and death, we seek to make meaning and understanding of our lives. The act of seeking is a quest, a search. One of the classical definitions of theology is "faith seeking understanding," and it points to our desire for deeper meaning and understanding of God in our lives. Pilgrimage is both an inward and outward journey; along the way, we're gaining new insights on an individual and communal level. On our pilgrimage, we are seeking the points of connection between the historical roots of the founding sponsors and the responsibility of leading the ministry of Providence St. Joseph.

Take a moment and look around this church that has not changed much over the centuries. As we gather in this place, we recall that Jean-Pierre Médaille was baptized here and welcomed into the Church, becoming a part of the Mystical Body of Christ on earth. This is where Fr. Médaille received three other sacraments: First Holy Communion, the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation, and Confirmation. This became his spiritual home and formal place of worship throughout his childhood years.

In your mind's eye, picture a young Jean-Pierre walking through these doors with his father, mother, and siblings. Allow your imagination to reflect on what he might have prayed for as a child. What hopes and dreams might he have imagined as he gazed upon the sanctuary and side altars?

His family members were active, worshipping parishioners of this parish. We join our prayer today with all those who have gone before us. We pray for the grace to respond to God's call to each of us and for all who are associated with Providence St. Joseph.

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## Reader 1

Fr. Médaille used new mystical and symbolic language to articulate the inarticulate. New language inspires new understanding and new behaviors. May this same spark of creativity be with us as we navigate the ever-changing health care landscape.

## Reader 2

The profound mystery of God's presence in reality is at the heart of the Congregation's spirituality. This understanding reveals the present and active invitation for a personal encounter with God anytime, anywhere. We pray for the openness and expectation of God's in-breaking presence in our lives as leaders within Providence St. Joseph.

## Reader 3

Fr. Médaille reached out to everyone – the dear neighbor without distinction. His journeys through the French countryside brought him into contact with all levels of society. May we, as members of the leadership community of Providence St. Joseph, be mindful of our roots of inclusivity and the dignity of all people.

## Reader 1

God is known in history, the events of salvation history, and the events of our lives today. Fr. Médaille listened with his whole being to discern his vocational call. May we continually seek the Spirit's promptings in our personal and professional lives, and may this positively influence our leadership ministry.

## Reader 2

In the writings of his Superiors, Fr. Médaille was viewed as a deep thinker, compassionate, intelligent, determined, and sensitive. These attributes reflect a dedication to prayer, meditation, study, reflection, and self-awareness before God. May his life be an invitation for us to deepen our own commitment to being reflective, self-aware leaders, praying for the grace and discipline to lead soulfully within the ministry of Providence St. Joseph.

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### Reader 3

Fr. Médaille is a witness to incarnational spirituality devoted to God. In embracing his call to live fully into who God created him to be, Fr. Médaille could extend his vision beyond his own lifetime and culture. We pray for the grace to embrace this moment in our lives as we embrace the challenges and opportunities afforded us in our call as leaders within the ministry of health care.

### Reader 1

Love and humility are the bedrock of embracing our incarnational moments. Through discernment, we begin to understand the roles we have embraced in our lives. We find ourselves at this moment in time to learn, on a spiritual and intellectual level, the nuances of our respective roles within Providence St. Joseph. We pray for the courage and humility to grasp the depth and breadth of our influence on this ministry entrusted to us and the implications our actions and decisions have on so many others.

### Reader 2

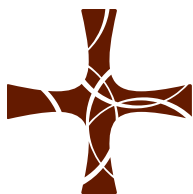
Fr. Médaille wrote the Maxims of Perfection as a way to educate both the literate and illiterate in the communities in which he ministered. The Maxims were written to facilitate the people's understanding of how to live a right and just life as Christians. A common thread throughout the Maxims was to respond to God with generosity. We pray for the wisdom to grow in our lived expressions of self-emptying love that flows from generous and gracious hearts.

### Reader 3

Another theme that echoes throughout the Maxims is that of gentleness. Knowing the ravages of war, poverty, and affliction that were the norm in 17th century France, "gentleness" takes on new meaning. This virtue is needed today as we grapple with the implications of the aftermath of the pandemic, war, violence, climate crisis, forced migration, poverty, and lack of access to the necessities of life for much of the world's population. We pray now for a gentle spirit within that enables and frees us to steward the abundance of resources at our disposal effectively.







## *On the Way to Le Puy*

*By Sister Jane DeLisle, CSJ*

Before we get to Le Puy, let's take an imaginary journey down the city's streets in the 17th century. This will show you where Fr. Médaille and the first Sisters claimed the initial graces of the charism and spirituality that shaped the Sisters of St. Joseph. Allow your imagination to guide you on a journey back in time.

Life in 17th century France was, at best, "hard and insecure," especially for the vast majority of the peasants. The clamoring sounds, the sight of poverty and illness, and the dank and acrid smells of poor sanitation overpower the senses as one walks the narrow and sometimes dark cobblestoned streets. Shafts of sunlight break from behind cumulous clouds in a bright blue sky. A gentle breeze wafts through the streets, relieving the senses.

Walking along Le Puy's dark, narrow streets, carts clatter loudly over the stones; several men and some children make their presence known with loud arguments echoing off the walls of the closely set buildings. Others in shabby, dirty clothes roam about aimlessly during the mid-morning hours, while some poorly kempt younger men sit idle, just waiting to see what adventure will come their way. There is no work available, for many are second and third sons in a society that offers the most promising future to only the eldest son. So, they wait, sometimes engaging in mischief and trouble with the local police.

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Suddenly, from around the corner, the clatter of carriage wheels and horse hooves on the cobblestones reverberates on the walls of the houses lining the street and halts abruptly in the more affluent part of the town. A groomsman opens the carriage door and helps a lovely lady of the aristocracy onto the street as she squints in the sunlight. Her dress is beautiful, and her hair is well-groomed. She carries a small handbag. Her skirts are slightly lifted so as not to soil the hem in the dirt of the street. A gentleman escorts her. They look neither left nor right.

The pair completely ignores the vagrants and street urchins along the street begging for handouts. Gingerly, the well-dressed couple steps over the sewage that runs along the edges of the street left over from the daily emptying of chamber pots from the windows. They enter the house as soon as a servant opens the door. There, they join a small group in the salon for enlightened conversation and perhaps some spiritual activity led by a traveling Jesuit missionary.

Toward the center of town, peasants try to sell what little they have to provide for their families meagerly. In simple tattered dresses, women carry water in wooden buckets. They exchange the latest news about the talk Fr. Médaille gave, which was focused on God's great love. They are emaciated and gaunt from lack of proper nourishment. Their hair is thin and poorly kept. Small children with swollen stomachs tug at their skirts, crying for attention, whining from hunger.

Mangey dogs run in packs on the street in search of scraps. Just to the left, there is a blacksmith shop. The Smithy, a bulky man, sweaty and grimy from hard work on the anvil, looks up with a sneer, showing broken and rotted teeth as another man, his brother-in-law, approaches him. This is an unwelcomed visit, for the man wants to borrow money that the Smithy does not have. They argue vehemently, both desperate. The Smithy still awaits the repayment from the last visit. Anger flares easily when one is hungry.

A little further down the street, a soldier, one of many who had found his way back home after the Thirty Years' War. Looking much older than his actual age, teeth missing, gums diseased, he leans on a

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makeshift crutch, having lost a leg in battle. He mindlessly scratches at his long, greasy head of hair. His uniform has seen better days, now tattered and dirty from years of wear, though once worn proudly, now merely rags. He talks to himself or maybe to an unseen comrade. Too many memories haunt this man and other soldiers who had participated in the pillage and destruction of lands and people without care. Now, he is ill with syphilis. There was nowhere to go; he could not find work; there was no space in his brother's house. He shows signs of mental illness, having seen many years of violence, war, malnutrition, and poverty.

Walking further down the street, we glance up narrow pathways, with doors leading into homes and shops of the bourgeois. Two men discuss the never-ending problem of taxes with great animation. Julian reports that the taxes are robbing his family of basic needs. He isn't sure he can make the next payment. Maurice replies that he, too, is struggling, especially now that his tenth child is born and his wife has died in childbirth. There is always the worry about how much money is still needed to pay the many taxes: The King, the Church, and the local landowner all levied taxes to support their lifestyle and services.

The buzz in town these days is the new agricultural tax levied by the local Bishop, de Maupas, as Lord of Le Puy. Now, he is charging for firewood and asking for a percentage of the harvest. Landowners, too, were charged a portion of their total annual revenue, which they took from the people who leased their land. The local townspeople, peasants by class, had no idea how they would be able to pay all these taxes. The burden is terrible!

On a wider street near the Cathedral, women sit making lace, older ones teaching the younger women, all trying to supplement their income. They pray and chat as they work. Here, at least, they create something of delicate beauty amid endless struggle, deprivation, and threat of illness. Perhaps they can sell the lace in Lyon or Paris, where there are more wealthy people. There, the wealthy decorate their homes and even their horses with lace, trying to outshine one another.

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Reaching the end of town, we come upon a small one-room family home. We peer through the doorway into a dark room with a hearth and fire smoldering in need of wood that is illegal to gather. The house smells of yesterday's cabbage, sweat, and urine. We see three brown chickens and an old goat mingling with young children in the dim light.

In the corner, just past the fire hearth, stands a wood frame covered with straw and old hand-woven blankets. There, the whole family sleeps together for warmth in the cold winters. Grand-mere lives here, too, with her son and his wife and children. Family is all one has, so they stick together —cousins, brothers and sisters, and parents trying to eke out a living. One is as poor as the other, but they must assist one another, sharing what little they have.

The woman of the house, Jacqueline, stirs the embers to raise the fire. She wants to heat the water in the black pot hanging over the embers. Tonight, she makes dinner with what she has: a few turnips and an onion grown from her garden. Perhaps there is a little flour and oil to make a small loaf of bread.

Jacqueline is young but looks older than her years because of the rigor of life and incessant hunger. Today, her jaw aches and is hot from an abscessed tooth. It isn't the first time. Disease, too, takes its toll. There is little medicine available in town, and she can't afford it anyway. Her mind wanders to the three babies she has lost to malnutrition and intestinal disease. She has birthed five in the six years she has been married. Like her neighbors and her own sisters, death is something with which she is very familiar, especially for the very young. Living to 60 would be an accomplishment! Debility and often death came in the forties.

In this one dingy room are the two children, the eldest, a son, Paul, with large brown eyes with dark circles and thin, dry hair, who fusses at his sister, Estelle, now three, who cries at her brother's unwanted attention. She, too, with a swollen stomach, appears listless and unwell. Pale and thin, they wait for the soup to be ready—their only meal of the day.

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Jacqueline's husband, Henri, works in the fields, trying to grow crops on rocky land leased from the local landowner, Monsieur Gagnon. The soil is poor from overuse. The extended family shares what is grown, and what is left is sold in town for needed goods, like flour, flax for weaving, and salt. In the evening, both husband and wife work to weave thread into cloth for clothing and blankets.

Tomorrow, Henri will go to the shop to purchase salt. He worries silently because of the high cost due to taxes. But salt is necessary for preserving meat and fish when he can get it; salt is also needed for tanning hides and making fertilizer. He will give up something else to meet this basic need. Why is life so hard?

An old wooden ox cart jostles its way past the house. Jacqueline and Henri look out the door to see who is coming by. They are very aware that illness has struck the neighboring household. Yes, it is Pierre and his eldest son, Michel, pulling the cart themselves, long having sold their ox. They live only a short distance down the road. Together, they carry yet another person who has died from malnutrition and dysentery.

## Reflection for Journaling:

- What was happening within you as you heard the story of destitution and poverty in 17th century France?
- If this were you, where would you find God in this desperate situation? Where would you find hope?
- What is your heart's response?

## Your Reflective Integration

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# A Stop Along the Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Fr. Médaille

## Contemplative Reflection Before Our Walk



As you look out the coach's windows and view the beautiful countryside of this part of France, realize this is the same terrain where Fr. Médaille walked during his missionary travels.

Why do we make this stop and take some time to walk? First, we've been traveling quite a way today, and getting out of the coach and into the fresh country air will do wonders for us! Second, recall that part of the spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph is the deep understanding that God is always present everywhere and at all times. For many, nature is a direct avenue into encounters with the Divine.

This path we are about to walk would most likely have been the same path Fr. Médaille traversed during his missionary years of ministry. He traveled from village to village, giving missions, hearing confessions, and visiting with his fellow Jesuit brothers.

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The Massif Central is a mountainous heartland of France, making up about one-sixth of the country. There is a great deal of rain and snow in this region. In the 17th century, the Massif Central was the poorest area of France. The people of this region were mountain peasantry and best described as individualistic and preferring to be alone, although they had strong family communities. They were utilitarian and realistic about their lives. They shared an isolationist mentality, and if you were not a part of their extended family, you were viewed as a “stranger.” Bishop Henri de Maupas referred to this region as the most uncouth part of the province. It is in this difficult and challenging region of France that the Jesuits established a significant ministerial and apostolic presence.

Look around. Take in the ruggedness of the countryside. Place yourself back in 17th century France and recall the conditions so concretely described in the guided meditation from earlier today. Imagine what it would have been like to walk from village to village. Most people would have walked because few could afford horses, mules, or donkeys for travel. Their clothes would have been worn, offering little protection against rain, sleet, wind, and snow – all of which are common in this part of the countryside.

The Superior General of the Jesuits encouraged his priests to travel on foot. This is how Fr. Médaille most likely traveled this region, walking these hills, valleys, and mountains. We imagine it is in these times of his walking alone that he contemplated the movement of the Spirit within him. It could well have been where he had conversations with widowed and single women of this region, women who spoke from their hearts of a burning desire for a way of life that was beyond the confines of the monastery. These conversations must have risen to consciousness within Fr. Médaille.

Recall that Fr. Médaille was a spiritual companion with the Jesuits, other priests, and lay men and women. Today, we call this type of ministry spiritual direction. As a Jesuit, Fr. Médaille was steeped in the discipline of discernment, and thus, as he listened to these women, listened to God’s movement in their lives, it is possible that

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the initial pieces of what would become the Sisters of St. Joseph began to come together.

Each of you has your own life's journey to walk and, specifically, your call to this ministry within Providence St. Joseph. As you embark on this roughly two-kilometer walk through the forest and pastures, quiet yourself. Allow the sights, smells, and sounds of nature to unfold before you because it is where the beauty and grandeur of God are found. Couple this with the knowledge that the beauty of God's indwelling presence is within each of us.

As you begin this path of walking the footsteps of Fr. Médaille, do so quietly. Give yourself the gift of inner and outer peace where the seeds of something new might surface within you. Hold gently whatever comes to mind. Slowly let go of all that impedes your ability to be in this present moment.

Walk this path, asking God to give you insight into your own life. What imprint are you leaving as you walk your path in life? In ministry? Allow nature to nourish and nurture you at this moment in time. Remember the words of scripture: *"Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10).

This is a contemplative, quiet time. Walk slowly or at a pace that is comfortable for you. Stop and pause when the Spirit moves you and take in nature's beauty. It's okay to take pictures but do so quietly and unobtrusively, allowing those around you to remain in their contemplative space.

The path we will travel begins in the forest and then leads gently down through the pastures and into the city of Pradelles, where we will have a light lunch. Enjoy this time, and let the God of surprises enlighten you. You have an hour to take this contemplative walk.

After we have met for lunch, continue your reflection as you board the coach. In small groups – talk to one another about this experience.

Keep reflecting on this experience of walking in the footsteps of Fr. Médaille.

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## Arriving in Le Puy-en-Velay

*“Be utterly given to God by a holy self-surrender, utterly for God by a love pure and completely unselfish, utterly in God by a continuing effort to be more conscious of God’s presence, utterly according to God by a will, a life and everything conformed to God.”*

MAXIM #24 BY JEAN-PIERRE MÉDAILLE, SJ

Le Puy-en-Velay, capital of the Haute-Loire department, is a town of approximately 25,000 inhabitants. It is renowned for its rich history in lace production, traditional brewing, and leather craftsmanship. The city’s prominence grew significantly in the 10th century when its shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary became a major pilgrimage destination.

The city is divided into two distinct sections. The modern part of Le Puy-en-Velay is situated below a towering, nearly 500-ft tall rocky hill, crowned by a striking bronze statue of the Virgin Mary. Nestled right at the base of this rocky outcrop lies the historic old city, characterized by its impressive 12th-century cathedral, a masterpiece of daring architectural design. Additionally, visitors can explore an 11th-century baptistery and numerous examples of Gothic architecture throughout the old city. Atop a smaller, needle-shaped rock is the Romanesque Church of St. Michel d’Aiguilhe, and at its foot is an 11th-century chapel.

The cathedral is the starting point of one of the pilgrimage routes to Saint James of Compostella. Pilgrims beginning their journey gathered here to be blessed each morning. The cathedral has been a “UNESCO World Heritage Site” since 1998 as part of the Routes of Santiago de Compostela in France.

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A city steeped in art and culture, Le Puy-en-Velay is a vibrant hub for artistic expression cultural enrichment, and a dynamic venue for conferences, exchanges, and gatherings. It is an ideal launching point for exploring a region that offers a wide array of outdoor activities.

As we know, Le Puy-en-Velay is renowned for its association with lace. Making the fuseau lace unique to this region is a centuries-old craft, and the crafters' techniques have been diligently preserved through the establishment of a National Conservation Workshop and a Lace Teaching Center. These institutions ensure the enduring legacy of this exquisite tradition.

The city also boasts the prestigious Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée for its green lentils, a celebrated ingredient that numerous chefs incorporate into their culinary creations. Additionally, it is the home of Green Vervaine, an after-dinner liqueur.

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# A Time to Reflect on the Spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Today, I'm talking with you about the spirit and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph and how this connects and can influence you as a leader within Providence St. Joseph Health. There is a two-fold reason for having this time to reflect on the Congregation's spirituality. First, spirituality is a vital part of who we are as Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, as evidenced by this statement in the Congregation's Constitution:

*We dedicate ourselves in all our works to creative collaboration in ministry with others. Sharing our spirituality is an important dimension of that collaboration.*  
(Article 15, Mission and Ministry)

Second, spirituality is a part of your role as a leader within Providence St. Joseph Health because you are responsible for our Mission. The Mission Statement of PSJH is: As expressions of God's healing love, witnessed through the ministry of Jesus, we are steadfast in serving all, especially those who are poor and vulnerable. Our core values are compassion, dignity, justice, excellence, and integrity.

With this as our backdrop, let us begin by remembering the reflective meditation we had while we were on the coach and coming to Le Puy. Recall the dismal conditions of 17th century France. Within this time of desperation, poverty, hopelessness, and helplessness, a new kind of spiritual energy was emerging. It was precisely at this moment that our founder, Jesuit Father Jean Pierre Médaille, undertook his missionary activities in the towns and villages in Central France and when the Sisters of St. Joseph were established.

What is significant about our early beginnings is that we came into being in this desperate time in a very quiet and unassuming manner. How was the congregation established? It came from one man, Fr. Médaille, who was open to the work of the Spirit and who

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responded in concrete, specific ways. At the time, Fr. Médaille was an itinerant missionary priest in Central France. He was a confessor, meaning that he heard confessions and acted as a spiritual companion, or in today's language, a spiritual director, for fellow Jesuits and lay men and women in the towns and villages he visited.

It was during this time of missionary travel that Fr. Médaille began to listen and sense the Spirit's movement within the women he accompanied as their spiritual director. At this point in time, religious women were cloistered, meaning that they were monastic and remained within the monastery's walls. What Fr. Médaille was discerning as he listened to these women was the call they were hearing to a different form of religious life – to apostolic religious life. Apostolic religious life means to be out among the people – a very different model of religious life than in 17th century France. These women desired to give their lives wholly to God, to live in a community outside the cloister and without the distinctive dress worn by monastic nuns.

Because so much of the documentation of the initial founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph was destroyed during the French Revolution, the precise origins of the congregation are unknown. What we do know has been garnered from civic documentation, as well as from letters in the archives of the Generalate of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in Rome. Combining these documents with the early writings of Fr. Médaille, which are a part of the archives of the Institute of St. Joseph in Le Puy-en-Velay, scholars have been able to piece together the founding roots of the Sisters of St. Joseph, which began in 1650.

Fr. Médaille refers to the initial groupings of women desiring this new way of being in the world as the Little Design. They formed small groups – usually three to six living together in a community.

It is clear from existing documentation that Fr. Médaille and the first six Sisters of St. Joseph created a new model of consecrated religious life for women. They accepted a rule – a way of living and being together – that gave structure to this new religious life.

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Apostolic Religious Life gained traction because of the understated way it began – with quiet determination and a kind of hiddenness that enabled it to emerge and grow with strong, foundational grounding.

Sisters of St. Joseph worldwide claim October 15, 1650 as our founding date. His Excellency Henri de Maupas called together the Daughters of the Hospital for Orphans and delivered an exhortation filled with the Holy Spirit, encouraging the women and blessing them; thus, the Congregation was birthed into being. Bishop de Maupas put them directly under the protection of Saint Joseph and ordered that their Congregation be called the Congregation of the Sisters or the Daughters of Saint Joseph (CSJ). On December 13, 1651, the first sisters took their vows: Françoise Eyraud (39), Clauda Chastel (widower), Marguerite Burdier (26), Anna Chaleyey (46), Anna Vey de Saint-Jeure (15), and Anna Brun (15). Given the age of Anna Vey and Anna Brun, they may have been children from the orphanage who wanted to join this founding community.

Françoise Eyraud was the first superior of the Congregation, and records show that she was the Director of the Hospital for Orphans since 1646. The records further reveal that there were 39 orphans and two servants working at the hospital at this time. It is clear that Bishop Henri de Maupas of Le Puy had the authority to decide who was in charge of the Hospital for Women and Orphans, which was called Montferrand in Le Puy. The final legal document formalizing the establishment of the Congregation (called Letters Patentes) was on March 31, 1651. This formal recognition of the congregation says to us today that Bishop de Maupas expected the community to grow. The community of Le Puy, now a part of The Institute of St. Joseph, is recognized as the official founding Congregation, and it is an essential part of our Sisters of St. Joseph Heritage Pilgrimage.

The Little Design was about these first six Sisters of St. Joseph, consecrating their lives to God, living together in small communities, and combining a life of prayer with active ministry to the sick and the poor. Their mandate was to “go out into the community, divide the city, identify the needs and with like-minded and like-hearted people, respond to these needs.”

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One of the early documents is called the Eucharistic Letter. In this letter, which was written to one of the first sisters, Fr. Médaille reveals a prophetic vision for the Congregation: To allow themselves to be emptied of self and filled with God and to communicate to those they meet the love and life they themselves received. As Sisters today, we refer to this self-emptying as a necessary and vital part of our own spirituality. To empty oneself is to gently let go of all that impedes one's ability to receive God's love and, in turn, pour out this love in generous service to the dear neighbor without distinction. What about you? Are you just about the tasks and not the relational? It is clear that without the relational, people will do the work, but the output will not be the same.

### **A Focus on the HOW**

It is very vital to note that since the beginning, an important part of our lived and shared spirituality was that HOW we served was just as important as the service itself. We were not founded to be wonderful 17th century social workers. We were first and foremost about "saving souls" - a phrase commonly used at this time in the Church's history. For Fr. Médaille and these early sisters, the services they provided (mostly in the hospital orphanage and as lacemakers) were an avenue into the lives of people; their focus was spiritual as well as practical. Fr. Médaille was just as interested in the spiritual development of these first Sisters as he was in the spiritual development of the people being served.

This is important for us today. We're not just about giving care to people in the communities we serve. Any hospital or health care provider does this. What distinguishes us, what MUST distinguish us, is HOW we serve. We were truly walking in the footsteps of those who came before us. We were continuing the Congregation's legacy of paying attention to the spiritual well-being of those being served and not just their physical wellbeing, as well as not just focusing on the services in and of themselves. Both Congregations - the CSJs of Orange and the Providence Sisters have this in the core of our beings. We need you to have this, too: this deeper sense of being called and sent!

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And as we find ourselves in this time of transition, all of what we're talking about does not go away. I'm excited about what we have formed at Providence, knowing that the Spirit's work guides us as we move forward. What has emerged flows from our respective charisms, and this new ministry is imbued with both!

Now, I want to go back to the spirit and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph. What does this mean, and how do we describe it? In Father Médaille's time, the people he ministered to were mostly illiterate. How did he teach people in the faith when they couldn't read or write? He did what was the norm at that time - he wrote what was called the Maxims of Perfection. The Maxims are pithy sayings that reveal a deep spiritual way of being in the world; they are short sayings that pertain to one's daily living out the call to be disciples of The Lord.

There are 100 Maxims, and they are ordered in a way that reveals an apostolic spirituality with the same mission as that to which all Christ's ministries were directed - unifying love. As Sisters of St. Joseph, we refer to our spirituality as Trinitarian, a relational way of being in our world. Since our founding, we are called to be in communion with - not separate from - the dear neighbor.

One way in which we talk about Trinitarian spirituality is the communion between God, ourselves, and the dear neighbor without distinction. Our mission as Sisters of St. Joseph flows from the purpose for which the Congregation exists:

We live and work so that all people may be united with God and with one another. This is rooted in the mission of Christ, the same mission which continually unfolds in the Church, "That all may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you. I pray that they may be one in us..." John 17:21 (Mission and Ministry, Article #12)

Fr. Médaille took old and familiar language and gave it new meaning. He used words and images available to the people of his time, much like Jesus did when he used parables to preach and teach. Fr. Médaille's message was consistent: God was present with them

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in the day-to-day because God is found in all things and is present everywhere (IGGY). Is your message consistent?

The spirituality of the Catholic Church in France, as well as elsewhere, was that God allowed suffering as the consequence of sin. Suffering in this world was a reasonable punishment, and one simply had to accept it. Fr. Médaille introduced a different way to understand God and suffering in the world. He urged the Sisters to view the world as God's Design in want of fulfillment. Rather than seeing the world as bad and thus living out of a sense of fear, Fr. Médaille said that it was precisely in the world where God could be found. God is everywhere, active at all times, and wanting all to be one.

This way of being and viewing the world was inspiring to those open to hearing and receiving it. Fr. Médaille's vision was to see the world, in the midst of poverty and pain, as a place for abundance, connection, and hope. Rather than submitting to the desperation of the time, he urged the Sisters to embrace their reality and one another. This was very counter-cultural because, at this time, if you were not a member of the family, you were suspect and someone to be feared. Fr. Médaille's message was to welcome the stranger and reach out and engage the world around them.

I began this talk by referring to self-emptying love and the importance of letting go of all that impedes our ability to be in a relationship with God in order to respond generously in service and presence to others. I want to talk for just a moment about another aspect of our Trinitarian spirituality that is important if you're to understand the heart of our spirituality as Sisters of St. Joseph.

When we're in Lyon a couple of days from now, we'll be in the Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon's motherhouse chapel. Above the altar is this beautiful rendition of the two Trinities - the Created Trinity of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and the Uncreated Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit. This is another example of how Fr. Médaille took language that was common in his day and developed a pithy way of teaching about the important virtues of the faith.

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## More About the Two Trinities

The Uncreated Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit means that we are to focus our lives toward self-emptying in order to:

- Honor the Father, who is the model of perfect love. To love as God loves. Holiness.
- Honor the Son who emptied himself of self-interest and self-will to be filled with God's love. Self-Emptying
- Honor the Holy Spirit, who is all love, so that our lives witness this love. Love.

They Created Trinity of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in order to:

- Honor Jesus, who was wholly devoted to the glory of his Father and the salvation of the dear neighbor without distinction: **Zeal**.
- Honor Mary, who was full of grace so that we, too, might be open to grace: **Fidelity**.
- Honor Joseph, who was all love to Jesus and Mary, so that we too practice charity and communion: **Charity**.

Thus, the first Sisters were steeped in this mystical yet practical spirituality. This is the same spirituality that has been the heritage of each new Sister of St. Joseph throughout the world. As Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, we are called to this same Trinitarian way of being in our world, as evidenced by these words in the Congregation's *Constitution*:

*We honor the Father by desiring always to respond to his gift of life; the Son by seeking to imitate his humility and self-surrender; and the Holy Spirit by desiring to realize and express God's love in our lives. (Article 7, Spirit and Spirituality)*

*As far as possible, we imitate Jesus in his untiring zeal to bring about the kingdom of God; Mary in her constant fidelity to the Holy Spirit; and Joseph in his generous and unpretentious service. (Article 8, Spirit and Spirituality)*

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From this spirituality flows our charism of unity and reconciliation. Remember that a charism is a gift given by God to an individual or group, for the use of building up the Kingdom of God. As a Congregation, we place great importance on relationships. Having just listened to me speak about our Trinitarian spirituality, can you see the connections between our charism of unity and reconciliation and the high value we place on relationship-building? This is who we are as a Congregation, and thus why it is important information for you as leaders of Providence St. Joseph Health.

As Sisters of St. Joseph, our lives flow from the Ignatian sense of God being in our world at all times. By finding God in all things, we continually look to break down barriers between the sacred and the secular. We live and work in the firm hope that who we are shines through to those around us and that others have a better idea of who God is and what Jesus means to us for having interacted with us. We seek out relationships that further our mission and attest to our desire to be mutual and inclusive in our relationships - relationships grounded in gentleness, peace, and joy.

This is what mission integration is about! This is what your role as leaders within Providence St. Joseph Health is all about. A culture can shift so quickly, and not always for the good! If we are to continue as a ministry of the Church, as the healing ministry of Jesus, in the tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange and the Sisters of Providence, as leaders, you need to understand our respective heritages and how our heritages evolve with each new generation.

In order for each of you to succeed as leaders of this ministry, you need to be grounded in our historical roots and understand how to apply our mission in today's evolving world of health care. How does lacemaking and caring for widows and orphans translate to the high-tech, sophisticated health care environment of today? Easily! And by the end of this pilgrimage, I hope that you can respond in a similar manner.

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## Find Your Moments

As you move along on this pilgrimage, take some time for quiet reflection. Let the “noise” within and around you fall away, and let God speak to you. Where were those moments of grace that you might not have realized when they happened, and yet, as you reflect on this pilgrimage, something did emerge within you? Maybe it was at Lourdes when you watched the tender care of those assisting the ill. Maybe it was a moment in Carcassonne. Perhaps it was last night when you first explored the streets of Le Puy; and perhaps it will come today as we walk the streets of this town.

Whatever moments happen for you along this pilgrimage, quiet yourself along the way so that you can capture and savor these unexpected encounters with the Sacred. Write down in your journal what your thoughts, urges, and senses were saying to you in the moment and when you reflect on them as you journal. Then, think about what you do every day back in your role within Providence St. Joseph Health. What are the connections? Allow yourself the time to sit quietly and await the connections because they are there! It is your role, as a leader, to make these connections - to INTEGRATE mission into what you do every day in order to assist those you lead to do the same. If you don't, who will?

Today's health care environment is one of rapid change, chaos, and confusion; it can also be a time of exciting opportunity and transformation. It is like the first Sisters of St. Joseph in 1650, and we are invited to enter more deeply into the contemplative reality of our time. As men and women of faith, our spirituality reveals that God is personal and self-giving rather than vengeful and demanding.

As Sisters of St. Joseph, we experience God as personal and God as self-giving; God invites us to be co-creators as disciples.

## To Those of Other Faith Traditions

I want to speak to those of you from other faith traditions because you might be wondering how this connects with you. Earlier, I said that our spirituality is Ignatian, where God is present in our world

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at all times. We also believe what theologian Karl Rahner said: that everyone is the recipient of God's self-communication.

As Sisters of St. Joseph, we search out others whose hearts are yearning for a similar sense of ministry; we work across religious affiliations and without wondering if someone is "religious" or not. We want to walk with others whose spirituality and religious beliefs align with our own. Our deep desire is that we transmit ourselves to those around us and that others have a better idea of who God is, not only for us but for themselves as well.

As Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, we are steadfast in our belief that our mission and purpose are still integral to the 21st century. We work so that others may experience personal integrity, communion with one another, and with God in the mystery of life. Just as in the 17th century – we don't do this alone! We do this in partnership with you as the leaders of this ministry called Providence St. Joseph Health. We are all invited to join with God and with one another in the common work of sustaining, fostering, and nurturing the common good. We do all of this from a stance of love because love is inclusive, mutual, creative, enduring, persevering, fearless, and tender. Your response to this invitation will be evidenced by the manner in which you lead!

While this is a pilgrimage walking in the footsteps of the Sisters of St. Joseph, please remember that our ministry is now embracing two different congregations with their own charism and their own heritage. At the same time, the purpose for existence is the same: responding to a vocational call to serve our God and all of God's people. For further reflection, please read the following to get a sense of the mission and charism of the Sisters of Providence.

You, as a leader, need to do the integrative work of the Mission, Vision, and Values of Providence St. Joseph Health ... if not you, who?

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## About Sisters of Providence

As Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, we work with the Sisters of Providence within the legacy Providence organization. It is important to know their story along with the Sisters of St. Joseph. The following are the Mission, Charism, and Virtues of the Sisters of Providence:

### Mission

The mission of the Sisters of Providence is to proclaim Providence as the loving presence of God, active in us and through us, watchful over the created universe, and attentive to the needs of all.

We also proclaim the compassion of Our Mother of Sorrows in her intimate participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We live these mysteries primarily by our compassionate love of those who are poor.

### Charism

Through the practice of works of mercy, in keeping with our heritage, and in solidarity with those who are poor, we, daughters of Blessed Emilie Tavernier Gamelin, manifest in the society of our times the Providence of God and the compassion of Our Mother of Sorrows.

### Virtues

The characteristic virtues of our Congregation are humility, simplicity, and charity.

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## The Sisters of Providence Story

Emilie Tavernier, born in Montreal on Feb. 19, 1800, faced immense adversity, losing her parents and siblings by age 15. She married Jean-Baptiste Gamelin in 1823, but they tragically lost their children, and he passed away when Emilie was 27. She turned to her faith and channeled her grief into charity work, helping the vulnerable in Montreal.

Emilie's efforts led to the founding of the Sisters of Providence in 1843, which was dedicated to helping the poor. She became the first superior and continued her work until she succumbed to cholera on Sept. 23, 1851. In 2001, she was beatified by Pope John Paul II on the path to sainthood.

The Sisters of Providence, inspired by Emilie's vision, expanded to the West. Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart and four sisters arrived in Fort Vancouver in 1856. They established hospitals, schools, and other services for the needy. The Sisters of Providence incorporated in 1859, making them the second oldest nonprofit corporation in Washington. Mother Joseph passed away in 1902, having established 33 enduring ministries. She is honored with statues in Washington, D.C., and Olympia, and her birthday was recognized as a state holiday in 1999.





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## About St. John-Francis Regis, SJ 1597-1640

St. Jean-Francis Regis, SJ, is another name often tied to Le Puy. St. Regis used Le Puy as a base for his missions and also encouraged the women of Le Puy to take up lace-making. St. John-Francis Regis, SJ, and Father Médaille were acquaintances who shared common ministries, including preaching, caring for the poor, organizing social services, and empowering impoverished women to create lace for their sustenance. St. John-Francis Regis likely influenced Father Médaille. He passed away in 1640, while Fr. Médaille went on to establish the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1650.

Born on January 31, 1597, in southern France, Jean-Francis Regis was a Jesuit priest and saint. He joined the Society of Jesus at nineteen and was ordained in 1630. Initially, he taught at the Jesuit school in Pamiers and later assisted the bishop of Montpellier in rekindling the faith of the people.

St. John-Francis Regis tirelessly worked with the impoverished, traveling through challenging terrain and inclement weather to reach remote areas. He spent several days in parishes, delivering heartfelt sermons, hearing confessions, celebrating Mass, and educating children in the faith. Additionally, he visited prisons and collected provisions for the needy. He also established safe houses and job opportunities for prostitutes.



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Many miraculous healings and conversions were attributed to St. John-Francis Regis, known for his humility, patience, fervent prayer, and ascetic practices. He ardently served the poor and marginalized, earning both admiration and criticism from his peers. His zeal was sometimes overwhelming, but his profound humility tempered it, aligning with his mission for God's honor and love.

On December 23, 1640, St. John-Francis Regis and Brother Claude Bideau embarked on a mission to Lalouvesc but got lost in a snowstorm, spending the night in a makeshift shelter. The following day, they reached their destination, where people eagerly awaited them. St. John-Francis Regis immediately began preaching, hearing confessions, and celebrating mass, continuing even during Midnight Mass on Christmas. Exhausted and exposed to cold air, St. John-Francis Regis collapsed, succumbing to pneumonia and passing away on December 31 while fervently praying.

In 1738, St. John-Francis Regis was canonized. Regis Societies proliferated across France, assisting the poor by regularizing marriages (legitimizing countless children) and providing education in rural areas.

Catholic saints are ordinary individuals who lead extraordinary lives in response to God's call to use their unique talents. We are all called to be saints. Every year on June 16, St. John-Francis Regis, SJ, is commemorated.

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# Call to Prayer

## Leader

Let us pray with St. John-Francis Regis, SJ, who is known as a man of great faith, deep prayer, asceticism, and unbounded zeal. His constant desire was for God and to be God's love toward every kind of neighbor. We pray a scripture he was sure to have prayed in his lifetime. "Let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you." 1 Corinthians 7:17

## Opening Prayer

May God enlighten your innermost vision so that you may know the great hope to which he has called you, the wealth of his glorious heritage to be distributed among the members of the church, and the immeasurable scope of his power in those who believe. Ephesians 1:18-19

PLEASE PRAY ANTIPHONALLY (ANSWERING RESPONSIVELY)

I search for  
God, elusive,  
hidden God,  
I long to dwell  
in the heart of Mystery

I search for my true self  
more of who I already am,  
knowing there's so much  
yet to be discovered.

I search for love,  
the unconditional  
love that enfolds me  
and asks to be shared

I search for vision  
in the shadow of my soul,  
impatiently awaiting  
the moment of lighting.

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I search for the quiet  
heart amid life's  
harried schedule; my  
soul cries out,  
yearning for solitude.

I search for  
compassion in a  
world gone deaf  
to cries of the hurting,  
and the pleas of the powerless.

### **ALL**

I search for Home,  
always for Home,  
unaware. Of course,  
that I am already there.



### **Closing Prayer**

Spirit of power and gentleness, time and again throughout history, you have anointed your servants, like John-Francis Regis, SJ, and sent them on a mission: to speak your word to the poor, to heal the sick, to free captives, always renewing the face of the earth in such a variety of ways that creation itself sings of your glory and the human family reflects more wonderfully your beauty in a thousand different ways! Come, Holy Spirit. Inspire and unsettle us, pour forth your abundant grace, and awaken us ever more surely to the pressing needs of our wounded world.

Gracious God, You gave Your Confessor St. John-Francis Regis such wonderful charity and un-conquerable patience that he was able to bear toil, hardship, and pain for the salvation of souls. Mercifully grant that we may follow his example and be constantly helped by his prayers, and so, like him, we may be the love of God in the world in which we live and serve in Jesus' name. Amen





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## The Place of the Martyrs, Le Puy



*"Holiness comes wrapped in the ordinary. There are burning bushes all around you. Every tree is full of angels. Hidden beauty is waiting in every crumb. Life wants to lead you from crumbs to angels, but this can happen only if you are willing to unwrap the ordinary by staying with it long enough to harvest its treasure."*

– A TREE FULL OF ANGELS, MACRINA WIEDERKEHR

### Call to Prayer

As we celebrate the origins of the Sisters of St. Joseph and the humble beginnings from which the Mission was born, we call to mind the days of struggle and self-gift. In each person's life, there are many challenges, some more drastic than others. In faith we know that God is with us in everything and that we are given the graces to do what is the one necessary thing.

Today, as we stand here in the square of the Martyrs, we remember the Sisters of St. Joseph and so many other people who stood by their faith and values during the French Revolution. We look back and call them martyrs because they gave their lives for their faith. We gather in prayer, in thanksgiving, and in hope. Now, we, too, are called to carry forth the Mission and continue the healing ministry of Jesus in the tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

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## Litany of Remembrance

### Our Response: “We remember and give thanks!”

- We remember the dream, the spirituality, and the vision of Jean-Pierre Médaille.
- We remember our early Sisters: Françoise Eyraud, Claudia Chastel, Marguerite Burdier, Anna Brun, Anna Chalayer, Anna Vey, and those who followed them in history. We rejoice in their pioneering and adventuresome spirit as they divided the city to address the needs of their day.
- We remember the courage and fidelity of our sisters during the French Revolution, those who went to the guillotine...those who were scattered and kept the vision alive in their hiddenness.

(Two of the five Sisters guillotined in Le Puy, Sister Jeanne Marie Aubert and Sister Marie Anne Garnier, died on June 17, 1794; in Privas Mother St. Croix, Sr. Madeline and Sr. Toussaint died on August 5, 1794.)

- We remember all those brave men and women who stayed grounded in their faith and courageously resisted the revolution.
- We remember the strength of Mother St. John Fontbonne, who founded the Congregation in Lyon in 1808.

### Leader

We hold gently the lives of these valiant women and all who have followed them in martyrdom. It was their zeal and fidelity to gospel values that have created the history and heritage that is ours to live in our time.

### ALL

They so lived that we, who follow in their footsteps united in the Mission, continue to bear the name of the community of the great love of God.

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# Reflection Questions for the Cathedral in Le Puy



- As you walked the streets of Le Puy yesterday and today, what do you “hear?” Listen with an inward ear, and let God speak to your heart.
- What most captures your attention in this cathedral? Reflect on why.
- As you take in all of Le Puy and your experiences thus far, answer this question: For what do you pray?

## Your Reflective Integration

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# A Prayer and Ritual for Le Puy Kitchen

## Gathering Prayer

Today, we stand in this sacred place...the place where our first Sisters gathered for warmth, meals, and community. This is a place made sacred by the women who came together with a deep desire to be one with God and to be a compassionate presence to the people of their times.

May their spirits touch our own so that the story of our founding and our shared mission continues to inspire us and guide us in all that we do.

(A CANDLE IS LIT FOR EACH PERSON AS THE NAMES ARE READ ALOUD.)

## Role Call of the Founders

ALL RESPOND:

Clauda Chastel	Be with us!
Françoise Eyraud	Be with us!
Marguerite Burdier	Be with us!
Anna Chalayer	Be with us!
Anna Brun	Be with us!
Anna Vey	Be with us!
Marguerie de St. Laurent	Be with us!
Jean-Pierre Médialle	Be with us!
Bishop Henri de Maupas	Be with us!

## Reader 1

We honor you here in this holy place of our beginnings. We ask you for your gifts of zeal for the dear neighbor, the courage to share our hearts with one another, and the desire to share a deep love for our God.

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## Reader 2

Here in this original kitchen, with its founding spirit still palpable, we renew our commitment and rededicate ourselves to our mission. We desire to bring people to God and to one another. May we be worthy of the dream you birthed into being.

## Reader 3

We ask you to hear our prayers for our world and our communities. Like you, we want to be about the mission: To be people of unity and reconciliation. We ask you for (mention needs and desires aloud)

## Leader

"Be with us, our patrons and friends. May we continue to carry your zeal and light into our weary world!" Amen

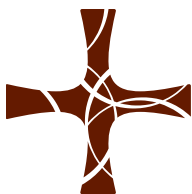












## Arriving in Bas-en-Basset

*"Live out your life with one desire only: To be always what God wants you to be in nature, grace, and glory for time and for eternity."*

MAXIM # 73 JEAN PIERRE MÉDAILLE, SJ

### A Reflection on Mother St. John Fontbonne

Mother St. John Fontbonne was the founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon, France. She was the Congregational leader who sent the first Sisters of St. Joseph to the United States in 1836.



Born "Jeanne Fontbonne" on March 31, 1759, in Bas-en-Basset, she was the second child of Michael and Benoite Teilière. There were three other siblings, with Jeanne being the second eldest and her sister Marie, the oldest child.

Jeanne and Marie came to know the Sisters of St. Joseph because the Congregation had a convent in Bas-en-Basset. In addition, two of their aunts, their father's sisters, were Sisters of St. Joseph. Upon completing their schooling in Bas-en-Basset, Jeanne and Marie attended the Sisters of St. Joseph boarding school in Le Puy. During her schooling, Jeanne was noted for her natural leadership and was described by her teachers as gifted, practical, sensitive, thoughtful, and decisive.

In July of 1778, Jeanne and Marie entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in Monistrol – about eight kilometers from Bas-en-Basset. Both

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Jeanne and Marie took the habit in December, and their religious names were St. John and Theresa. It was just seven years later, at the age of 26, that Jeanne (St. John) became the Superior of the house in Monistrol.

Relationships were important to Mother St. John, and she developed a close connection with the local ordinary, Bishop de Galard. The two renovated and enlarged the hospital (a building to receive the poor) in Monistrol, and while blessing it, the Bishop asked Mother St. John to do the same – which was highly unusual at that time. To this day, the cornerstone of the hospital is a place of honor for the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Mother St. John's vision for ministry went beyond the hospital, yet she needed the funding to implement her vision. She wanted to establish a workshop where women would work together, whether on behalf of the poor, for their own families, or for their own sustenance. This vision came to fruition through the generous benefactor, Madame Chantemule, a noble lady of the region. The workshop reveals an even deeper purpose of Mother St. John's: a counter-cultural way of gathering women of different ages and social classes under one roof. This focus on bringing people together is a core part of the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. It is also worth noting that as the workshop began to flourish.

However, even though the workshop was thriving, rising tensions between the classes were growing across France. By February of 1790, the French Revolution was underway. Part of the repercussions of the Revolution was the focus on nationalizing the Catholic Church, thus replacing the authority of the Pope and bishops with a democratic system of appointments where every citizen, Catholic or not, had the right to vote in the election of the local bishop and the pastor of the region. Also, in 1790, a law was passed requiring all priests to swear allegiance to the Civil Constitution. Non-juring priests, those who refused to take the oath, would lose their position and their means of support. The oath was the government's attempt to break all ties between the Church in France and the Catholic Church in Rome.

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Mother St. John and the Sisters of St. Joseph supported the Catholic Church and the non-juring priests who refused to take the oath. Unfortunately for the Sisters, Fr. Ollier, the pastor of the parish in which Mother St. John's community resided, used his pulpit to swear the Constitutional Oath imposed on the clergy. Bishop Galard, on the other hand, refused to take the oath and thus lost his position. In defiance, the Sisters of St. Joseph refused to attend the liturgies in the parish with Fr. Ollier presiding. Thus began the battle between Mother St. John and the Sisters with Fr. Ollier.

Remember that the Sisters' ministry to the poor and sick was vital to Monistrol and its inhabitants, which is why they remained active in ministry in the early part of the Revolution. On September 12, 1791, the Sisters were denounced for incompetent administration of the hospital and labeled fanatics. At one point, a mob came to the door of the convent and demanded that the Sisters obey the Constitution and assist at liturgy. Standing in the doorway, Mother St. John refused their request, and eventually, the mob left.

While the Sisters held firm against Fr. Ollier, they could not defend themselves against the progress of the Revolution. On August 18, 1792, a decree was promulgated prohibiting religious people from administering public institutions. On September 29, 1792, the Sisters of St. Joseph departed from their convent and returned to their families. Three remained in Monistrol: Mother St. John, Sr. Theresa (her blood sister), and another member of the Congregation, Sr. Martha.

Just days after the other Sisters left, the three remaining Sisters were confronted by a mob of men who dragged them from their homes and marched them to the church. Once there, the Sisters refused to kneel or participate in the liturgy. It was shortly after this that the three Sisters, Mother St. John, Sr. Theresa, and Sr. Martha, returned to the Fontbonne family home in Bas-en-Basset.

For the first year at the Fontbonne family home, the Sisters lived in relative tranquility. Unfortunately, the government promulgated a new law ordering that all those who had retired from religious life had to take the oath of fidelity to the State; those who refused to

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take the oath could be arrested. The Sisters refused to take the oath, and it became too dangerous for them to remain in the family home. They joined other nonjuring priests hiding in the woods during the day, only returning to their homes under the cover of darkness.

It was inevitable that the three would be caught and arrested. Because of the overcrowding in the jails, the Sisters were taken about 25 kilometers from their hometown and jailed in the former convent of the Augustinians in Saint Didier – now known as Montblanc.

The Fontbonnes and Sr. Martha survived their long months in prison. According to tradition, when one of the guards addressed Mother St. John, he said, “Citizen, tomorrow for you.” The Sisters believed that their date with the guillotine had arrived. The next day, they received news that Robespierre had fallen (1794), and the day would bring them freedom rather than death.

Mother St. John, Sr. Theresa, and Sr. Martha returned to Monistrol and tried to recover their convent, which had been confiscated by the government. Unfortunately, the property had been sold to a revolutionary patriot who would not return it to the Sisters. Mother St. John and Sr. Theresa returned to their family home and remained there for the next fifteen years.

It is here where the story of Mother St. John takes on a new twist. A priest by the name of Fr. Claude Cholleton had started a congregation after the revolution in a town called Saint-Etienne. This newly formed congregation was comprised of women who had been Sisters before the revolution, as well as other women who wanted to be a part of this new congregation. Given their practice of dressing in black, these Sisters were called the “Black Daughters.” Before these women completed their formation, Fr. Cholleton was re-assigned to the diocese of Lyon to be the Vicar for Cardinal Fesch.

Cardinal Fesch was the most powerful prelate in France, largely because he was Napoleon’s maternal uncle. The Sisters of St. Joseph look upon what transpired next as God’s providence at work: The circumstances brought Fr. Cholleton, Cardinal Fesch, and Mother St. John together.

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When Fr. Cholleton arrived in Lyon after leaving the Black Daughters in Saint-Etienne without proper leadership, he spoke of his concerns to Cardinal Fesch. Cardinal Fesch had known of the Sisters of St. Joseph prior to the revolution, and he advised Fr. Cholleton that the Black Daughters be brought under the rule of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Fr. Cholleton accepted this recommendation though he nor Cardinal Fesch knew of a specific Sister of St. Joseph who might be of help.

God's providence came to the forefront once more because a visiting Capuchin from Monistrol, Fr. Hubert, heard about the Vicar's plan and suggested that Mother St. John take responsibility for the Black Daughters. Cardinal Fesch and Fr. Cholleton readily agreed to this plan. Soon, a messenger from Cardinal Fesch knocked on the door of the Fontbonne family home and asked Mother St. John to return with him to St. Etienne to be the Superior of the Black Daughters. She accepted his offer and arrived to stay with her new Sisters on August 14, 1807.

At the age of 49, Mother St. John left her hometown and set down roots with a group of novices whom she had neither interviewed nor received. To their credit, the Black Daughters accepted Mother St. John even though she came from a different tradition than their own. Mother St. John had to first address the Jansenist mortification that seemed to underlie their congregational spirituality. She challenged the Black Daughters by putting forth the concept that mutual tolerance, weariness from work, and care for the sick could be much more demanding than any penance or suffering they inflicted upon themselves. Little by little, the Black Daughters came to embody and understand the spirit of the Institute that Mother St. John represented, and on July 14, 1808, twelve postulants received the habit. With Mother St. John, these Sisters founded "The Society of Saint Joseph." It is worth noting that at this time, the political climate of France did not allow them to be called a Congregation.

In 1814, Mother St. John decided to move the community from St. Etienne to Lyon, where they would have more space and direct contact with the seat of the Archdiocese. In 1816, she bought a ruined castle and began a seven-year process of overseeing the

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necessary renovations. In November 1823, the new Vicar of the archdiocese, Fr. Bouchard, came to see the construction and was scandalized by the large windows that Mother St. John had ordered. In her view, the windows promoted the physical and emotional health of the Sisters. In his opinion, they were a luxury as opposed to the spirit of poverty. Mother St. John didn't replace the windows. Instead, she waited three months until the Bishop revoked the restrictions. On March 5, 1824, all the Sisters moved into the renovated former castle, complete with bright sunshine pouring through the magnificent large windows!

By 1830, Mother St. John was 70 years old and had spent 52 of those years as a Sister of St. Joseph. Those years had been among the most turbulent in Western History. For Mother St. John and many of her generation, the disgrace of the revolution was transformed into the grace that helped them develop a deeper faith and genuine holiness. She learned to be aware of blind confidence in people who occupied positions of authority. Nevertheless, she was still capable of collaborating with a powerful Cardinal who called her to be something she had never imagined.

Before she died, Mother St. John founded or re-organized more than 240 houses of the Congregation, not to mention those that came to life in foreign lands. This is the woman who, at 77 years of age, opened the Congregation to a new expression of Catholicism: A foundation in the United States.





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# Mother St. John Fontbonne – A Leader

Written by Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

## Leader:

Mother St. John Fontbonne was an incredible leader. Reflecting on what made her so extraordinary can assist us as leaders within Providence St. Joseph Health and beyond.

## Prayer for Pondering:

As a child, she was described as a leader among her peers. She *embraced* her God-given talents for leadership, and at the tender age of 26, she was elected Superior by her local community in Monistrol.

In her role as Superior, she expanded the ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph to meet the needs of the people. Mother St. John sought funding for the Congregation's work through influential men and women. One of these ministries was bringing women from all levels of society together. "*Bringing people together*" is a core element of the *charism* of the Sisters of St. Joseph...the dear neighbor without distinction.

In her public denouncement of Fr. Ollier (pastor of the church in Monistrol) because he took the Constitutional Oath imposed on the clergy, we admire her *integrity*. She and the Sisters held firmly to their *faith* and *commitment* to the larger Church, refusing to separate themselves from papal authority.

Having to disband the Monistrol community, Mother St. John spent over fifteen years with Sr. Theresa and Sr. Martha at the Fontbonne family home. We honor their holy *perseverance* for remaining faithful to God and following the Rule of the Congregation during these many years of separation from other Sisters of St. Joseph.

Mother St. John was a woman of *valor* and *compassion* when she provided sanctuary to members of the clergy who likewise refused to take the oath. She and Sisters like her risked prison and possibly death because of their actions to provide care and comfort to those fleeing persecution.

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Mother St. John, Sr. Theresa, and others were dragged from their family homes and imprisoned. During her time in jail, reports state that Mother St. John was calm and serene, though distressed over the fact that she was not martyred. Her courage during this time of imprisonment and her ability to be a model for others during an obviously frightening time in their lives is *inspiring* to us all.

When Mother St. John accepted the invitation from Cardinal Fesch to establish the Sisters of St. Joseph by becoming the Superior of the Black Daughters, Mother St. John demonstrated *gracious humility* in responding “yes” to this call to new leadership with women she did not know and women who had been formed under a much different rule. The Black Daughters soon experienced a strong connection to Mother St. John and exemplified *openness* and *generosity* in accepting her as their new leader. In this sense of togetherness, the community flourished.

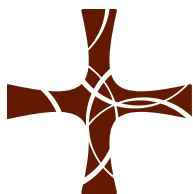
As a leader, Mother St. John was *strategic*. As new, smaller communities of Sisters of St. Joseph formed in the South of France, over 100 between 1816 and 1835, Mother St. John understood the need for a strong center to support these ever-expanding communities. Thus, Mother St. John made the *timely decision* to found the Lyon Congregation in 1808. She was attentive to the signs of the times and made *bold* decisions to ensure the future of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

In sending young sisters to the United States in 1836, Mother St. John demonstrated *courageous* and *bold faith* that these Sisters would form a new congregation and thrive in the rugged and wild confines of this faraway land. She *trusted* that their ministries would flourish through the *leadership* and *ingenuity* of these *brave* women who would continue to further the legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

And finally, in her last years of life, Mother St. John stepped down from her role as the Superior and *invited* new generations of Sisters to take up the yoke of *leadership*. She was known as a *loving mentor* and *friend* to the women who would follow her in leadership. At the age of 84, Mother St. John died a peaceful death, and one can't help but think that God said to her: *Well done, my good and faithful servant.*







## Arriving in Lyon

*May we connect with our Sisters and foremothers of all times so that their zeal may continue to live in us and inspire us. Gather the treads of hope, wonder, and strength that bind us together. Transform us and weave for us a new memory in this time and place. Amen.*

Lyon has special meaning for The Sisters of St. Joseph. As we recall, the Sisters of St. Joseph was founded in Lyon after the end of the French Revolution. After years of living in her family home, Mother St. John was appointed Superior General of the Congregation and summoned to Lyon to establish a motherhouse and novitiate. She worked here for many years until she died and was buried in Lyon's Cimetiere de Loyasse. Today, Lyon is the location of the generalate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon, an international congregation of St. Joseph with more than 1,000 members serving in 15 countries.

### More About Lyon

Lyon is the third largest French city, the first being Paris and the second Marseilles. However, with its suburbs and smaller surrounding towns, it is France's second-largest metropolitan area (population 1.7 million). It is a major center of business, situated between Paris and Marseilles, and has a reputation as the French capital of gastronomy, as well as having played a significant role in the history of French cinema. Lyon is also considered the silk capital of the world and is a center for fashion.

Lyon was founded as a Roman colony in 43 BC. Caesar made Lyon the starting point of the principal Roman roads throughout Gaul. It

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then became the capital and main city of Gaul, partly thanks to its location at the convergence of two navigable rivers.

The history of Lyon is also intimately linked to the history of Christianity, and the city's many religious buildings testify to its religious standing over the centuries. In the Middle Ages, the city welcomed the seat of the Primate of the Gauls, the first church of France, an honorary title that still exists. Today, the archbishop of Lyon is still referred to as "le primat des Gaules."

### **The Chapel near the Motherhouse in Lyon**

In the primitive Constitution (1693), the salvation and perfection of the Sisters could never be separated from the salvation and perfection of the dear neighbor. This unusual mission has been described as the single, double end of the Congregation. Our first Sisters were called to be risk-taking prophets in their neighborhoods. They were called to divide the city, to find out what moral disorders existed there, and to find the means to remedy these disorders. These Sisters were change agents in their time – identifying the systemic issues that were hurtful and working to change or alleviate their devastating effects on the human body, mind, and spirit.

But there is a vital element that must be noted here. These first Sisters were not 17th century social workers. Their response flowed fully from their mission as Sisters of St. Joseph. Their response flowed from their spirituality, which was a close union with God, one another, and their neighbor. The goal was not a "neighborhood clean up" but the union of themselves with their neighbor, the neighbor with God, and neighbor with neighbor.

From the very beginning, the Sisters were asked to find lay people and teach them to look for and find God in their daily lives and to teach them to become contemplatives in action. This is what we've been doing all along, and this is why we are on this pilgrimage...to ground ourselves more strongly in the commitments we've already made as leaders of this healing ministry.

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The heart of our Congregational Constitution is *Article 11: The life and works of our Congregation are directed to a single end: The union of ourselves and all people with God and with one another in and through Christ Jesus. This purpose requires of us docility to the Spirit, profound humility, and zeal which is characterized by gentleness, joy, and peace.*

Our Constitution (1989) echoes this centerpiece in *Article 14: It is in the totality of our lives that we witness God’s unconditional love and fidelity. What we do in ministry is shaped by what we experience in intimacy with the Lord and community. Our work is not separate from our life with God and our life together.*

## Some further questions for reflection:

- As our pilgrimage comes to a close, name one learning from this pilgrimage that you want to integrate more deeply into your own life. How will you do this?
- As a leader within Providence St. Joseph Health, what aspect of your leadership points to your being a servant leader and someone who serves the “dear neighbor” without distinction?
- What is stirring within you right now? Please journal about it!

## Your Reflective Integration

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## A Prayer for Mother St. John's Bedroom

*Dear Mother St. John, sometimes you are larger than life for us, but here, in your room, among your belongings, we realize something of who you were.*

*Your profession cross reminds us of the commitments we, too, have made; may we treasure our commitments.*

*Your pitcher reminds us of your simplicity as you continued with ordinary daily tasks even when your strength was failing; may we be graced with this same simplicity.*

*Your cane reminds us of your frailty and your need to lean on others; may we always lean upon the Lord our God and one another in the good times and in our times of struggle.*

*Your prie-dieu reminds us of your fidelity in prayer. May we come regularly to pray alone and with one another in order that God be the center of our lives.*

*Your statue calls and compels us. You might not have liked having a statue made, yet we who follow in your footsteps are most grateful.*

*May we, like you, be ready to move forward, to take the next step on our journey in life and ministry.*

*May we, like you, be ready to step down from any pedestal or comfort zone which keeps us from being with the dear neighbor.*

*May we, like you, keep our sleeves rolled up so that we are generous in our service to one another and the dear neighbor without distinction.*

*May we, like you, keep our hands outstretched to the needy and toward the future with bold faith, foresight, and flexibility.*

*Finally, Mother St. John, our sister and friend, may we, like you, keep our eyes fixed on the Lord our God forever. Amen.*

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# From Lyon to the United States

*Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ*

As we prepare for our voyage back to the United States, let us reflect upon the brave Sisters who made this trip almost 200 years ago.

## The Initial Sisters Missioned

Mother St. John missioned six sisters to the United States on January 4, 1836.

- Sr. Febronie Fontbonne (30, niece of Mother St. John)
- Sr. Delphine Fontbonne (23, niece of Mother St. John)
- Sr. Marguerite-Felicté Bouté
- Sr. Febronie Chappelon (26 yrs)
- Sr. St. Protais Déboille (21 yrs)
- Sr. Philomene Viliane (25 yrs)
- Fr. James Fontbonne (Mother St. John's nephew and brother of Febronie and Delphine)

Only Sr. Febronie Chappelon and Sr. Febronie Fontbonne would return to France.

More would follow. Sr. Celestine Pommerel (23 yrs) and Julie Fournier (Postulant – 22 yrs and later called Sr. St. John) first went to St. Etienne for ten months to learn how to teach the deaf. After their training, they set voyage and arrived in St. Louis on September 4, 1837.

## The Early Years in America

The initial six sisters sailed on the Natchez and arrived in the U.S. on March 5, 1836. Bishop Rosati (Bishop of St. Louis) greeted them in New Orleans, and after a two-week rest, they traveled to St. Louis on the steamer George Collier.

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Although Carondelet was destined to be the cradle of the community in the United States, Cahokia, Illinois, was the place of the first missionary activities of the Sisters.

On April 7, 1836, Bishop Rosati took three of the Sisters with him to Cahokia to begin their ministry at Holy Family Parish, which is the oldest continuously active Catholic parish in the United States today.

## Cahokia, Illinois

Cahokia was settled in 1698, with most of the population comprised of French Canadians, along with some French immigrants and Native Americans. In 1836, the Sisters of St. Joseph opened “The Institute of St. Joseph.” It is known by Cahokians as The Abbey.

The three Sisters who started the first ministry in Cahokia were:

- Mother Febronie Fontbonne (Superior)
- Sr. Febronie Chappelon
- Sr. St. Protais Déboille

Life in Cahokia offered certain conveniences for the Sisters, notably the prevalent use of French, a language they were comfortable with, in contrast to Carondelet, where English dominated. This linguistic familiarity in Cahokia eased their adaptation process. However, their time in Cahokia was not without challenges. The humid climate contributed to health issues, leading to frequent illnesses. Despite these hardships, the Sisters were committed to education, and their school was growing. They began accepting boarding students, and the school’s success soon surpassed expectations.

In 1844, a great flood occurred, and the Sisters and students nearly drowned. Thankfully, Mother Celestine, Superior of the Carondelet community, sent a boat to check on them. The Sisters and the students were rescued from the second floor of the school. The Institute was rebuilt, and the Sisters returned, only to be flooded out again in 1851, thus ending their ministry in Cahokia.

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## Carondelet, Missouri

While three of the initial Sisters sent to the U.S. settled in Cahokia, the remaining three began their ministry in Carondelet, Missouri. These Sisters were:

- Mother Delphine Fontbonne (Superior)
- Sr. Marguerite-Felicité Bouté
- Sr. Philomene Viliane

Carondelet was commonly referred to as Vide Poche (Empty Pocket) because of the poverty of the residents. It was a small village on the outskirts of St. Louis with only several hundred residents in 1836. The chief occupation of the residents was woodcutting. Initially, the people of Carondelet were not interested in religion or education, and the Sisters struggled to settle into their new environment.

Coming from comfortable homes in Lyon, the Sisters found that life in Carondelet was much different, presenting them with challenges of poverty and austerity. The initial house faced the river, and a passageway divided the ground space into two rooms, approximately 15'x24'. Overhead was a small attic reached by a ladder from the outside. This lack of space necessitated that a room serve alternately as a parlor, refectory, and dorm, while the other room was a classroom during the day and a bedroom at night.

Being too poor to pay cash for tuition, parents often brought provisions or wood in recompense.

In an effort to alleviate their financial distress, the Sisters often worked as seamstresses in the evening when their classes with the children were finished. Despite financial hardship, the Sisters took on an additional ministry during their first year in the United States, running an orphanage. In addition, Sr. Celestine Pommerel and Sr. St. John Fournier arrived in St. Louis in 1837 to start teaching deaf students as a third ministry. Bishop Rosati, along with other influential men in the community, was able to obtain a \$2,000 grant from the State of Missouri to pay the tuition of any deaf pupil who was a state resident.

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In October 1837, the first U.S. postulant, Anne Eliza Dillon, was admitted to the Congregation. In religious life, she was known as Sister Mary Joseph. The Congregation continued to grow, and ministries expanded.

One new ministry that was needed was a school for African American children.

By 1854, 12 novices professed vows, yet more sisters were needed. Mother Celestine (who had succeeded Mother Delphine in 1839) appealed to Lyon for more Sisters. Lyon was unable to send any Sisters, but Sisters of St. Joseph from Moutiers, France, answered the call and soon arrived in Carondelet.

### **Relationship with the Bishop of St. Louis**

Throughout his life, Bishop Rosati remained a good friend of the Congregation. Though poor himself, he often contributed to the Sisters and would make the long walk from St. Louis to Carondelet to visit them.

Bishop Rosati died on September 25, 1843, and was succeeded by Bishop Peter Kenrick. Bishop Kenrick inherited a diocese deep in debt, but his skill at making wise real estate investments paid off. Bishop Kenrick stayed in close contact with the Congregation and likewise gave them excellent advice on real estate investments, which benefited the congregation.

### **United States Expansion**

In 1847, the first foundation outside of St. Louis was established in Philadelphia, with Sr. St. John Fournier becoming the founding Superior. The Sisters of St. Joseph would soon establish communities from Coast to Coast.

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## Sisters of St. Joseph Expansion from Carondelet, MI

**1847** – Philadelphia, PA

**1851** – St. Paul, MN

**1851** – Toronto, CA

**1853** – Wheeling, WV

**1854** – Buffalo, NY

**1854** – Rochester, NY

**1856** – Brentwood, NY (from Philadelphia)

**1858** – Albany, NY

**1860** – Erie, PA

**1869** – Baden, PA (from Brentwood)

**1872** – Cleveland, OH

**1873** – Boston, MA (from Brentwood)

**1873** – Rutland, NJ (from Brentwood)

**1876** – Los Angeles, CA

**1881** – Waterton, PA

**1883** – Springfield, MA (from Brentwood)

**1883** – Concordia, KS (from Brentwood)

**1888** – Wichita, KS (from Concordia)

**1888** – Tipton, IN (from Waterton)

**1889** – Nazareth, MI (from Waterton)

**1899** – LaGrange, IL (from Concordia)

**1912** – Orange, CA (from LaGrange)

As noted before, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange trace their roots from Le Puy, Lyon, Carondelet, Rochester, Concordia, LaGrange, and Eureka/Orange. (*The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange originally settled in Eureka but moved their Motherhouse from Eureka to Orange in 1922.*)





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## Cemetery Prayer Lyon, France

As we gather at the burial site of Mother St. John Fontbonne and Mother Marie de Chantal, we stand amid a long history of Sisters of St. Joseph and all the people who worked side-by-side with them.

They divided the city and sought out the ills, joining hearts and hands to address the needs of the people.

They were the embodiment of God's compassionate presence and great love, visible to all they encountered in their day.



We remember the courage it took to live faithful to one's call in times of strife and great need. Dispersed, arrested, and imprisoned during the French Revolution, Mother St. John and many others faced the possibility of death for the sake of their faith and vision. With courage, she was ready to die for her faith, giving all to God. Seeing her willing heart, God had other plans: Founding the Community of St. Joseph.

We pray that the spirit, wisdom, and courage of Mother St. John may inspire us for the sake of the Mission and ministry to

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which we give ourselves each day. May the Spirit guide our days on earth in the ways of holiness and justice so that we may serve you in union with all people of goodwill.

May we be sure in faith, strong in hope, and perfect in love. May we follow in her footsteps of courage, gentleness, and compassion through our leadership to continue the mission of Jesus touched by the tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph. By our healing, reconciling presence, may we draw all people to You, O God, and to unity among all people. Amen

**Leader:** Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,

**ALL:** And let perpetual light shine upon them.

**Leader:** May they rest in peace.

**ALL:** Amen

**Leader:** May the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God.

**ALL:** Amen.

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## Sharing the Pilgrimage Upon Return

Steps for considering what and how to bring the experience home:

- Review your journal. What are the themes? What intrigues you?
- Consider projects you are working on at home. Are there some connections between what you have experienced and what you hope to achieve? How can you help others connect more deeply and concretely to the mission of Providence St. Joseph Health?
- What ideas do you have for sharing, connecting, and integrating what you have learned?
- Begin with the end in mind. In two years, what would it look like for you and your team (project/goal) to be more connected to the “ministry of Jesus”?
- Write down some images, ideas, and words that come to mind as you brainstorm what this greater connection to the mission would look like with your team/work group/project.
- How does what you have learned, experienced, and pondered during this pilgrimage inspire and motivate the above?
- When you share your reflection in the Fourviere chapel, select a paragraph that best describes how you feel as we bring our Pilgrimage to a close.

### Your Reflective Integration

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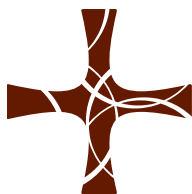


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## Letter to Sisters in St. Louis from Mother Saint John

Mother Saint John, from afar, sustained her dear, generous missionaries by most encouraging exhortations:

*“All here recalls to me the memory of my well-loved children; and I still meet you in all the places where I saw you so many times. It seems to me that it is a century since I have heard from you, and I do not know how you are. The affection I have for you does not permit me to remain waiting any longer; for the distance which separates us, far from lessening my affection, makes it only more intense and tender. If the ocean separates us, eternity will unite us. I cannot express to you perfectly the joy I experience in this thought. Eternity will unite us, gives me consolation. What joy on our first meeting in Heaven. We will then be united, never more to be separated. Write to me at the first chance. Give me details of all you do or suffer. Pour into the heart of a Mother, who loves you tenderly, your sorrow, your cares, and your joys, if you have any. I will share all. Do not let me think that America makes you forget your old Mother, who embraces you all in Our Lord Jesus Christ. In whatever part of this world we may be, we are never exiled, never far from the eyes of our Heavenly Father. In Europe, as well as in America, He is everywhere witness of our works and struggles. When I think that you are separated from me in another world, I am consoled by the thought that we are all united in the bosom of God. My entire wish is that you be saints and that your communities be regular and edifying. I implore God to pour down upon you His choicest blessings and to assist you always with His grace.”*



## Songs of the Pilgrimage

### UBI CARITAS LIVE IN CHARITY

Taizé Community

Jacque Berthier

U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - - mor,  
Live in char - i - ty and stead - fast love,

u - bi ca - ri - tas. De - us i bi est.  
live n char - i - ty; God will dwell in you.

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:2-8; *Where charity and love are found, God is there* Taizé Community, 1978  
Tune: Jacque Berthier, 1923 - 1994. © 1979; Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc. agent.

# SALVE, REGINA

HAIL, HOLY QUEEN

Chant, Mode V

Sal - ve, Re - gí - na, ma - ter mi - se - ri - cór - di - ae:  
VÍ - ta, dul - cé - do et spes no - stra, sal - ve.  
Ad te cla - mā - mus, éx - su - les, fi - li - i He - vae.  
Ad te sus - pi - rá - mus, ge - mén - tes et flen - tes  
in hac la - cri - má - rum val - le. E - ia er - go, Ad - vo - cá - ta no - stra,  
il - los tu - os mi - se - ri - cór - des ó - cu - los ad nos con - vér - te.  
Et Je - sum, be - ne - dí - ctum fruc - tum ven - tris tu - i,  
no - bis post hoc ex - si - lí - um os - tèn - de.  
O cle - mens, O pí - a,  
O dul - cis Ví - r - go Ma - ri - a.

Text: Latin attr. to Hermannus Contractus, 1013–1054.

# STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS

EARTH MAMA

Words and music by  
Joyce Johnson Rouse



1. I am stand - ing on the shoul - ders of the ones  
stand - ing on the shoul - ders of the ones  
stand - ing on the shoul - ders of the ones



— who came be - fore me. I am strong - er for their cour  
— who came be - fore us. They are saints and they are hu -  
— who came be - fore me. I am hon - ored by their pas -



- age, I am wis - er for their words. I am  
- mans, they are an - gels they are friends. We can  
- sion they for our u - ni - ty I will



lift - ed by their long - ing for a fair and bright - er fu -  
see be - yond the stru - gles and the trou - bles and the chal  
stand a lit - tle tall - er, I will work a lit - tle long



- ture. I am grate - ful for their vis - ion, for their  
- lence when we know that by our ef - forts, things will be  
- er, and my should - ers will be there to hold



1. toil - ing on this earth. 2. We are They lift me  
bet - ter in the end. ones who fol - low me.



high - er than I could ev - er fly,



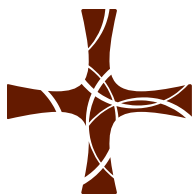
car - ry - ing my bur - dens a - way. I im -



ag - ine our world if they had - n't tried, D. S.



we would - n't be so ver - y blessed to - day. 3. I am



## *Acknowledgments*

We are grateful to the following people whose research and insights helped develop this French Pilgrimage for our leaders:

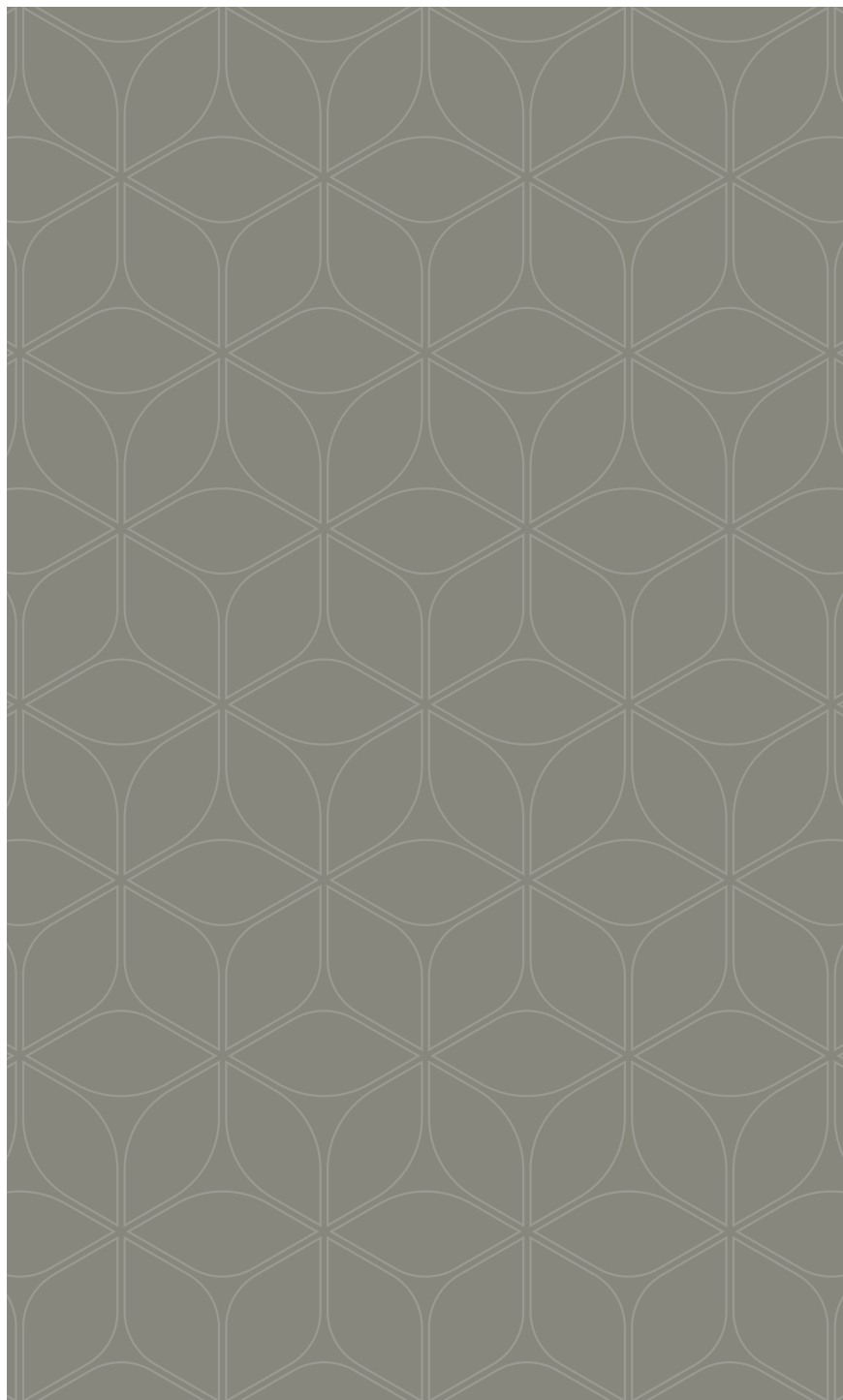
- Sr. Marcia Alan, CSJ (Concordia)
- Sr. Pat Byrne, CSJ (Baden)
- Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ (Orange)
- Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ (Orange)
- Sr. Anne Hennessy, CSJ (Orange)
- Sr. Sheila Holly, SSJ (Philadelphia)
- Sr. Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ (Orange)
- Sr. Suzanne Sassus, CSJ (Orange)

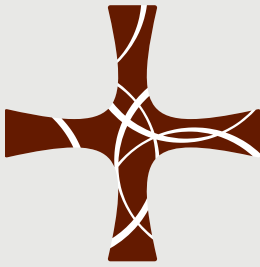
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LEADERSHIP  
INSTITUTE