

FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH OF CANADA  
RESOURCES FOR  
THE GLOBAL COORDINATING GROUP CALENDAR

During the **FOURTH** week of **MAY**, we *listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayer the Sisters of St. Joseph and the people of **THE GAMBIA**.



The Republic of Gambia is a country in west Africa that is entirely surrounded by Senegal except for its coastline on the Atlantic Ocean at its western end. It is the smallest country on mainland Africa. The Gambia is situated on either side of the Gambia River which flows through the centre of The Gambia and empties into the Atlantic Ocean. Its area is 10,689 sq, klm (4,127 sq mi) with a population of 1, 857,181 as of April 2013. Banjul is the capital and the largest cities are Serekunda and Brikama.

The Gambia was made part of the British Empire in 1965. It gained independence under the leadership of Dawda Jawara who ruled until Yahya Jammeh seized power in a bloodless 1994 coup. Adama Barrow became the third president in January 2017, after defeating Jammeh in December 2016 elections. Jammeh initially accepted the results, then refused, which triggered a constitutional crisis and military intervention by the Economic Community of West African States, resulting in his exile. The Gambia's economy is dominated by farming, fishing and especially tourism. In 2008 about a third of the population lived below the international poverty line of US \$1.25 per day.

Early history: Arab traders provided the first written accounts of the Gambia area in the ninth and tenth centuries. During the tenth century, Muslim merchants and scholars established communities in several West African commercial centres. A large export trade was established, selling local people as slaves, as well as gold, ivory and manufactured goods.

At the beginning of the 14th century, most of what is today called Gambia was part of the Mali Empire. The Portuguese reached this area by sea in the mid-15th century, and began to dominate overseas trade.

During the late 17th century and throughout the 18th century, the British Empire and the French Empire struggled continually for political and commercial supremacy in the regions of the Senegal River and the Gambia River.

As many as three million people may have been taken as slaves from this general region during the three centuries that the transatlantic slave trade operated. Most of those taken were sold by other Africans to Europeans: some were prisoners of intertribal wars; some were victims sold because of unpaid debts; and many others were simply victims of kidnapping.

Traders initially sent people to Europe to work as servants until the market for labour expanded in the West Indies and North America in the 18th century. In 1807, the United Kingdom abolished the slave trade throughout its empire. It also tried, unsuccessfully, to end the slave trade in the Gambia. Slave ships intercepted by the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron in the Atlantic were also returned to the Gambia, with people who had been slaves released on MacCarthy Island far up the Gambia River where they were expected to establish new lives. (Information from Wikipedia)

### *SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH*

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy have 7 sisters ministering in the Gambia. They are involved in health care, AIDS programs, women's promotion, education and parish work.

To read about some of the work being done in East Africa by the Annecy Congregation click this link: <http://www.srsfstjosephofannecy.org/index.php/en/news/60-news-from-the-african-region>



*United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 11,000 sisters in 52 countries, listening to the heart of the world.*