

FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH OF CANADA

RESOURCES FOR

THE GLOBAL COORDINATING GROUP CALENDAR

During the **THIRD** week of **JULY**, we *listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayer the Sisters of St. Joseph and the people of **ITALY**.

Italy is a sovereign state in Europe, located in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, it shares open ended borders with France, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia, San Marino and Vatican City. Italy covers an area of 301,338 km (116,347 sq mi) and has a largely temperate seasonal and Mediterranean climate. With around 61 million inhabitants, it is the fourth most populous EU member state and the most populous in southern Europe.



Since classical times, ancient Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Greeks established settlements in the south of Italy, with Etruscans and Celts inhabiting the centre and the north of Italy respectively, and various ancient Italian tribes dispersed throughout. The Italic tribe known as the Latins formed the Roman Kingdom in the 8th century BC, which eventually became a republic that conquered and assimilated its neighbours. Ultimately, the Roman Empire emerged in the 1st century BC as the dominant power in the Mediterranean Basin and became the leading cultural, political and religious centre of Western civilization.



During the Early Middle Ages, Italy suffered sociopolitical collapse amid barbarian invasions, but by the 11th century numerous rival city-states and maritime republics, mainly in the northern and central regions of Italy, rose to great prosperity through shipping, commerce and banking, laying the groundwork for modern capitalism. These mostly independent statelets, acting as Europe's main spice trade hubs with Asia and the Near East, often enjoyed a greater degree of democracy than the larger feudal monarchies that were consolidating throughout Europe; however, part of central Italy was under the control of the Papal States, while Southern Italy remained largely feudal until the 19th century, partially as a result of a succession of Byzantine, Arab, Norman, Angevin and Spanish conquests of the region.

The Renaissance began in Italy and spread to the rest of Europe, bringing a renewed interest in humanism, science, exploration and art. Italian culture flourished at this time, producing famous scholars, artists such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Galileo, and Machiavelli. Since the Middle Ages, Italian explorers such as Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, John Cabot, and Giovanni da Verrazzano discovered new routes to the Far East and the New World, helping

to usher in the European Age of Discovery. Nevertheless, Italy's commercial and political power significantly waned with the opening of trade routes which bypassed the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the Italian city-states constantly engaged one another in bloody warfare, culminating in the Italian Wars of the 15th and 16th centuries that left them exhausted, with none emerging as a dominant power. They soon fell victim to conquest by European powers such as France, Spain and Austria.

By the mid-19th century, a rising movement in support of Italian nationalism and independence from foreign control led to a period of revolutionary political upheaval. After centuries of foreign domination and political division, Italy was mostly unified in 1871. From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, the new Kingdom of Italy rapidly industrialized. The south remained largely impoverished fueling a large and influential diaspora.

Despite being one of the main victors in World War I, Italy entered a period of economic crisis and social turmoil, leading to the rise of a fascist dictatorship in 1922. Participation in World War II on the Axis side ended in military defeat, economic destruction and the Italian Civil War. Following the liberation of Italy and the rise of the resistance, the country abolished the monarchy, reinstated democracy, enjoyed a prolonged economic boom and, despite periods of sociopolitical turmoils, became a major advanced country.

Italy has a very high level of human development, and it stands among the top countries for life expectancy. The country plays a prominent role in regional and global economic, military, cultural and diplomatic affairs. Italy is a founding member of the European Union and a member of numerous international institutions, including the UN, NATO, the G7, the G20, the Union for the Mediterranean, the council of Europe and many more. As a reflection of its cultural wealth, Italy is home to 54 World Heritage sites, and is the fifth-most visited country. (Information from Wikipedia)

Sisters of St. Joseph

Italy is home to 1164 Sisters and 920 Associates, from the Congregations of Aosta, Chambéry, Cuneo, Pinerolo and the Istituto San Giuseppe. They minister in education, homes for the aged, youth ministry, parish and pastoral work with adults, university residence and a hostel for girls.

Read about a visit to the **Aosta** congregation:

<http://sistersofstjosephfederation.blogspot.com/2012/09/aosta-valley-in-heart-of-italian-alps.html>

A place you might like to stay:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=wSPs4lvDUiUC&pg=PA133&lpg=PA133&dq=Sisters+of+st.+joseph+of+aosta&source=bl&ots=2R-YAhgGbw&sig=ZtooXjNgxOlmqdUdCkKOQTAoM8g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiy6ZWE4pTcAhVG74MKHds2A5oQ6AEIWzAK#v=onepage&q=Sisters%20of%20st.%20joseph%20of%20aosta&f=false>



Aosta valley in the heart of the Italian Alps

Two examples of projects of the Sisters of St. Joseph of **Chambéry** are found in CSJournal 2017 #5

1. Panettone for Solidarity

The Italian province has arrived at the seventh edition of the Christmas campaign, “Panettone for Solidarity”, and all this is possible thanks to the active collaboration of all the communities in the Province, the families of Sisters and lay friends. The Christmas campaign, CSJMissioni 2017, intends to finance scholarships for young women at the St. Joseph Hostel in Songea, Tanzania. The goal is to promote education as much as possible, by offering assistance at various levels and in different ways. It endorses the second Millennium Development Goal pursued by the United Nations, i.e., “to ensure universal primary education by guaranteeing elementary education to all boys and girls”. With the funds raised, the attendance of so many poor girls of the Mateka district will be assured in Songea, and their integral human formation can be sustained.

This solidarity initiative has been extended at the European level to other provinces (France, Denmark, and Norway) and the region of Ireland, which responded with great generosity, buying panettone or sending money to support scholarships for the young people of our hostel in Songea.

2. Refugees

The Italian province offers a further initiative, aimed this time at all the communities of the province. In response to the call of the 2015 General Chapter, the international JPIC Commission presents to the whole Congregation a few issues that touch the lives of people and the planet, among which emerges the plight of migrants and refugees. Our charism calls us to build bridges between civilizations and cultures, between local people and migrants. Applying the wealth of our spirituality, JPIC wants to give witness that unity is possible through hospitality, desiring to help people - Sisters and lay people - to

grow in awareness capable of sustaining generous assistance to migrants and refugees, so that their lives become more humane. For this reason, the Provincial Council together with CSJ Missioni encourages all communities to become acquainted personally with some refugees or immigrants, coming directly in contact with them through organizations and associations that already deal with this phenomenon. All Italian communities, therefore, are invited to create an event during the Christmas season – a meeting, lunch, dinner - that will mark the beginning of a journey of discovery with refugees in its territory.

A memoire from Sr. Justine (UN/NG)) on visiting the sisters in Italy

In a recent visit to the Sisters of St. Joseph in northern Italy, specifically Torino, Aoste, Pinerolo and Cuneo, I became more aware of the situation of refugees and migrants and how the Sisters are engaged with these vulnerable groups. In Torino the Italian Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph is engaged in a collaborative ministry dedicated to caring for the physical, psychological, mental, spiritual and social needs of the migrants and refugees.

In the past few years Italy has been faced with a considerable migration flow. In spite of efforts to deal with it, Italy has been unable to cope in a fully productive way with the phenomenon. The first response to asylum seekers has been flawed and inadequate. Many are housed in hotel facilities where they get shelter, food and basic clothing, but no guidance for how to become independent from the system. Usually asylum seekers and refugees spend more than a year waiting to be recognized as such, without being able to attend training courses or look for a job. Once they have obtained the refugee status, they must leave the facility within a few months.

Civil Society is trying to respond to this need. It is the ordinary people and volunteer organizations that offer different services. Their aim is not only to provide the refugees and migrants with food, housing, clothing but also to help them know about and understand the different local services. They familiarize them with the school system, legal assistance, the health care system, while building friendship and relationships, and which is the heart of our Charism.

I also learned that two of our sisters, Marirosa and Patricia, from the Congregations of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Pinerolo, recently volunteered at a refugee center in Kitsika Greece. These particular migrants and refugees have witnessed genocide in all its horror. And now they are living in conditions that are barely human. Adults and children are in need of food, clothing and care. On their return to Italy they continue to work for the refugees, collecting money, food and warm clothing which they took at the end of October, to help the people endure the cold winter.

S. Justine Gitanjali Senapati

United in prayer the Global Joseph Family, 11,000 sisters in 54 countries, listening to the heart of the world.

