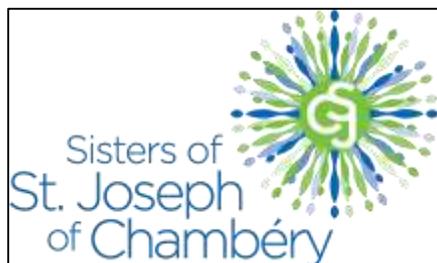


Today, on this thirty-ninth week (October 3) of our 2022 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the 2 Sisters and 6 Associates serving in **Sweden** as well as the people of that nordic nation.

The Sisters belong to the **Chambéry Congregation** and throughout the 19th century began various Nordic missions: in Denmark (1856), Sweden (1862), Norway (1865) and Iceland (1896). As noted in this [Lund University article](#),



“The Chambéry congregation was the second female religious congregation to be established in the Nordic countries since the Reformation and the most successful. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were around 800 St. Joseph Sisters living in communities spread throughout the Nordic countries. The congregation developed a broad range of activities in the fields of health care and school education...”

The article also notes that the presence of Catholic Sisters *“not only represented an alternative worldview but also an unfamiliar belief system that many regarded as a threat to their Protestant-influenced national culture. Catholic religious orders were considered as particularly dangerous [as they] represented a new form of women’s culture in society, where the Lutheran doctrine of vocation with its stress on women’s maternal and domestic duties was still an indispensable part of the prevailing social norm system.”*

More recently, and responding to the needs of French-speaking immigrants, the Sisters opened a mission in Stockholm. Later, as the number of religious grew in southern Sweden, the Sisters moved the north of the country where the need was great given that few religious and priests were present there. This [2006 General Council of Sweden report](#) by Srs. Lila and Beartrice described their mission with new immigrants and refugees in Sundsvall (in central-north Sweden) where they hosted *“refugees, young people, and families in their apartment, some for weeks, others for months.”* Today, the Sisters continue that important work – focussing their ministry in pastoral care and support to refugees.



Country Background: Between 8,000 to 6,000 BC, Sweden was extensively populated by hunter gatherers, although dwellings and graves have been found to date even further back to the Stone Age. During the early Iron Age (500 BC until 400 AD), the population of Sweden became settled, and agriculture began to form the basis of the economy and society. The country’s ancient name was Svithiod; while the modern name of Sweden was derived from the Svear,

or Suiones - a people mentioned as early as 98AD by the Roman author Tacitus. While an independent Swedish state has already emerged during the early 12th century, by 1397 it formed

part of the three-state monarchial union known as the 'Kalmar Union' comprised of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Today, the sovereign state of Sweden is a constitutional and parliamentary democracy. With a population of 10.5million (2022), of which approximately one fifth are newcomers, Sweden is known for its comprehensive social welfare system that provides universal health care and tertiary education to its citizens. It has the world's eleventh-highest per capita income and ranks highly in numerous metrics of national performance - including quality of life, health, education, protection of civil liberties, economic competitiveness, equality, prosperity and human development. Traditionally a neutral country (e.g.: during both World Wars and the Cold War) both Sweden and Finland have taken steps in 2022 to join NATO as a consequence of threats from Russia as outlined in this August 2022 [Guardian article](#). In addition to possible NATO membership, Sweden is already an active member in the United Nations, the Nordic Council, the Council of Europe, the World Trade Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Recent parliamentary elections in the country saw the government parties lose their majority with the likely outcome that Ulf Kristersson, the leader of the Moderate Party, will become prime minister. As a general comment about Sweden, this [Freedom House report](#) notes that while *"civil liberties and political rights are legally guaranteed and respected in practice, and the rule of law prevails, recent challenges include increases in violent crime and reported hate crimes."* (Sources: Al Jazeera News, Freedom House, [Sweden.SE](#), The Guardian, Wikipedia)



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 7850 Sisters, 5700 Associates, 34 Agrégées in 44 countries, listening to the heart of the world