



Au Puy

Volume 17, Number 2, Summer 2024

It has been a busy first half of the season at the Centre. We have welcomed groups for week-long pilgrimages, programs, and short visits. Three times we were double-booked as more and more people come to Le Puy to see the Kitchen and historical sites of the Sisters of St. Joseph. It is gratifying to see such interest and learning going on because it means that the charism is inspiring and taking hold on a lot more people of all ages, places, and stations in life! This is encouraging and hope-filled for the future, which is blooming and growing throughout the world in new ways.

We have a unique global perspective of this future, and we will celebrate it on October 17 as the Centre marks its 20th anniversary. Guests will include the Centre's Board members as well as sisters representing congregations throughout the world through the Global Coordinating Group (GCG). Other guests include the Rector of the Diocese of Le Puy, the Mayor of Aiguilhe, our old friend and pastor of Les Carmes Parish Fr. Paul Chamaly, provincials from the French congregations, as well as members of the Centre's first Board and staff. The day's event will begin with a prayer service planned by Sisters Mary Diesbourg, Sheila Holly, and Josette Gocella, members of the first staff. The service will be followed by a sumptuous French buffet lunch.

An anniversary video has been prepared that features some of the faces of the past 20 years. And, a special edition newsletter coming out in September will tell the story about the Centre's founding and its major events and accomplishments over the years.

We are grateful to all the people who have made the International Centre a vibrant and thriving place. Their time, patience, persistence, and love of the Sisters of St. Joseph and the charism have made all the difference. Let us pray for another 20 years—and beyond!



Sr. Eluiza de Andrade (Chambéry Congregation-Brazil) and Olga Bonfiglio (associate, Congregation of St. Joseph-USA)

[Click here](#) to see our 20th anniversary video

Orange Sisters Hold Annual Pilgrimage with a Twist – May 15-21



Associates and partners in mission participated in “Called to the More: An Experience of the CSSJ Spiritual Legacy” on May 15-21. Besides visiting the Kitchen and various historical sites of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the group visited Mother St. John Fontbonne’s birthplace in Bas-en-Basset, the Heritage Centre and Fourvière basilica in Lyon, and the basilica and museum of St. Francis Regis in Lalouvesc. ([Click here](#) for more information about St. Francis Regis.)

The pilgrimage was led by Sr. Mary Beth Ingham, general superior, and Sr. Jane DeLisle, director of the Center for Spiritual Development. This is the first year they have organized a pilgrimage exclusively for lay people. [Click here](#) for more information about the Orange Congregation.

Stepping into the Past, Living in the Present, Journeying toward the Future – May 27 - June 3

Participants in Mary Rowell’s program “Stepping into the Past, Living in the Present, Journeying toward the Future” spent the week as an international community in this second year of offering the program. Canadians, Americans, Africans, Indians, and Mexicans delved into the history and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph and visited the Kitchen and SSJ historical sites.

Sr. Mary Rowell, CSJ, is a Sister of St. Joseph in Canada and is vocation and first formation director for her Congregation. She currently works in retreat and environmental ministries at Villa St. Joseph in Cobourg, Ontario. In that capacity, Mary provides presentations and retreats across Canada and the United States, many of which focus on the CSSJ charism for all members of the “Joseph Family”. Mary also facilitates general chapters for various Congregations. We look forward to working with Mary next year!



Mount St. Mary's University Brings Board Members, Faculty, and Staff to Le Puy for Annual Pilgrimage – May 30 - June 2



Mount St. Mary's University of Los Angeles (USA) held its annual pilgrimage for Board members, faculty, and staff from May 30 to June 2. Twenty-seven men and women from the University participated.

MSMU President Ann McElaney-Johnson accompanied the group and Shannon Green, director of the [CSJ Institute](#), presented a history of the Sisters of St. Joseph to orient the group to the various sites they would see. The group also traveled to Bas-en-Basset to see the birthplace of Mother St. John Fontbonne and to have a delicious French picnic lunch there.

[MSMU](#) was founded by the Sisters of Carondelet (USA) in 1925. It is the only women's university in Los Angeles and one of the most diverse in the nation. The University is known nationally for its research on gender equity, its innovative health and science programs, and its commitment to community service.

Charism in Motion – June 6-11



Charism in Motion is a new program for young adults (ages 21-49) in the U.S. Federation that started in 2022. It is open to anyone with a relationship to the Sisters of St. Joseph and their Charism. This program gives people a chance to interact with others united under the mission of the sisters during retreats, professional development, spiritual events, and more. Charism in Motion was also a new pilgrimage program at the International Centre this year.

Presenters included Sr. Michelle Leshner, SSJ-Philadelphia, professor of theology at Chestnut Hill College, and Kristen Whitney-Daniels, associate director of the US Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The 11 young women attended the program came from all walks of professional life.

Lyon Congregation Holds Intensive Meetings at the Centre – June 16-22



*Luc Pouliquen and Anick Bonnefond of ESDAC
(Spiritual Exercises for Apostolic
Discernment in Common)*

They came from Burkina Faso, Egypt, France, India, the Ivory Coast, Mexico, Lebanon, the USA, and by zoom from England and Ireland to meet with each other together for the first time since elected to 6-year terms of leadership in April of 2023. The Extended General Council (EGC) of the Congregation met in Le Puy on June 16-22. “It is the place of our ‘source’ and we return to it for a week of Syodal prayer, sharing, listening, and conversations about how best to, ‘allow the unfolding of common directions in accordance with the guidelines of General Chapter, in a spirit of openness to the Church and the needs of each country’ (Const. 158 re the EGC), said Sr. Judy Donovan, Superior General.

Sisters Judy Donovan, Colette Soro, Vimala Alexandre, and Elizabeth Rangel Reyes (in absentia) are members of the General Counsel while Sisters Catherine Fromager, Lily Thockanattu, Marcelle Bochra, Juana Monteillo, Sophy Matthew, Colette Ayo, and Maria (Pepis) del Pilar are leaders of provinces, regions and sectors of the Congregation.

Luc Pouliquen and Anick Bonnefond from ESDAC (Spiritual Exercises for Communal Apostolic Discernment) presented sessions on renewing the sisters’ understanding of how to use spiritual conversations for deeper group listening and discerning as well as to guide them through a day of “Sharing the State of the House” of each of the provinces, regions, and sectors. ESDAC facilitated the congregation’s General Chapter in 2023 using this Ignatian inspired process of “spiritual conversations”.

Dr. Nancy Bancroft (far left) of the USA presented sessions on conflict management styles as well as leadership and group cohesion. Sr. Simone served as the French-English translator and Sr. Maria del Pilar (Pepis) Sordo (fourth from right), of Mexico but serving in Lebanon, served as the French-Spanish translator.

The Leaders reviewed the General Chapter Orientations and together determined next steps on several priority areas. In her evaluation, one leader reflected, ‘Le Puy was the perfect place for this first gathering of this body which will work together for the next 5 years. We were in a place of pilgrimage, and a place where our Charism was born nearly 375 years ago. We go out, like pilgrims, renewed in our mission for today!’

On their way back to Lyon, the group stopped in Bas-en-Basset to see the birthplace of Mother St. John Fontbonne. It was a perfect end to a long and industrious week.



After several days of intensive meetings, the sisters visited the Kitchen and toured SSJ historical sites in Le Puy. Here they are seen having a much-needed and much-appreciated ice cream break.

For more photos, [click here](#) to see the Lyon Congregation website.

Short Visits



Six lay members and two Lyon sisters of the **Association of Jean-Pierre Médaille** in France spent Saturday, June 15 at the Centre talking about how they could incorporate the charism into their lives and work. After lunch, the group went to the Kitchen and the Sisters' Chapel. This visit was the biggest challenge of the day because the City of Le Puy was holding a bicycle and running race. Streets were blocked and parking was limited. However, the group pursued its objective and overcame these obstacles. We were glad to spend the day with them! [Click here](#) for more info about the Association.



Odile and François get their passports stamped at the Le Puy Cathedral after attending the 7 a.m. pilgrim Mass, which occurs every day, and attracts hundreds of pilgrims.

François and Odile Delorme stopped by the Centre for an overnight rest on their way to Compostelle. They were following the Camino by bicycle starting in Chambéry. They have been friends of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry for several years. Eluiza stamps their passports as part of their passage on the Camino.



Mentxu Ibarra visited the Centre for a couple days with her friend, Annick Bonnefond, who was part of the team working with the Lyon Extended General Council (EGC) on June 16-22. Mentxsu is from the Spanish Basque, and it was a pleasure to meet her



by Dr. Gillian Boyce of Charleston, South Carolina (USA) who visited the Kitchen with her daughter, Ashley Poblocki.

My daughter and I visited Le Puy the first week of June...pouring rain when we arrived and a beautiful sunny day when we left. Such is the weather near the mountains! For several years I had had the longing to visit this ancient city. Why? I don't know why really...but the longing continued more strongly each year until, finally, I went! (I wonder if it had anything to do with me reading a 3-inch fine print tome on the history of the formation and work of the Sisters of St. Joseph!)

Almost twenty years ago I attended a class on spiritual direction at a Pittsburgh, PA, seminary. Twelve to fifteen members of the class were so drawn to each other in Ignatian Silent Retreat that we decided to form an intentional meditation group (COR...companions on the road...) that began to meet once a year at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph and eventually other retreat centers. The first time I entered the huge front doors, I felt HOME. And so, it has continued. Each year together, each month personally, I meet with my *anam cara*...my spiritual director... wise guide, compassionate teacher, friend. Over the years I became more deeply familiar with the charisms, the maxims of the Little Institute, and like a child, in awe, listened to the descriptions of the founding sisters in France and the work that they carried out, on into the international stage and present day.

Our AirBnB was in one of a row of ancient pensions across from the very considerable area where the Sisters lived and served the community in the 17th century. Every morning I felt the gift of looking across to the cathedral. Every day we would walk by the buildings where the Sisters had served so faithfully for so many centuries. We attended vespers at the Cathedral and felt the moving of the Spirit; climbed the two extinct volcano puy's to the chapel and statue on their tops. We noticed with surprise that this was also the French start of the Camino de Santiago to Compostela of Spain! Another layer of history was added.

The hospitality and loving service to community was exemplified our last day in Le Puy when we visited the very busy International Center. They quickly sorted out their schedule and took us to the very heart of where the history of the sisters all began..."the Kitchen". Amidst all the ancient buildings was a tiny room kept just as it was when a group of six women began their service to the needy, the sick, and the marginalized.

I stand there, and feel. It's a strange feeling beyond even physical feeling; I feel a bit breathless... even a sting behind my eyes...and pray. As I mark my upcoming 80th year with this trip, I know...I know there is still much prayerful service that I am able to do. That we all are able to do.

Institute Sisters Celebrate Jubilees and Birthdays – July 4-6

A group of sisters from the Institute St. Joseph (Le Puy) held a three-day gathering July 4-6 at the Centre for community meetings. They celebrated the 60th jubilees of Sœurs Marie-Frédérique Billon, Nicole Faurite, Yvonne Vallon, Eliane Massu and the 80th birthdays of Sisters Collette Philibert, Jacqueline Vole, Marie-Paule Rascle and Christiane-Thérèse Valette. Mass was celebrated by long-time friend and former pastor of Les Carmes Church, Fr. Paul Chamaly.

Since the sisters arrived on the American national holiday (July 4) and before the French national holiday (July 14), we celebrated with an American-style “picnic” lunch of hot dogs, potato salad, corn-on-the-cob, green beans, and watermelon.



Eating corn-on-the-cob the first time



Struggling to open the celebratory sparkling wine



80-year birthdays



60 years of religious life



248 years as a nation

Books by Sisters and Friends

***Wellsprings of Grace: Jean-Pierre Médaille, S.J. and the Ignatian Charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph* by Sr. [Joan L. Roccasalvo C.S.J.](#)**



The phrase, “wellsprings of grace,” aptly describes the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the focus of this study as it applies to the Sisters of St. Joseph. According to Thomas Corbishley, SJ, few books, apart from the Bible, have influenced Christians more than these Exercises, transforming an exercitant into a steadfast companion and disciple of the Lord. Their success lies in the simple fact that ‘they do what they set out to do.’ The individual becomes a power of one. Those who generously cooperate with their graces are charged with a mandate to become ambassadors for Christ (Rom. 1:17). They build up a culture of love one person at a time in the sacrament of the present moment. This fact cannot be overstated. Mary Gordon, the well-known writer and

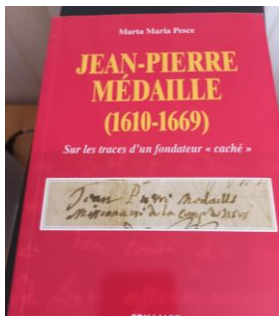
occasional critic of the Catholic Church, notes that “even if Jesuits had disappeared, Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises, which he wrote to help the members focus their inner lives, would be a monument in discernment and insight.” As a reference book, *Wellsprings of Grace* systematically traces the influence of the Ignatian Exercises on the Sisters of St. Joseph in their identity and mission. No research prior to *Wellsprings of Grace* has identified and studied the sources from which the foundational texts of the Sisters of St. Joseph have emerged. These Ignatian Exercises have become the distinguishing mark of the Jesuits themselves: “When all is said and done,” writes Simon Ditchfield, “it is the Spiritual Exercises that encapsulate the distinctiveness of the Jesuits. It is not the only reason but the main reason.” Those who do these Exercises are likewise distinguished as new creations in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17). *This book is available in English only.*

***Come, Have Breakfast: Meditations on God and the Earth* by [Sr. Elizabeth A. Johnson](#)**



“‘Come, have breakfast’ (Jn 21:12) These three simple words followed by generous action open a portal into an ecological image of the living God who is active with cordial hospitality toward all creatures, nurturing their lives, desiring that all should be fed.”

In her latest work, prize-winning theologian Sr. Elizabeth Johnson views planet Earth, its beauty and threatened state, through the lens of scripture. Each luminous meditation offers a snapshot of one aspect of the holy mystery who creates, indwells, redeems, vivifies, and sanctifies the whole world. Together, they offer a panoramic view of the living God who loves the earth, accompanies all its creatures in their living and their dying, and moves us to care for our uncommon common home. *This book is available in English only.*



***Jean-Pierre Médaille (1610-1669) In the footsteps of a “Hidden” Founder* by Sr. Marta Maria Pesce**

In 2016 the Italian Federation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph celebrated its 50th Anniversary. This illustrious Federation needed to present a book about Father Médaille written by Sr. Marta Maria Pesce of the Cuneo Congregation. In 510 pages, the author has woven lace into the life of the Carcassonne-born founder. It's a book that has lifted the veil of doubts hidden since the foundation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, even if the founder remains hidden in his destiny. *This book is available in French and Italian only.*

“Brushstrokes on a Charism”, Father Medaille's “Little Design for Today” by Gianluca Zurra



This booklet is a rereading of Father Médaille's spirituality. The author draws the spirituality of the Little Design with a brush that has fallen from heaven. Gianluca Zurra, a priest from the Diocese of Alba in Italy, is a Systematic Theologian at the Institute of Religious Science in Fossano and the Faculty of Theology in Turin. This book is available in French and Italian only.

Leadership Conference of Women Religious – USA

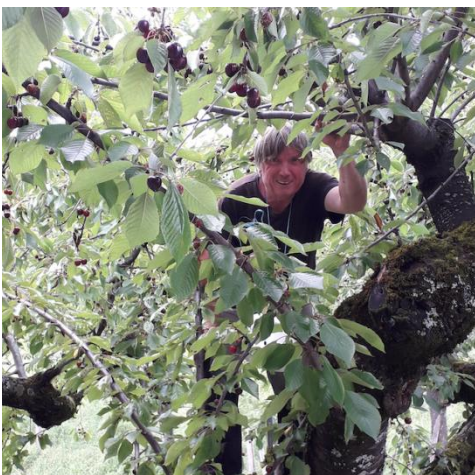
Sister Kathy Brazda, president of the Congregation of St. Joseph Leadership Team, has been named president-elect of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), which represents about two-thirds of the 36,000 Catholic sisters in the United States.

“I am both humbled and excited to be appointed president of the LCWR during this time of great change in religious life,” Sister Kathy said. “I look forward to serving, and hold all women religious in prayer as we journey forward with faith and hope.”

Congratulations, Kathy!!!



Cherries and Sheep



Giles, the shepherd who pastures his sheep in the Centre’s backyard, was up a tree one Saturday afternoon picking some delicious cherries for us and for his own homemade jams.



Sr. Simone Saugues takes a break from translating the Lyon sisters’ leadership meetings to commune with one of Giles’ sheep.

230th Anniversary of Sisters Guillotined during the French Revolution

Sr. St. Julien (née Marie Garnier) lost her life on June 17, 1794 to the guillotine during the French Revolution. She was one of three Sisters of St Joseph executed in Le Puy. Three other sisters were also guillotined in Privas for their faith and for hiding priests who were under threat by the revolutionaries. This plaque, which recognizes Sr. St. Julien, hangs in a small church in Lissac, a small town near Le Puy. We pray special prayers for these sisters who courageously held firm in their faith during a difficult time.



Paris Olympic Games – An Engagement for Peace



The City of Le Puy erected a display of the Olympic rings in the square next to the City Hall in Place Martouret.

It's important to remember that Olympic sport is really all about peace. Originally, the ancient Olympics were aimed at world peace and the city states held a two-month truce during war times. That's why the Olympics still has fights, races, and podiums—because we're all God's athletes, and we don't want to “have to run in vain” as St. Paul said (Galatians 2:2). The Olympic Games are very demanding because each athlete must prepare for his/her event by asking for strength, listening, exercising, training regularly, and renouncing excesses. So “let us run to prevail” is an engagement not just for peace but for love and solidarity for all people; each one pushes the others to go further.

Pierre de Coubertin, historian and rugby referee, founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894, before he became the renovator of the Olympic Games. The first Olympic Games of the modern era were held in Paris in 1924. One hundred years later, they return as Olympians from around the world compete for gold, silver, and bronze medals July 26 to August 11. The Paralympic (JPO) Games will follow from August 28 to September 8.



Les coureurs de Robert Delaunay (1924) Musée d'Art moderne de Toulon - France