

The ministry of hospitality is truly a gratifying one at the International Centre. People from all over the world in all walks of life find their way here for a visit, a program, or a pilgrimage, and we are privileged to meet them and introduce them to Le Puy to see the precious historical sites of the Sisters of St. Joseph and to learn more about the history and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph. One interesting phenomenon over these past 19 years of the Centre's existence is our guests. Originally designed for sisters, associates, and agrégées, the Centre has blossomed to attract many other groups including university and high school students, SSJ institutional staffs, high school and college alumni, friends, and partners of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The ever-evolving composition of the "Family of Joseph" is in plain view at the Centre as it is in your various communities and institutions—only we do it on an international scale. If this is what the present holds, we are truly excited about what future will be!

Meanwhile, we invite you to be creative about planning your own visits, programs, and pilgrimages here in Le Puy as it ties into visioning, celebrating, and sharing the charism and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Give us a call or an email to talk about what is possible, and we will do our best to accommodate you.

Eluiza and Olga, staff members

New Program for Lay People a Great Success



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As more and more lay people are interested in coming to Le Puy to deepen their understanding of the history and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the International Centre Board decided to offer a second program for lay people with Sr. Mary Rowell (SSJs in Canada) as presenter.

"Stepping into the Past, Living in the Present, and Journeying toward the Future" (May 1-7) integrated prayer, reflection, presentations, and sharing with visits to special SSJ sites in Le Puy and Lyon. Participants also engaged in "walking together" as they discerned the movement of the Spirit. As the week evolved, meal times seemed to go longer while prayer times grew more intensely as the group shared stories of each other's lives and experiences in ministry. On the last full day, the group celebrated the Coronation of Charles III with English tea sandwiches, "trifle", and a sparkling wine toast to the new king. However, what was most significant among the three associates, one former sister, and three vowed religious was a lack of distinction or hierarchy among them as they showed appreciation for each other's journey as a part of the "Family of Joseph".

Roots & Wings Program Brings African & Indian Sisters to Le Puy



The Roots & Wings program (March 13-19) brought young sisters with temporary or one year of perpetual vows from India, Burkina Faso, Congo, Madagascar, Chad, and Sri Lanka. The objective of the program was to give the sisters an opportunity to re-read their lives and vocational call in the light of the origins of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and to move into how they can live their vowed “yes” today within the reality of our world and the “Dear Neighbor” near and far.

The sisters also learned that Le Puy has been a center for lace-making since 1407, and that the founding sisters made lace at night after ministering to the people of the city during the day. This work earned them a living, which distinguished them from the cloistered nuns of the time who relied on donations to sustain themselves. This independence was one of the major reasons the Sisters of St. Joseph were able to emerge and survive as the Church’s new apostolic movement took shape.

The sisters spent a day in Lyon to learn more about Mother St. John Fontbonne. They visited the Origin & Evolution Centre, the grave of Mother St. John, the chapel where she prayed for the sisters she sent to the USA, and the Basilica at Fourvière. Sr. Rita Bujold (Lyon-Maine) served as their guide.

Sr. Judy Donovan (Lyon-Maine) and Sr. Gloria Philip (Buenos Aires) served as presenters, and Sr. Simone Saugues (Institute of St. Joseph) was the French-English translator.

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Sisters of St. Joseph from Philadelphia Hold Annual Pilgrimage

Even the rain, wind, and cloudy skies did not dampen the spirits of six sisters and two associates who made the annual pilgrimage to Le Puy and Lyon April 19-25. After resting up a bit from their long journey, the group climbed St. Michel—all 285 steps. The next day they went to the old city of Le Puy to visit the Kitchen where they prayed a thanksgiving prayer to the six founding sisters, Fr. Medaille, and Bishop de Maupas. They also visited the Église du Collège where Fr. Médaille preached, the Tree of Martyrs where two sisters were guillotined during the French Revolution, the Cathedral of Notre Dame of the Assumption, and of course, Martine’s Lace Shop where they found many beautiful handmade lace items. And, in what has become a new tradition, they visited the St. Joseph Shrine. After leaving Le Puy, the group went to Bas-en-Basset to see the birthplace of Mother St. John Fontbonne and then to Lyon to visit the Origin and Evolution Center of the Lyon Sisters, Mother St. John's grave, the hilltop basilica of Fourvière, the chapel where Mother St. John prayed for the sisters she had sent to the USA, and Old Lyon for a delectable dinner in the Food Capital of France.



This happy group of pilgrims posed with one of the “pilgrims” of Saint Jacques de Compostelle. The 700-mile-long Camino started in Le Puy over 800 years ago thanks to local Bishop Godesca.

[Click here](#) for more photos.

“Islands of Sanity” in the Middle of Chaos



by Sr. Linda Buck, Orange, CA (USA)

Over these past few months, I have reflected on what is happening in our world today and the comments I hear from many (myself included) about being overwhelmed. *We seek hope in the middle of chaos.* We are not alone. Our earliest sisters, whether in Le Puy or our local congregations, listened to the needs of the neighbor and found hope in how they responded to their times. Their chaos looked different, yet I imagine their experience of it was similar. What are we to do? What is this place of hope we seek?

Author and management consultant Margaret Wheatly discusses finding “islands of sanity” where we seek a place to foster relationships, nourish our hearts and souls, and allow creative responses to emerge. Finding an “island of sanity” enables us to be ourselves, speak our truth, move into a collective understanding, and touch into a new reality more expansive and oriented toward the common good. Perhaps the Kitchen was just that for the first Sisters of St. Joseph.

The Centre International St. Joseph also provides such a space. The various programs capture different aspects of our spirituality, walking on the streets allows connection with a rich history, and standing in the Kitchen invites us to this ancient “island” where we can tap into an antidote for today’s chaos. We are thus reminded of the rhythm of the day, coming home to share from the heart, and being in relationship.

Anyone called to be part of this global Family of Joseph knows the power of unifying love as expressed in the relationship of the Two Trinities. This model of relationship, of dynamic love, calls us to a prophetic stance of relationship. It is not about what we do but about who we are and what we embrace. I recall the prayer by Pedro Arrupe, SJ, “What you are in love with...will decide everything.”

Yet, we are human, and being in relationship can create pain in our lives, and our histories can create obstacles to inner freedom. Invitations for healing are all around us—to heal ourselves, our neighbors, fractures with God, and creation. This is some of the most challenging work, which creates more space and ability to be a witness to this dynamic love.

Our call today is to seek greater inner freedom so that our outer expression can signify hope. With our companions, we are bearers of this hope who find an “island of sanity” amid the chaos, and we move towards the Spirit’s invitation to be a radical response.

If you are looking for space to explore this dynamic model of relationship and the invitation to *be* a radical response, join Linda Buck, CSJ, from September 29 – October 5, 2023, for the program, *Being a Prophetic Stance of Relationship: A Radical Response for Our Wounded World*. This program offers a pilgrimage of the heart for all drawn to the charm of unifying love. We will discover how obstacles to inner freedom, grief and loss, and the rapid change and transition prevalent today invite us to respond radically, bringing Triune relationship and love alive in the world. The week-long experience offers a rhythm of input sessions, interactive participation, reflection, and an orientation to the city of Le Puy, with a visit to the Kitchen. [Click here](#) and scroll down for more information.



Brief Visits to Le Puy



Sr. Laisamma, Sr. Molly, Sr. Elizabeth, and Sr. Mary all from India enjoyed a couple days' visit in Le Puy last November. They are pictured here at the "back door" of the Cathedral.



The sisters from the Institute of St. Joseph (original Le Puy congregation) held a weekend study session at the Centre last November. We are always happy to host the sisters because we can provide them with a space for their work, and we have the opportunity to meet "our dear French neighbors"!

Our Lady of Peace Academy Makes First Pilgrimage



Twenty-five teenage girls ages 14-18 from San Diego, California (USA) came to Le Puy April 7-10 with five chaperones to learn more about the origins of the Sisters of St. Joseph. They timed their visit to the Easter Triduum, which gave them a more intense experience of Church during its most important holy days. They attended the Way of the Cross on Good Friday and Easter Sunday Mass at 7 a.m. at the Cathedral, which was also the Mass for the pilgrims beginning their journey on the Camino of St. Jacques of Compostelle. Dr. Brandy Sato, the principal, accompanied the group with co-planner, Ryan Martin-Spencer, director of mission integration.

[Click here](#) for more photos.

More Visitors Come to the Centre

Many people traveling in France, organize a visit to Le Puy to see the Kitchen and the Centre. We encourage all our readers to do the same. Those who make the trip here also have some connection to the Sisters of St. Joseph, which they proudly talk about and share with their spouses and friends. This is yet another aspect of our hospitality ministry where we welcome members of the 'Family of Joseph' who were ministered to by thousands of sisters over the past several decades.



David and Jennifer Knight (left) and Ellen and Nate Robinson (right) took a couples' vacation together in France with some time out of their busy itinerary to come to Le Puy by train to visit the Kitchen and other sacred SSJ historical sites. Jennifer is executive assistant to the president at St. Joseph Academy in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (USA). Ellen graduated from SJA in 1993. The Academy is sponsored by the Congregation of St. Joseph.



Robert Vergnolle is a former student and friend of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, Florida (USA), since his kindergarten days (75 years ago) in Jacksonville. He recently contacted Sr. Rita Baum, one of the sisters there and former International Centre staff member about a visit to Le Puy during their travels in France in April. He and his wife, JoAnn, have wanted to come to Le Puy for many years to learn more about the history of the Sisters in France. (Robert is a regular history buff.) Robert and JoAnn now live in Greenville, South Carolina (USA).

Sr. Catherine Barange Honored for 20 Years of Service to the Centre

Sr. Catherine Barange, superior general of the Lyon Congregation in France, was honored for her 20+ years of service to the International Centre at the Board's March 28-30 semi-annual meeting. She was among those who conceived and founded the Centre in 2000. She has served as secretary to the Board for several years. At this year's Chapter in her Congregation, she stepped down from her position as superior after 10 years. Sr. Catherine has provided leadership to her congregation for decades as an administrator, a provincial, and in several other roles.

Thank you, Merci, Gracias, Obrigada, Grazie, Catherine!!!

[Click here](#) for more photos.

