



Newsletter

Issue 11 - June 2009



Mère St. Jean

Well, we promised a follow-up to the last issue of the Newsletter, and this one is full of the resonances of Mère St. Jean. There is the inspiration of her life, and her continuing influence through all of the last 160 years, reaching right down to today's school children; then there is the dedication and service of her present-day daughters, so much in the tradition that Père Gailhac and Mère St. Jean strove to establish; there are reflections from Extended Family members around the world; and news of developments in one corner of that world.

Rathmore Grammar School, Belfast

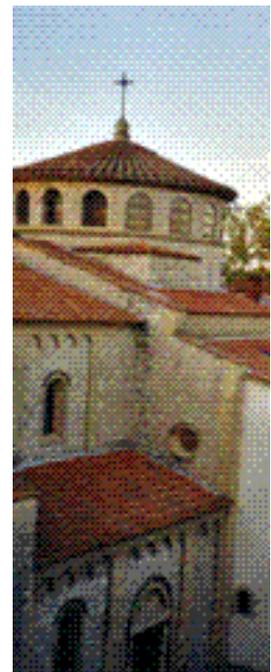


We began bringing small groups of teachers to the Mother House some years ago and they found it such a good experience that we have continued the practice each year, and last year and again this year brought a group of governors on a separate trip. Both teachers and governors have given us very positive feedback: the hospitality and warm welcome of the Mother House community and that of the Bon Pasteur, the opportunity to get to know one another in a more personal way, the value of putting what we do here in Rathmore into a broader context, discovering our "roots", getting to know the sisters, learning about the Founder, Foundress, early sisters and who and where we are as RSHM today, the background to and deeper meaning of our school motto, "Ut Vitam Habeant", which is that of the Congregation - all this as well as the camaraderie of journeying together and spending some time together away from our daily routine.

It has struck me how the Spirit works in these groups, far beyond my expectations, as some people have told me how personally renewing and healing they have found the experience. One consequence of it is our Founders' week which we celebrate each year in school. We still have work to do on it to make it really vibrant. Some very enthusiastic teachers organised the acquisition of wall hangings (maybe 6ft by 4ft) of the Founder and Foundress which we display for the week as well as giving input at school assemblies by way of a power-point presentation on our origins. We also incorporate some of the history into our First Year's Citizenship programme. These initiatives came from staff who had been to Béziers and I was only too happy to support them.

I feel we never get round to doing enough. I would love to bring pupils over, for example, and then there is the whole question of who to bring given that we have 1260 pupils and at what time of year as the school leaders are in Upper Six and very busy with various outreach and charity projects throughout the year. We did bring a group some years ago for our 150th celebrations. Maybe my successor will manage something here.

Sr. Ursula Canavan. Principal



"That all may have life"

La Maison Mère, Béziers

The fourth and final meeting for this year of Mère St. Jean was held on 14th May 2009.

There were a good thirty or so of us, to recall Mère St. Jean and the first Sisters, her daughters.

At each of the round tables, led in turn by the members of the presenting team, we were reminded of a significant feature of the story: the life, the trials, and the courage of Mère St. Jean, the General Superior; then of Mère Ste. Croix who took over from her on her death; and finally of Mère St. Félix, who succeeded Mère Ste. Croix, and supported our revered Father until his death.



At this latest meeting, Sr. Marion demonstrated how the Institute is engaged today in the struggle against human slavery, especially that of women and children. These meetings, which are so prayerful and rewarding for us were a time of grace which we hope to renew next year.

Sr. Bernadette McNamara

Diamond Jubilees in Lisburn

On Saturday 6th June we had a truly joyful SHM/Parish celebration for the diamond jubilees of Srs Catherine Stapleton and Mary Dunne in the Parish Church, followed by refreshments in the parish hall. When the parish priest was invited to celebrate the Mass he had insisted that the parish be informed and invited to join the Mass.



Sr. Mary & Sr. Catherine at the Jubilee Mass

The response in little gifts and Masses arriving at the convent door every hour on the day expressed the people's appreciation of the Sisters' dedication over the years.

The parish priest focussed on the 60 years of fidelity of Catherine and Mary and again expressed the gratitude and deep appreciation of the people of the parish. He asked them to continue to 'paddle around' among the people and in the school, even that!

The St Joseph's pupils were there in force to play music and sing to enhance the celebration of the Mass. Family members, friends and the Dunmurry community enjoyed what was a simple and very happy occasion.

"That all may have life"



Cutting the Jubilee Cake

Prior to the day of celebration the St Joseph’s pupils invited Sr. Mary and the Sisters to an assembly where they thanked Mary for all her work, from making them sorry for their sins to putting ashes on their foreheads, to being a good cook, always with a smile. The ‘icing on the cake’ was the highly complimentary portraits they presented to her, framed and ready for hanging! What hilarity these caused to guests! The future of the portraits is open to suggestions, the new house or bids welcome for an auction!

It was a day to give great gratitude to God and rejoice in the history of Lisburn. Thanks to Catherine, Mary and the community for continuing the SHM presence in Lisburn.

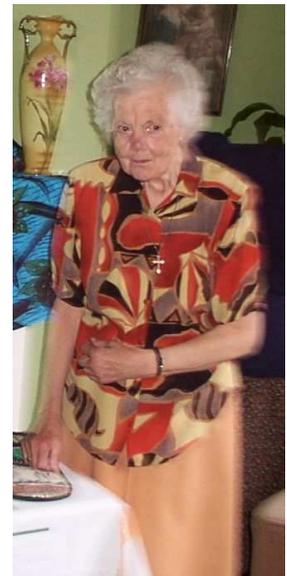
Sr. Catherine Dunne

Sr. Kathleen adds:

In this year of Mere St Jean, Srs Marcella, Catherine Quilligan, Gabrielle O’Regan, Margaret Mary Morris, Mary Dunne, Catherine Stapleton and Catherine Philbin happily celebrated their Diamond Jubilees.

Here in Lisburn the celebration started in St Joseph’s Primary School with a simple Liturgy and some entertainment. The pupils recalled the history of the Congregation and the work of Sr. Mary in the school, in the Sacramental preparation of the children as well as other curricular work, with some very serious and very amusing anecdotes.

The highlight of the Jubilee was a concelebrated Mass in St. Patrick’s Church Lisburn joined by family, friends and parishioners. Father Eamon Magorrian paid glowing tributes to the work of the Lisburn community in the parish over the years. In the neighbouring Parish of St. Colman’s Fr McGrady paid tribute to the witness value of fidelity in religious life in these difficult times and congratulated the Jubilarians Sr. Mary Dunne and Sr. Catherine Stapleton.



Sr. Marcella

Reflections

Sr. Michaeline O’Dwyer (EAP) has collected some SHM Extended Family Reflections on Mère St. Jean, from the NEP and the American Provinces. With the permission of the EAP Core Group, here are a few snippets:

When I saw the font in the church in Murviel where Appollonie was baptized, I thought that her parents could not have imagined at that moment what a gift they were giving to the Church and to all of us. Today her example stays with us - the need to be humble, to be loving, kind and brave, and willing to step up and assume responsibility when needed. What a role for women today!

Ursula Mahoney, New York

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The strength of Mère St. Jean’s example is that we all can be courageous. God’s plan for us unfolds as we recognize that all events contribute to God’s will and our “fiat” is a choice to cooperate with God’s will.

Marie-Catherine Letendre, Italy

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“That all may have life”

Trusting that God had called her to each part of her life (married and then religious), her life showed a conviction that she would be guided through all the challenges she might face in accepting God's call.

Inkeri Voutilainen, England

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Here is a woman who stood on the brink of a peaceful, joyful and tranquil life. After personal losses, heartbreak and shattered dreams, she steps into the unknown. With faith, she does the next indicated thing.

Barbara Redmond, California

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As Extended Family members we are all grateful for the opportunity to better know and be directly inspired by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Thank you for being constant in our lives.

Anne Randazzo, New York

Core Group Development

In our submission to the Provincial Chapter in October 2006, the NEP Extended Family Core Group identified, amongst others, two areas necessary for the future development of EF:

- Networking throughout the Province to promote EF and SHM collaboration;
- Interaction and communication , within the NEP and with other Provinces.



It was realised (and recommended by the Chapter) that there needs to be a wider representation of the Province than exists among the present members of the Core Group.

And so there is to be a two-day meeting in early Autumn when the Core Group plus invited representatives from other areas of the Province will look at

- where Extended Family stands now,
- future development,
- the possibility of facilitating programmes and activities to meet the aims of the Guidelines.
- the rôle of the EF Contact in each area.

Watch this space!

Next Issue

Please let us have your contributions, whether prayers, poems, articles, thoughts, reflections, photos, or drawings, by

30th September 2009

Please send all contributions to:

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Best wishes from the SHM EF Core Group (NEP)

"That all may have life"