

A Woman for our Time

...Introducing Marie Madeleine

October 2006 Issue # 1

A newsletter issued by
the Faithful Companions of Jesus
Stella Maris Broadstairs Kent England

This is the first issue of a newsletter issued by the Faithful Companions of Jesus, (often simply known as the FCJ sisters). Through this newsletter we hope to make more widely known the life and work of Marie Madeleine de Bonnault d'Houët, Foundress of the FCJ sisters.

Marie Madeleine is **a woman for our time**; a French woman of inspiration and courage. Through this newsletter you will hear more of her story. It is sufficient for now to say that she was daughter, sister, friend, wife, widow and mother, and ultimately religious sister and foundress. Her husband, Joseph de Bonnault d'Houët died before their child, Eugène, was born and Marie Madeleine faced the future on her own. She did so courageously and not only did she bring up their son, but founded a group of Catholic sisters known as the Faithful Companions of Jesus.

As a religious sister she travelled extensively founding communities in France, England, Ireland, Italy and Switzerland. After her death in 1858 FCJ communities were founded in Australia, Canada, Scotland, Belgium, the USA and Jersey. In more recent years communities were founded in Sierra Leone, Indonesia, the Philippines, Argentina, Bolivia and Romania. The most recent foundation is in Mexico and soon there will be one in Myanmar. The FCJ sisters work in different ministries and share life in community. But above all they are **Companions of Jesus** whose lives long to reveal Jesus to the world.



Marie Madeleine Victoire
de Bengy de Bonnault d'Houët
Foundress of the
Faithful Companions of Jesus

The FCJ Web-site

Why not visit our web-site and learn more about the life of Marie Madeleine and about the congregation that she founded.

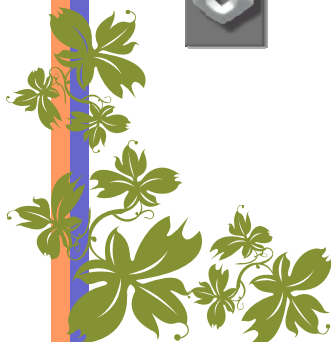
www.fcjsisters.org

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A thoroughly good woman

Within her life time, Marie Madeleine was known for her deep goodness. In fact both in life and in death people spoke of her as a *saintly* woman. In 1873, only 15 years after her death the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris obtained support from Rome to begin an official inquiry into the holiness of Marie Madeleine's life. This **process** of taking evidence from people and of examining the way a person lived is known as a "**Cause**". The process can eventually, lead to the canonisation of the person. In 1970 the Church recognised the heroicity of Marie Madeleine's virtues and gave her the title **Venerable**. The next step in the *Cause* of Marie Madeleine is her beatification. Before this can happen proof is needed that through her intercession something wonderful has taken place, something that is surprising and welcome; something that is inexplicable by natural or scientific laws! In other words proof is needed that through her intercession a **miracle** has taken place. Whilst this seems an enormous task one way to begin is asking favours of her in every day life. Marie Madeleine is a 'friend' who is looking out for us, praying with us and ready to assist us. So ask her to pray with you for what you need.

*Marie Madeleine is a
'friend' who is looking
out for us, praying with
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The Young Married Couple

Victoire de Bengy and Joseph de Bonnault d'Houët were married in Bourges cathedral on May 18 1804. They were a deeply happy couple, outstanding in their work for the sick and destitute but within months Joseph's health began to deteriorate and after just fourteen months of marriage he died of typhoid. The illness was traced to his visits to the destitute sick. Victoire, who was pregnant, was stunned by grief and the town was shocked by the untimely death of this generous and loving young man. Among the letters of sympathy Victoire received was one from a girlhood friend, Constance de Rochfort. *'Dear friend, you have such living faith, you are so wise, that it is within your own self that you will find the greatest source of comfort. In the two states in which up to now God has placed you, you have been an example to daughters and wives. Very soon you will be the same for mothers.'* Victoire gave birth just three months after Joseph's death and the child was called Eugène.

A profound love of children

Throughout her life, both as mother and as religious sister, Marie Madeleine's care and concern for children was deeply loving. At Amiens, in the early days of her religious congregation, she recognised the plight of some local children and succeeded in securing from the Civic Authority the use of a disused building. This former factory became a centre of care and instruction for these disadvantaged and often sick children who came carrying baskets of cotton ends to be unravelled and taken home at night. This somewhat thankless task was an indispensable contribution to the family income. To these poor children the Foundress and her sisters gave all their care. In different ways and inspired by the example of Marie Madeleine, the FCJ sisters continue to support families in the education of their children.

Reading more about Marie Madeline

There are several publications about Marie Madeleine:-

God's Faithful Instrument (by Patricia Grogan fcJ)

Faithful Companion of Jesus, Marie Madeleine d'Houët, (by Mary Campion McCarren fcJ)

One Woman's life...Many Womens' Stories

(by Mary Campion McCarren fcJ)

The Story Goes On (by Katherine Mary O'Flynn fcJ)

Contact your nearest FCJ community for these publications. Alternatively read more about Marie Madeleine on the FCJ Sisters' website at:- WWW.fcjsisters.org

Finding a good school

Strange as it may seem, the consequences of Marie Madeleine's choice of school for Eugène had life-changing consequences for herself. In 1814, the Bishop of Amiens invited the Jesuit priests to open a school in the old Abbey of St Acheul in the city of Amiens. Marie Madeleine rejoiced at the news and decided to send Eugène to the new school even though it was a long way from home. The doting mother arranged to stay in Amiens to help her child settle in and soon found herself doing voluntary work in the school. Marie Madeleine came to know and appreciate even more deeply the Jesuit fathers. Under their guidance her prayer life flourished and she eventually felt attracted to the Jesuit ideal of total self-giving to the Lord. But she had a teenage son whom she loved deeply and from whom she could not be separated. However her experience of God was so strong that she could not ignore it. Eventually and despite many obstacles, in 1820, a group of women came together with Marie Madeleine to live as *faithful companions of Jesus*. And all the while this loving mother nurtured Eugène into young adulthood.

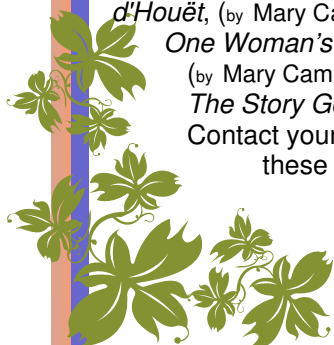
The ways of Children

Children have great potential for giving unexpected responses to the simplest of questions. We all know of situations where a parent expects the child to impress and the child does that but in an unexpected way. Young Eugène was no exception and enjoyed a measure of celebrity for his answer to one of the Jesuits when class groups were being sorted at the beginning of the school year at St Acheul. We can imagine the scene as the small boy child stands in front of big desk of the Prefect of Studies and is asked, "Now where shall we put you? What do you know?"

"Me?" replied Eugene quite modestly, "nothing; but ask Mummy, she knows everything."

What's in a Name?

Baptised *Marie Madeleine Victoire*, the foundress was called *Gigi* as a child, *Victoire* as a young woman and *Madame Joseph* as a young wife and widow. To others, she was *Madame d'Houët*. However she herself wrote, *"My name is Magdalen. I will follow my patron saint who so loved Jesus, ...as to accompany him in his journeys and labours, ministering to him even to the foot of the Cross with the other holy women who did not like the apostles, abandon him, but proved to be his faithful companions of Jesus."* Madeleine is French for Magdalen and this is the reason we call her Marie Madeleine.



A Woman for our Time

... Marie Madeleine ... compassionate and caring

February 2007

Issue # 2

A newsletter issued by
the Faithful Companions of Jesus
Stella Maris Broadstairs Kent England

... Caring for the sick

Marie Madeleine, the Foundress of the FCJ sisters, had a deep reverence for each person and this shone through all her dealings with people. From girlhood she showed a great capacity for practical, compassionate care of others and at just sixteen worked in the hospice of St Roch in Issoudun. As a young married woman, with Joseph her husband, Marie Madeleine visited and tended the sick Spanish prisoners of war. It was during these visits that Joseph contracted typhoid. A heartbroken Marie Madeleine tenderly nursed him day and night. He died 1 July 1805.

When Eugène her son was a student at St Acheul in Amiens, he and several of his companions had a particularly virulent attack of measles. Marie Madeleine, the widowed, doting mother, obtained permission from the rector to care for her own child and all the other boys in the infirmary. She cared for them in such a loving way that they looked upon her as a mother. Ferdinand Jeantier was one of the sick students. He had been 'guardian angel' to Eugène when the younger boy started at St Acheul and in turn became a good friend. He spent the summer of 1817 with the family. During the holiday both Ferdinand and Eugène were ill again. The servant responsible for the housework had an accident and Marie Madeleine ended up nursing all three of them.

This capacity to give care and to nurse tenderly was with her to the end of her life. As daughter, wife and mother she cared for others and later Marie Madeleine showed the same care for the sisters in her young Society....often sending detailed advice on what to do for the frail and sick.



... And she would take no nonsense

Marie Madeleine showed both a natural tenderness and a certain determination in her dealings with her son, Eugène, who at six years of age, could not read. His mother had tried to teach him, but the very sight of his reading book always produced tears and the desired effect of cancelling the lesson. Madame de Bonnault, his grandmother noticed this and encouraged her daughter-in-law to send the child to her for reading lessons. The shame of this caused Marie Madeleine to rethink her strategy. The next day she began in earnest to give Eugène regular lessons, with the result that in two months, in spite of his tears, he could read.



Marie Madeleine Victoire
de Bengy de Bonnault d'Houët
Foundress of the
Faithful Companions of Jesus

Eugène's birth

Eugène, Marie Madeleine's son was born in Bourges at the de Bonnault home on rue Porte Jaune on 23 September 1805, just seven weeks after the death of his father Joseph de Bonnault d'Houët. Eugene's birth was registered by his two grandfathers, Sylvain de Bengy and Francis Joseph de Bonnault d'Houët who lived at rue Porte Jaune.



The de Bonnault House
on rue Porte Jaune
Bourges, France

A letter (with a healthy recipe) ...

From **Marie Madeleine**
Writing from Switzerland

to Mother **Joseph Mahé**
Rue des Augustin No 15
Amiens, Somme 4 September 1840

We have just had prize-giving, I have not a minute but I am writing this note just for Mother Geneviève. I earnestly beg of her not to be anxious about anything. She should have a very strong broth. Let her take it with milk and a very solid rice soup. Cook the rice in a little cloth bag in a saucepan of fat and then mix it with the broth. Let her eat nourishing food frequently during the day.

I think donkey's milk would do her good. Ask Monsieur Riquet (the doctor) for it. If she is still ill I shall send her for a change of air, but I fear that the motion of the carriage might upset her.

Hide from her anything that might cause her anxiety. Read her this letter from me; she would really give me great consolation if she took care of her health.

I hope to come to you soon. The post is leaving; pray for me and do as you think best.. I shall write to you tomorrow.



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A blind grandmother-in-law

Marie Madeleine was a great favourite in the family. Her disposition was endearing to all. Her sweetness and gentleness won the esteem and respect, especially of those who knew her well.

Her husband's grandmother held her, one could say, in actual veneration. This pious old lady had been totally blind for many years, and coped well with her lack of sight. She secretly cherished, however, one heart-burning desire – the recovery of her sight if only for a few moments, so as to see once more before she died the face of the granddaughter-in-law whom she admired so much.

*...She secretly
cherished the desire to
see the face of the
daughter-in-law whom
she admired so much*

In simplicity and with a child-like confidence in God she prayed every day for this favour and her prayer was answered. One day when Marie Madeleine was keeping Grandma company while the other members of the household were at Mass, the old lady's sight was suddenly restored. To her intense joy, and yet in utter silence, she feasted her eyes on the figure before her, contemplating at leisure the features she had so longed to see.

Marie Madeleine did not realise what had happened and grandma kept her secret until the day of her death. Then, as a priest was encouraging her to have confidence in God, she answered: "I have every reason to have confidence in Him; He has granted my prayers once before and given me a great grace".

She then told the priest the story of the temporary restoration of her eyesight.

Caring for us ...

Within her life time Marie Madeleine was known as a deeply caring woman. Both in life and in death people spoke of her as a *saintly* woman. In 1970 the Church gave her the title Venerable, recognising her virtuous life. Marie Madeleine is a friend who is ready to care for **us**, praying with us. So ask favours of her in your everyday life. Perhaps **you** take special care of someone. Why not commend this person to the prayer of Marie Madeleine.

A Woman for our Time



Searching for the way forward

May 2007 Issue # 3

A newsletter issued by
the Faithful Companions of Jesus
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Why not visit our web-site and learn
more about the congregation that
Marie Madeleine founded?
www.fcjsisters.org

A Mother's example...

Marie Madeleine, the Foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, was born into a large extended family in Châteauroux, France. In addition to her parents, sister and brothers, she was surrounded by aunts, uncles and cousins. They were a happy, secure family, long established in the area. With the onset of the Revolution life changed drastically and they came to know hardship, prison and exile.

Marie Madeleine's mother, Madame de Bengy, was a wise and loving woman who showed courage and perseverance when her husband was imprisoned during the Revolution. She did not buckle under adversity, nor give way to despair, dividing her energies between working for her husband's release and bringing up their children in a secluded farmhouse. She faced their changed circumstances realistically and trained her children to do the same. Marie Madeleine, her eldest child, was a great support to her mother and learnt from her how to manage house and home becoming very skilled in the process. However, it was her mother's example of fidelity to prayer and her trust in God which remained with Marie Madeleine to the end of her life.

Death ...and depression

When Marie Madeleine Victoire married Joseph de Bonnault d'Houët her dowry was the manor house at Parassy. Surrounded by farmland and vineyards, it was an idyllic spot. She and Joseph went there after their marriage and two weeks after his death she went back with her sister and sister-in-law seeking to come to terms with her loss. But she was eight months pregnant and returned, grief-stricken, to the de Bonnault family home for the baby's birth. Despite the great care given by her two families, Marie Madeleine went into postnatal depression. She suffered from anxieties which made her fear her child was dead. She had nightmares in which she saw her own funeral. Grieving takes time. Understandably, the young widow's life revolved round her child; he was the centre of her universe. Marie Madeleine gradually recovered her equilibrium and again enjoyed parties, balls and the theatre. *Though it was not to last...*

Sensitive to the plight of others

From girlhood Marie Madeleine had been sensitive to the plight of others. Joseph had been very concerned for prisoners and after his death his widow continued the good work he had done. Bourges prison held many Spanish prisoners from the Peninsular War. Marie Madeleine not only sent the prisoners food but went *incognito* to nurse them. Like Joseph, she too caught typhoid but unlike Joseph, she recovered. But full health gradually brought new experiences. She was longing for something more. Something was tugging at her heart. *Life was changing ...what was happening?*



Crazy about Eugène

Eugène was at the centre of Marie Madeleine's life. In fact she was drawn to all children because in every child she saw Eugène; *'that string'* she wrote *'vibrates always with the deepest tones in my heart'*. He was never far from her thoughts. Like many a mother she kept all the letters he wrote from school with news of his health, the food, his friends, his lessons and tests, his simple queries about home, herself, his grandparents, and even the state of the grapes at Parassy.

Marie Madeleine welcomed his school friends to Parassy during holiday time and the boy was allowed to visit the homes of school friends. His maternal grandfather was very fond of the boy and time was spent with him. So although she didn't *'possess'* her son Marie Madeleine did admit that her love for him *verged on idolatry!*



Marie Madeleine ...
was never described as pretty or beautiful. But with smiling eyes and radiant smile, vivacity and wit she was always considered attractive.

*I am only partly aware of the plan,
the music, the theme
Yet I feel that sometime I shall come upon it.*
Elizabeth Jennings

What next?

In the years after Joseph's death Marie Madeleine thought seriously about marrying again. She was actually on the point of accepting an offer of marriage when she had a sense that this wasn't what God wanted of her. *She prayed to do what God wanted her to do and do it joyfully.*

In hiding at Parassy

Marie Madeleine's house at Parassy was already a place of memories for her when in 1815 she gave five months' hospitality to a Jesuit priest. It was a dangerous thing to do, for the priest was Joseph Varin, a Royalist. Napoleon had escaped from Elba and Fr Varin was one of many suspected of plots against Napoleon. For Joseph Varin, the five months' stay was perhaps a time of unwelcome seclusion, whereas for Marie Madeleine it was a time of deep spiritual formation.



Parassy, Le Vieux Pressoir

Fr Varin's conversation deepened her understanding of the Society of Jesus and its spirituality. It was a time of prayer, discussion and reflection and was most precious to her. *By the time it was safe for Fr Varin to return to Paris they both believed that God was asking something from her, but what it was remained unclear.*

My Name is Magdalene

The significance of her name helped deepen her understanding of God's call to her. *...My name is Magdalene; I wish to be like my patron saint who loved Jesus her Master so truly that she ministered to his wants, and followed him in his travels and his undertakings to the very foot of the Cross. She and the holy women did not, like the Apostles, leave him in his hour of need, and ... proved themselves his 'faithful companions'. I want a group of women religious who, with me, will bear the name: 'Faithful Companions of Jesus.'* ...Step by step Marie Madeleine followed what she believed was the path laid out for her and founded a new religious group. Whilst some never wavered in their support of her, others vacillated. *She was to need great courage and trust in the years ahead.*

The wider scene in France

In the wake of the French Revolution women all over France worked for the restoration of religion and for social stability. It is an amazing fact that between 1800 and 1820 thirty-five new congregations of women were founded in France; and each year between 1820 and 1880 six new groups were founded. The women who founded these new congregations came from all sections of French society. Moved by the suffering and social unrest around them, and by the dearth of spiritual comfort, they dedicated themselves to a range of activities that helped alleviate poverty, brought comfort to the sick and dying and helped the wholesome education of children.

Marie Madeleine was part of this blossoming of new life and the Faithful Companions were one of these new groups. From its beginnings in 1820 in Amiens, France, the Faithful Companions now live and minister in fifteen countries and have worked on every continent.

And what happened to Eugène?

Eugène completed his studies at St Acheul in 1826. His final college report was glowing. That September Marie Madeleine visited St Acheul to thank the staff for their care of her son. Like many in the family, Eugène chose the legal profession as his career and studied at the University of Paris. (Ever solicitous, his mother found him both an apartment and a housekeeper.) In 1830 she was as proud as any mother when she was able to write to friend that he had done *brilliantly* in his law exams.

Eugène wanted to marry and his mother and friends helped him look for the ideal wife! (This was the custom of the time). Eventually, with a lot of prayer and after a lot of 'introductions' (all the fcJ sisters were praying for this intention,) Eugène himself met Louise Bosquillon d'Aubercourt, his future wife. Marie Madeleine liked Louise very much and was convinced the marriage would be blessed in heaven. And it was. Eugène and Louise had three children and the FCJ sisters continue to be in touch with their descendants.

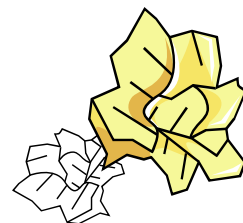
P.S. ...in case you didn't know...

Marie Madeleine's marriage certificate gives two dates; 'le trois fructidor' and August 21st 1804. Why? Well it is a civil document and Fructidor was the twelfth month of the Republican calendar which was then in use (It wasn't used after 1805.) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fructidor> is the address of a conversion table between the Gregorian and Republican calendars!



A Woman for our Time

Working with poor children then and now



September 2007 Issue # 4

newsletter issued by
the Faithful Companions of Jesus
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Why not visit our web-site and
learn more about the congregation
that Marie Madeleine founded.
www.fcjsisters.org

First and foremost, ... Companions of Jesus,

Marie Madeleine's dream for the congregation she founded in 1820 was for religious women who would be *companions of Jesus*. She hoped they would establish schools, be involved in retreat work and work in missionary areas.

A deeply contemplative woman, Marie Madeleine was also eminently practical and did not wait until all the elements of her dream were in place before taking action. She lived in Amiens, one of France's great textile centres. In 1820 the industry was in recession. The families of the textile workers were suffering severely and Marie Madeleine seized the opportunity to help them, particularly the women and children.

The root cause of the recession was war. The years between 1793 and 1815 saw a bloody, lengthy and widespread conflict between Britain and France which widened to include many other countries. The warfare had long-lasting effects on trade worldwide. Ports were blockaded and economic sanctions imposed reducing the supply and inflating the prices of many commodities including raw cotton. Just as in today's world, it was children who were the prime victims of the economic sanctions. The children of **St Leu** suffered badly.

Caring for the 'Cotton Pickers'

Marie Madeleine loved children and from their earliest days in 1820, the Faithful Companions looked after poor children. In addition, a small group of the so called 'cotton pickers' found their way into the sisters' care. These children worked in the textile factories gathering up the tiniest bits of cotton from the floors, the looms, the cards, as raw cotton was so expensive. When sorted and cleaned their cotton pickings were sold to the spinners and the bit of money received supplemented the family income.

As more companions joined Marie Madeleine she was able to expand the work with the cotton pickers. But more space was needed and impressed by the work of this new religious group, the town authorities obtained from the Minister for War a disused building for their use. So of course the cotton pickers came in droves. Whatever the weather, at 7am, 250 children were at the entrance gates. The majority of the children were extremely needy and some were obviously ill, but all carried a basket of cotton ends to be unravelled and taken home at night. The children spent twelve hours a day in this safe haven; the hours that their parents worked in the textile factories.

Marie Madeleine and her sisters gave these children love and care when the norm was child exploitation. Obviously, the youngsters were given time to unravel and clean their cotton pickings. They learnt their catechism, did lessons in reading and arithmetic, had the chance to play games together and enjoy some childhood.

Care for Orphans

Marie Madeleine's special care for orphans was lovingly practical. In 1846 she got a property at Camon, which at that time was a village in the countryside. The house was spacious and with its own garden. It became an orphanage and the house in Amiens became a boarding school.

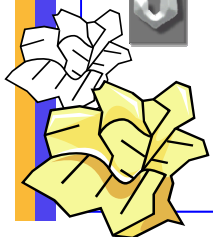
St Leu is an area of Amiens just north of the cathedral. It was originally home to the city's textile industry. Today, Amiens still produces much of France's velvet but the factories have moved out to the suburbs. The St Leu district consists of a network of canals, winding cobbled streets and cottages. The area has been restored and is now the fashionable heart of Amiens.



The corner of Rue des Augustin and Rue du Puits-Vert in 1830 showing the building in which the first Companions cared for poor children



Marie Madeleine died in 1858 and in accordance with her wishes was buried with the orphans in the cemetery at Gentilly, Paris.



Working with Women

The early Companions did not confine their work to the poor children of their neighbourhood. Marie Madeleine recognised the need to help the families, particularly the mothers. Pragmatic, shrewd, and compassionate, Marie Madeleine recognised the suffering of these poor women and did something to alleviate it.

The community cared for numerous children during factory working hours and at 7pm as soon as the youngsters vacated the premises a night school session started for eighty women. The women were married and single, young and middle aged, mothers of families and factory hands. They were all anxious to learn their catechism, deepen their faith or simply enjoy a few hours in a restful and congenial atmosphere. The night classes were very popular and it got to the point that the women even wanted to spend their Sunday with the sisters. Space was at a premium and Marie Madeleine, having already got help from the town authorities, asked again for more accommodation. At the request of the town authorities the Minister for War lent her additional premises for work with the women. These night classes ran for many years until they were taken over by a congregation, founded for this work.

Marie Madeleine and her sisters gave companionship to these women, they recognised the radical importance of their health and happiness and helped them grow in faith and dignity.

A loving woman

In November 1970, the Church declared that Marie Madeleine lived a truly saintly life. The next step in the Cause of Marie Madeleine is her beatification. Before this can happen proof is needed that through her intercession something wonderful has taken place, that a miracle has happened. Whilst this seems an enormous task one way to begin is asking favours of her in every day life.

Marie Madeleine is a 'friend' who is looking out for us, praying with us and ready to assist us. So ask her to pray with you for what you need, and let the FCJ sisters know of any help you receive through the intercession of Marie Madeleine. Please send your information to one of the following contacts:-

Beatrice Molyneux fcJ or **Regina Dempsey fcJ** Laurel Hill Court, Summerville Avenue, Limerick, Ireland

Breda Bresnihan fcJ, Stella Maris, North Foreland, Broadstairs Kent, UK CT10 3NR

Catherine Moore fcJ, 36 Donegal St, Norwood, South Australia 5067

Dolores D'Amour, Companion in Mission, c/o Sacred Heart Convent FCJ, 219-19 Avenue, SW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2S 0C8

Lumița Popescu, fcJ Strada Monetăriei nr 12, Et. 2 Ap.9 Sector 1, Bucharest 011216 Romania

Marie Madeleine's inspiration lives on:

In May 2002, almost two centuries after Marie Madeleine began her work with the families of St Leu, the Faithful Companions of Jesus started a project with families near a dumpsite in Area 6, Bagong Silangon, Quezon City in the Philippines. Like the textile workers of St Leu, these families are victims of shifts in economics, driven to the city in search of a living. They suffer extremes of economic poverty. The work of the FCJs in Area 6 began with women because the Sisters believed that a mother's health and happiness affects the whole family.

*A mother's health
and happiness
affects the
whole family*

The women of Area 6 had many problems but money was their biggest concern and ways were found to help the women earn and save.

A Savings Group was started which helped some families get out of heavy debts for which they were charged high interest. A Cooperative was established, and great was the joy when this money was distributed to the members according to the sum they had saved! Some women were able to take out loans for livelihood projects.

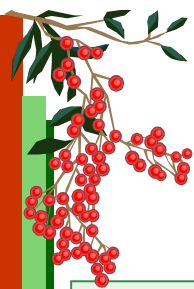
Very soon after the Centre was started it was clear more space was needed so the building was extended. At the same time other needs were identified in the area and as a result, through the assistance of many supporters the Centre offered 120 families the material to build a septic tank and a toilet in their own house. This contributed greatly to the cleanliness of the area and reduced health hazards considerably.

The Centre has made a big difference

The FCJ Centre in Area 6 is a little bit of heaven for the mothers and children. There are story-telling sessions for the children, first-aid for their cuts and bruises, toys for play and importantly, love and acceptance. The Centre is open to anybody wanting to come and chat, drink coffee or tea, relax in a quiet environment. In the weekly "Faith and Life" activity women learn to read their own lives and to see God present in their story.

The Centre has helped to support a greater friendship amongst the women. They have been able to become freer and more active in community concerns. In addition the young people of Area 6 are more involved in the training programs. The Area itself has become much cleaner and people are beginning to be aware of ecological concerns. The health of the people has improved. The dignity of the women is celebrated.

Marie Madeleine's story lives on...



A Woman for our Time

Marie Madeleine the Business Woman



November 2007
Issue #5

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It might seem strange to describe Marie Madeleine, the Foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus as a business woman. Those familiar with her story know she was a mother, a widow, and a religious sister,

...but a business woman?

Reflecting on the enterprise of founding a congregation it is not difficult to recognise the challenge of getting such a project 'off the ground', let alone expanding and developing it. The successful realisation of Marie Madeleine's dreams for the reign of God was fuelled by her abiding love of Jesus, her Companion and helped by a sharp business acumen. Widowed, she was a woman in a man's world. There was no *constant* source of mentoring as she established her communities and no significant donors backing the venture. Her ability for prudent judgement and sound financial management enabled her, within her life time, to establish houses in France, England, Italy, Ireland, and Switzerland. Love of God was her driving force and she gave back to God the best of her talents. *She was undoubtedly a good business woman.*

A Successful Business Woman...

In considering Marie Madeleine from this perspective we could be helped by a description given by a young Canadian woman, Emma Coombe, who holds a management position in a large enterprise and is studying for an MBA. We cannot tease out many aspects of this reflection here, but it is worth keeping its points in mind when reading the snippets offered in this newsletter.

"...A successful business woman is a leader and mentor in the community. She is honest, confident, determined, risk averse, and open to criticism. She also acknowledges her mistakes, embraces learning and change, possesses excellent communication skills and is passionate about her work.

In order to be an effective leader, a businesswoman must establish a clear strategic vision and supporting goals for her team or organization and engage her members in developing and executing the plan to achieve these goals. She recognizes that her members, and the community she serves, are critical to the organization's success. Therefore, she places a strong emphasis on fostering relationships within the team or organization as well as with external stakeholders. Finally, a good businesswoman measures her effectiveness and success on the achievements of her team." Emma F. Coombe

Through the lens of this description we might suggest that *being a faithful companion of Jesus* was Marie Madeleine's strategic vision and that her business acumen was directed to developing supporting goals.

Grace builds on nature, and many aspects of her proven business skills were learnt from her mother whose training enabled her daughter to turn her hand to any aspect of household management.

Her mother's example of prayer and trust in God remained with Marie Madeleine to the end of her life.

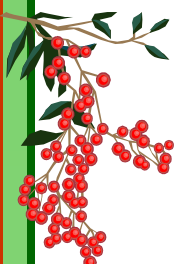
1818 the first FCJ house ...a bargain

In 1817 it was becoming clearer to Marie Madeleine that she was called to found a religious congregation, and she began looking for a house. It was a challenge. We don't know what was happening to the Amiens property market but we do know that she met a friend who told her that a suitable house which she had already looked at was now selling for half price. It is interesting that Marie Madeleine did not rush into the purchase. She prayed and reflected on the matter, discussed it with those who were helping her, and only then proceeded with the necessary formalities. She subsequently had the property surveyed and within three days had become the owner of the house and furniture for 16,000 francs. The original asking price for the house was 40,000 francs. It would seem Marie Madeleine had got a real bargain!



**A new prayer leaflet honouring
Marie Madeleine
is now available.**

**For details on how to obtain a
copy, e-mail
mmfcjnewsletter@googlemail.com**



1821 ...good management and generous

Marie Madeleine was financially secure. Her husband's family provided for her and Eugène, her son and there was income from the vineyards at Parassy. This house was her dowry and it became both a safe-haven and a source of income. Annually, she supervised the grape harvest and managed the business. The benefit which accrued this good management was widely shared. A note in Marie Madeleine's papers, written perhaps for her spiritual director reads: *"I have not confided it to anyone; but I have a year's income in advance, and 8,000 francs besides. Since my marriage, seventeen years ago, my income has been 3,000 francs, out of which, for the last seven years, my son has cost me 1,200 francs, and there, therefore, remained 1,800 francs, and yet I have been able to give frequently to others-once 2,000 francs to the same person, 1600 francs to two others, and sums nearly equivalent to these to several others."* ...A quick calculation shows she gave away a significant percentage of her annual income.

1830 an unexpected bonus in London

Marie Madeleine was blessed when she arrived in England in November 1830. Though advised that a London foundation would be impossible because of cost, she trusted in Divine Providence. In London she found herself in an area of French émigrés amongst whom were many priests who, having fled the Revolution, had stayed on in London founding Mass centres, chapels and schools. Fortuitously, it was to one of these, the St Aloysius Charity School, that Marie Madeleine had been directed. Within a day of her arrival the priest responsible for the school, Fr Nérinckx, offered the establishment to Marie Madeleine. Wisely, she suggested that he should first get references from France. The priest thought this unnecessary and after an interview with a senior cleric, Marie Madeleine was given the school and church. It was 16 November and she had only been in London only five days!

1830s ...Striking a bargain in Turin

In Turin of the 1830s, whilst Marie Madeleine was founding establishments for the education of children and the training of teachers, Don John Bosco was beginning his work for the education of youth. The two became friends and supported each other. Don Bosco's priests said Mass for the Companions who in turn mended hundreds of boys' socks each week. *A happy relationship with external stakeholders!*

Keeping the vision vibrant...

Fr Georgelin, chaplain at the FCJ convent in Paris, said of Marie Madeleine that buying large blocks of land, building big houses or enlarging those already in existence was all play to her when it was *question of helping the poor or leading souls to heaven.* M de Tarlé, Secretary General of the French Chamber of Commerce, observed that whenever it was a question of helping the poor, or leading souls to heaven, she was remarkable for her vigour and virility. *'She let herself be guided all her life by divine action,'* he said, *'but never lost contact with the reality of things.'*

1841 ...Certificate of Residency ...London

In 1841 Marie Madeleine wanted to buy Gumley House, a beautiful property west of London. The house had potential but Marie Madeleine didn't have the money. Undeterred she wrote to the Sister dealing with the matter, *'...it must be bought for £2,500 and even for £2,800 if you cannot have it for less.'*

Bishop Griffiths of Westminster offered her a loan and regardless of possible difficulties connected with loans she urged prompt action. *'I still hold that we must buy it. The Lord will enable me to find the money. This business is far too important for God's glory to let it fail because of money.'* The rest of the letter shows Marie Madeleine's exceptional expertise in both legal and business matters. She wrote to a sister in Nantes on 22 March: *'We have finally bought a house, ...at a very favourable price, ... the Queen and Parliament have granted me a certificate of residence which allows me to make a purchase, but it alone cost almost £200.'* More money was needed and very simply, she asked all the FCJ houses to help.

(£200 in 1841 was equivalent to £16,000 in 2006.)

1844 ...Assessing 'Success' ...Nice

In 1844 Marie Madeleine established a school in Nice but by now was doing things differently. The experience of twenty four years had shown her that projects which helped only the poor, as in Amiens, Somers Town, Tottenham, Asti and Turin, had not fulfilled her expectations and were not as prosperous as she wished. So now she adopted the principle that every foundation must, if only in the interests of the poor, begin with the service of the better-off. She felt that generally speaking, these families did not readily entrust their children to persons whom they knew as caring mainly for the poor. On the other hand, the poor were pleased to have their children in the care of those who instructed

the well-to-do. The Foundress found that the combination of these two areas of the apostolate guaranteed the success of each.

Subsequently, this model of a poor school and a school for the better-off enabled the FCJ sisters either to establish themselves in areas of great deprivation or at least to serve in such areas. The model guaranteed a source of income for the community and enabled them cross social divides in a world of great economic division.

A careful Investor

Marie Madeleine founded thirty houses within her life-time. Eugène, her son, seeing the success of his mother's enterprise was convinced she had financed some of the projects with his money and not just her own. One can only imagine the upset and hurt caused by this accusation and in today's language one might say her accounts were audited. Lawyers testified that Marie Madeleine's business affairs were in perfect order and that her son's inheritance had been well invested and protected. Eugène expressed deep satisfaction at the outcome.

The successful business woman is honest, confident, determined, risk averse, and open to criticism.



A Woman for our Time

150th Anniversary Newsletter



A newsletter issued by

The
Faithful
Companions
of Jesus

Stella Maris Broadstairs
Kent England

5 April 2008
Issue #6



*Since their foundation in
1820, the
Faithful Companions of
Jesus have
influenced
thousands of lives.*

*May God bless the FCJ
family of Sisters,
Companions in Mission
and
collaborators and grant
the grace to continue the
good work begun by
Marie Madeleine ...*

*to be messengers of
the Good News
of Jesus!*

Why not take a look at our
newly upgraded
website to see how
the FCJ family is
marking
the anniversary

www.fcjsisters.org

This is a special year for the FCJ family of Sisters, Companions in Mission and Colleagues, for it marks the 150th anniversary of the death of Marie Madeleine, our Foundress. We celebrate with gratitude, her life and legacy.

Marie Madeleine was 76 when she died in Paris in 1858. She had lived the first half of her life as daughter, sister, wife, widow and mother of Eugène her son. Then in 1820, aged 38, she was the foundress of the FCJ Society, became a religious sister and in due time a grandmother! She travelled extensively and founded convents and schools in France, England, Ireland, Italy and Switzerland.

Marie Madeleine was a saintly, hope-filled woman whose apostolic heart and vision continues to inspire each of us.

**We remember with gratitude
as we celebrate this 150th anniversary ...**

The winter of 1858 was severe, and Marie Madeleine was ill. Cold weather gave way to spring but her health did not improve. Lent came and as it advanced her sufferings increased, but her calm courage, simplicity and dignity remained strong. Holy Week brought more physical pain and she knew death was near. On Holy Thursday the thirty-eighth anniversary of the foundation of the Society Marie Madeleine reminded the sisters of the significance of the day and encouraged them to renew their commitment to *'stand with Mary and the holy women at the foot of the cross.'*

On Easter Sunday, April 4th, 1858, Marie Madeleine was visited by her grandson, Léon, the eldest child of her son Eugene and daughter-in-law, Louise. Just three years earlier, the family had mourned the tragic death of Joseph, the second of their children. Fond of all her grandchildren, there had been a special bond with Joseph who bore his grandfather's name. Marie Madeleine's husband, Joseph, had died when she was pregnant with Eugène.

Marie Madeleine was delighted to see Léon, now in his early twenties. He found his grandmother seated in her armchair, frail and emaciated. Hiding her discomfort she had an animated conversation with the young man. She was able to joke about her ailments and told him laughingly she was dying of catarrh and would leave it to him in her will. He left her comforted by what he believed was an improvement in her health, treasuring the rosary she had given him, happy in the assurance of the place he held in her heart.

On April 5th, Easter Monday, Marie Madeleine continued to be lovingly surrounded by her sisters, the members of her still young Society, the amazing fruit of the loss she had suffered at the death of her husband Joseph. While she declared that she counted for nothing in the foundation of the Society there could only be gratitude for the way she had collaborated with the dream of God for her life. With her habitual gentleness and a poverty which accepted the reality of each moment *she gave witness* to what were to be her last words, saying, as she looked at the crucifix, 'Good example does much good'. We are told that, amidst the sorrow felt by all the faithful companions of Jesus gathered round Marie Madeleine as she left this world to continue her journey into God, there was also a sense of deep peace and joy.

The gratitude and the joy remain ours today.

April 5th 2008
Is the 150th Anniversary
of the death in Paris
of Marie Madeleine d'Houët,
the saintly Foundress
of the
Faithful Companions of Jesus.



150th Anniversary Celebrations

The FCJ Family thanks God for Marie Madeleine's openness to God's call, for her commitment to the Gospel and her example of loving gentleness. Her 'zeal for souls' was powerful and we are grateful to the early Companions who, inspired by her example, joined the young Society. We honour those numerous FCJ Sisters who across the years have zealously worked for the Reign of God. We celebrate the Faithful Companions who have gone before us and rejoice that we are called to continue the work of God's Mission today...



At Stella Maris Broadstairs, England, the place

where Marie Madeleine is buried, a Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated on April 5 2008. On 7th/8th May there will be 'Celebration Evenings' for staff and friends; a Power-point presentation on Marie Madeleine will be shown. At the invitation of General Leadership trees will be planted by each FCJ community in the newer parts of the Society. This planting of trees is both a commemorative event in honour of Marie Madeleine and an acknowledgement of our carbon footprint.

The Province of the Americas

The Sisters of the Province of the Americas who are from a wide geographical area celebrated on the double at their Provincial Chapter in January 2008. They celebrated the 150th anniversary of Marie Madeleine's death and the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first FCJs in Canada; the first FCJs to arrive in the Americas. Over the next few months, the Sisters of this province and the Companions in Mission will be planting trees to celebrate this special year. Local celebrations are planned with the Companions in Mission and others in communities, parishes and corporate works.

The Province of Asia-Australia

In Melbourne, Australia on 5 April there will be a mini Pilgrimage (for FCJ Sisters, Companions in Mission and other interested people) followed by Mass of Thanksgiving at 12 noon in St Ignatius' Church, Richmond. In **Frankston, Victoria**, on 13 April there will be a Mass at John Paul College, followed by a BBQ. Past Students Reunions will be times of special celebration. Other events including a Retreat in Daily Life will take place later in the year.

In the **Philippines at Manila**, the Scout Borromeo community is distributing seedlings of the Malunggay tree to 150 local families. The Malunggay has edible leaves and is considered to be the most nutritious plant in the world. At the **FCJ Centre** there will be celebrations and a Mass in the local church with a special program of hospital visits which will coincide with a presentation of electric fans for a number of wards. And at **Maasin**, 150 fruit trees will be given to needy families in the neighbourhood with an explanation about the anniversary. Other events are to be announced later.

In **Yogyakarta, Indonesia** on 5 April a Mass of Thanksgiving will be held and on the 6th there will be an Open House at Soropadan which will include a power-point presentation, reflective prayer, short talks and sharing on FCJ Charism. In **Ende, Flores** on 5 April a special prayer will be held in the FCJ community to which neighbours and friends are invited.

The British Province

There will be Several Masses of Thanksgiving:

In **Middlesbrough, England**, at 12 noon on 5 April at St Mary's Cathedral. In **Somers Town, London** at St Aloysius Church, on June 21. In **Liverpool** on Saturday 13 September at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King. There will be celebrations in **Jersey** on 19 May and in **Paisley** later in the year. Many FCJ students are going to Paris for the special gathering of FCJ schools. The Anniversary has been advertised widely in local and national publications.

The Continental Province

During the past year in Paris, the room where Marie Madeleine died in 1858 and the museum have both been refurbished. Friends of the community as well as pupils from our school have visited these rooms and learnt more about the life and spirit of our Foundress. The FCJ school, Notre Dame de France, is hosting a gathering of FCJ schools. More information about this event is found at <http://jubilefcj.free.fr/> A Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated in Notre Dame Cathedral. We know that some of Marie Madeleine's descendants will be present for the Mass.

In the parishes of **Livorno** and **San Mauro**, where FCJ sisters live and work, celebrations are planned for 5 April. Later in the year there will be celebrations in these two places and also in **Bucharest** and **Turin**. Much work has been done to translate some of our resources into *Italian, Romanian* and *French*.

The Irish Province

The Irish Province gives thanks for the life and legacy of Marie Madeleine and is availing of this opportunity to make her and the FCJ Society more widely known in Ireland. Articles have been published in newspapers; many FCJ students are going to Paris for the 'Big Gathering'.

Public Masses of Thanksgiving will be celebrated in **Dublin, Limerick City and Bunclody**. A private Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated for the FCJ Family at their Assembly in Mt. St. Anne's Retreat Centre in Portarlington on 17 May 2008.

Poetry / Essay competitions on the life and charism of Marie Madeleine are being organised in our schools and there is a Website poetry / essay competition for individuals over 18 years. The readers will be invited to submit a reflective piece of writing in either poetry or prose around Marie Madeleine. (More information is on the Irish Province site of the FCJ website.)

Three scholarships in Marie Madeleine's name will be offered to foreign national families to help them with the learning of English.

A Woman for our Time

Marie Madeleine ... Woman of the land



It is reasonable to suggest that despite long stretches of time in cities and extensive travelling to some of the most industrialised parts of France and Britain, **Marie Madeleine remained a country woman at heart.**

Marie Madeleine's childhood was spent at Pouplain in the heart of the French countryside where she learnt the rhythm of the seasons with its cycle of new life, growth and harvest.

*The smell of hay
space of fields and sky
the land ...*

*... ... daisy-chaining, romping
childlike-happy,*

Surface - yet shaping deep

from 'Pouplain' by Marilyn Matz fcJ
'Passion and Pilgrimage'
FCJ private circulation 1997

At the time of her marriage in 1804 she was given as a dowry a property at Parassy near Bourges in central France. Surrounded by vineyards and wheat fields, Parassy became for her a place of solitude, growth in holiness and happiness. Marie Madeleine went there annually for the grape harvest and knew the people of the village well. She understood these country folk and they in turn were so fond of her that no fewer than eighty of them travelled to Paris for her funeral. This was no mean feat 150 years ago.

5 April 2009 marks the end of a year of celebrations honouring Marie Madeleine, this *woman of the land*. How appropriate that many of the events were earth-focused. Gardens have been beautified, the seedlings of nutritious plants tended, shading trees planted and orchards extended. Many of these events are described in the News section of the FCJ Society web-site, www.fcjsisters.org but we might remind ourselves of some here.

In Manila, the **Philippines**, 150 families of the FCJ Centre, Bagong Silangan, were given potted seedlings of an edible and nutritious plant, the Malunggay; this will supplement their diet in the future. In Yogyakarta, **Indonesia**, the community planted a rambutan tree in their garden at Baciro which should bear fruit within the year. As well, each member of the community undertook to care very specially for a particular tree in the garden, in the hope of encouraging a greater growth to offset the increasing pollution in Yogyakarta.

At Condor, a rural study centre near Tarija in **Bolivia**, fruit trees were planted around the perimeter of the property. At Maria Magdalena School in Clodomira, **Argentina**, trees were planted on the roadside to provide shade and beauty. Similarly, the school grounds at St Philomena, Rhode Island **USA** have been enhanced by more trees as also the garden at the FCJ house in Tuscaloosa, Alabama **USA**. ...and more..

Our world is a little greener as a result of this Anniversary Year

Marie Madeleine, this *woman of the land*, had an innate sense of the link between the land and spiritual and physical well-being. It shows not only in her frugal living, but in the properties she acquired and in the gardens she helped create. It would be appropriate to say that Marie Madeleine *stewarded* the land and, in today's language, was *environmentally aware*.

Marie Madeleine's example is most relevant

A newsletter issued by

The Faithful Companions of JESUS

Stella Maris Broadstairs
Kent England

31 March 2009
Issue #7

5 April 2008-2009 A Year of Celebration

5 April 2008 marked the 150th anniversary of the death of Marie Madeleine, the Foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus and this anniversary year has been marked by celebrations to give thanks for her life and to make this courageous woman better known as a role model for our times.



Marie Madeleine Victoire
de Bengy de Bonnault d'Houët
Foundress of the
Faithful Companions of Jesus

Why not visit our web-site and learn
more about the congregation that
Marie Madeleine founded?
www.fcjsisters.org

Recognising this love of the land, it is no surprise that Marie Madeleine chose healthy places for FCJ houses, and encouraged the creation of gardens.

A house by the sea ...

Marie Madeleine writes in 1840 of the convent in Nice, **France**, 'It is superbly situated on the sea-front. From our windows we can see the port. We have a beautiful garden with olive groves, fig trees, rose bushes and oleanders with flowers as numerous as leaves. You would need to see it to believe it. It is like a scene in a fairy tale ...I will send you some of our figs. It seems that 400lb of this fruit will be dried.'

... a beautiful house by a River

Descriptions in the early annals of Laurel Hill in Limerick, **Ireland** border on the lyrical to do justice to its beauty. 'Built on a height a little beyond the city, the terraces and greensward of this lovely property slope gently towards the river. Here are verdant grasslands and flowering gardens, crowned by our beautiful convent. On the further bank are handsome dwellings, castles and old ruins and girdling all, are the peaceful hills of Clare. At one time gentle, limpid, azure; at another sombre, agitated and angry, the Shannon is turned to liquid gold in that most unforgettable sight of all, the evening sunset! ... In the evening the peaceful beauty of our abode radiates a golden glow of shimmering loveliness.' Marie Madeleine was so impressed by its splendour she writes: 'Tell our sisters Laurel Hill is charming. We have nothing else so beautiful, not even Nice.'

... a house nine miles out of London

In May 1841, Marie Madeleine wrote from west London, **England**: 'It would be difficult for you to picture the garden here, (at Gumley) the water hens and beautiful birds of every kind, the rhododendrons twenty feet high in full bloom, the hermitage on a hill in the middle of the garden, the shady wood, the tall lime trees and the superb wisteria ... How I wish you were here even for a day! I cannot describe it. You would have to see it.'

... And sending roses with love

In April 1838, Marie Madeleine wrote to the sisters at **Turin, Italy**: 'I am sending you four hundred and sixty rose bushes and having found a good opportunity, I am sending you as well other shrubs, jasmines, and two beautiful oleander. ...The consignment has to be put in the diligence at Chambéry on Tuesday evening, two days after Easter. ... We couldn't get any orange trees, as I had hoped.' (These were to come later.) 'If the building is not finished I will make another journey and shall bring you an olive tree and a few orange and lemon trees.'

The early Annals have many more descriptions of the gardens at the early convents. ... In **France**, at St Anne d'Auray, for example, a wilderness was turned into a magnificent park and at Nantes, the garden became an oasis of woodland and flowers. It involved planning, and plants were transported between convents, and even countries, ... (to an extent that would probably be illegal today.) Most importantly, the gardens were widely shared.

The cotton pickers, (children who earned a pittance by unravelling bits of cotton) in Châteauroux, **France** were 'lured not merely by free admission to this school-cum workshop but also by the endless green spaces where they could play during the break from work and lessons.' (Grogan p 92) On Sundays and feast-days the house and park were open to both children and adults. ... 'Mothers of families, young women, and all who wanted to grow in faith came for instruction,' and enjoyed the park!

...and today

The days of buying big houses and creating large gardens for a school and community are long gone, but we can ask how does Marie Madeleine's delight in the land and in gardens translate into today's world? - As already suggested, Marie Madeleine **stewarded** the land; to steward something is to take **responsibility** for it.

...the Garden of the Earth

The creation story in Genesis, (2.15) gives us a picture of stewardship. Adam and Eve were placed in a garden, 'to work it and take care of it'. The story presents us with a picture of the **Earth as God's garden** and humans as its 'gardeners'.

The trees in the garden of Eden were 'pleasing to the eye'. The gardeners must promote the beauty and oppose any degradation of **God's Garden**.

The **garden** in Genesis provides food and water and other materials (2.12) to sustain life in **all** its forms. ..So **God's Garden** must be tended carefully to enable it support **all** forms of life.

A **garden** is a place of creativity. We are created in the image of God (Genesis 1.26) and must use our scientific knowledge creatively to enhance **all** life in **God's Garden**.

God's Garden belongs to all generations and is to be tended so that we give the future a healthier Earth than the one we inherited.

O Loving God!

**You have made us co-creators of the earth!
Guardians of the planet!
To care for all your creatures,
to tend the land, the sea
and the air we breathe;
all that you have made
you have placed in our hands.**

Ps 8 (Tr Nan Merrill)

A Woman for our Time

Marie Madeleine ... a harpist



Perhaps there is no language more powerful than that of music.

Music crosses all cultural and linguistic barriers. It speaks at depth to the heart and lifts the human spirit. Music is celebratory and the use of music in sacred ceremonies has occurred since ancient times. Music is truly the language of the angels.



For all these reasons and more, music has been a feature of FCJ life and an important part of FCJ education. Music and musicians have always been encouraged: music is in our soul, and we remember with delight that Marie Madeleine d'Houët, the Foundress of the FCJ Society was a harpist. Though we know nothing of her musical ability we note that along with prayer books, pictures and other memorabilia, Marie Madeleine's *pedal harp* is a treasured possession in the museum of the FCJ house in Paris. Though there is scant record of

Marie Madeleine playing the harp once she founded the FCJ Society, tradition tells us that occasionally she accompanied the sisters at evening recreations as they sang the evening hymn to Mary, '*Bon soir, Bonne Mère ...*' which had been composed by Marie de Bussy fcj.

The FCJ foundress learnt the harp as a girl at a time when 'harping' was a social accomplishment. The following brief history gives insight on the context in which Victoire, (as Marie Madeleine was known) learnt her instrument. It is based on a text shared with us by **Mairead Doherty** (née Loughnane) who was at Laurel Hill FCJ and is now a professional harpist in Boston.

The harp and its development

Hebrew Scripture tells us that *King David praised God with harp and song* and evidence tells us the harp of that time (c.1000BCE) was a simple ten-stringed instrument. Something like this so-called *lap-harp* was taken by the Celtic peoples in their westward migrations across what is now Europe, and the Celts adopted the harp as their own.

For over fifteen hundred years, particularly in Ireland, Celtic harpists developed the instrument and eventually with many more strings and a system of manual levers it was possible to change the pitch of individual strings. The harp was further developed in C18 mainland Europe and with a greater flexibility the instrument was included in orchestras. Then a Bavarian instrument maker, Hochbrucker, devised a mechanism that enabled a new range of keys and now known as the *pedal harp*, it was introduced to France in 1749. It was a success both musically and socially. Initially there was no music for this 'new' harp and the gap was filled by harpsichord music and ingenuity! It was Hochbrucker's son who wrote some of the earliest known music for the pedal harp. Georges Cousineau, a French harp maker improved the pedal system and his improvements were built on by Sebastian Erard, a French piano maker who in 1794, when a refugee in London, patented the mechanism for the pedal harp.

The pedal harp flourished in France through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was popular in the private drawing room, *Salon* and especially in the developing orchestras of Europe. Young students, both boys and girls, usually came to study the harp by way of the piano and typically began the harp when they were ten to twelve years old.

... As Ireland is credited with the development of the Irish harp, France is credited with the development of the pedal harp.

How lovely to think of Marie Madeleine Victoire, playing the rather 'trendy' pedal harp, ... entertaining her parents, younger sister, brothers and family friends.

Music and musical accompaniment is an FCJ tradition that lives on...

The Joys of Harping

Martha Ní Ghlinn, and **Aisling Egan** are third year students at Laurel Hill, Limerick, where harping is a proud tradition. They write:

We are two of the lucky people in Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ who experience the joy of playing the harp. The joys of harping seem to be endless, from the activities both in school and outside school. This year we were given the amazing opportunity of participating in a Harp Ensemble with our school under the leadership of Ms. Geraghty, a musician well known to all of us. We came together a number of times during the year. We learned some great new tunes, participated in school masses and even joined with the school orchestra to perform a beautiful tune. As well as all that, we really had a great time and learned a lot from each other about our individual musical styles and techniques.

Outside of school, many of us are members of the National Harp Orchestra and the Irish Harp Orchestra under the directorship of Dr. Janet Harbison, renowned Irish Harper. This year alone we have travelled to Austria and Germany performing in such prestigious venues as the Philharmonic Hall in Munich.

Harping also tends to fill our summers with fun. From the residential summer school with *Cairde na Cruite* in Termonfeckin, Co. Louth to the *Willie Clancy Festival* in Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare, the festivals provide us with opportunities to participate in workshops with different harp teachers and also to play in sessions with other musicians.'

Praising God ...

We leave the last word to an FCJ pianist.

Madeleine Cuddy fcJ, known to many as an accomplished pianist, choir mistress and liturgist, speaks of the joy of choral accompaniment:

'There is such joy in accompanying a choir that is truly singing the meaning of the words. Their singing, gives meaning to the music. The faith behind the song becomes alive. ...Even when a voice sounds like a cinder under a door, if a singer puts everything into her music it is the most glorious worship of God.'

David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.

(2 Samuel 6:5)

Guitaring and Music ministry

The guitar, another stringed instrument, is popular in South America, and **Ely Peralta fcJ** writes from Argentina:

I am involved in music ministry in Holy Trinity Parish in *Solidarity Barrio* where I live. I play the guitar and lead the singing for Saturday and Sunday Masses. There are times when I offer this same gift to a catechist group.

I feel very happy to be able to contribute to the life of the liturgy. I know that people, particularly young people, are very grateful for my gift of music and I love to see their happy, smiling faces as they join in the singing. I have had many requests from students for guitar lessons. Unfortunately, because of my commitment to my ministry at *Fe y Alegría** I could only take on one student. I love to see the enthusiasm that music and singing brings into the lives of people and into my own life too.

When I lived in La Banda, my home, I sang in a choir in my parish when I was a teenager. Here I learned that singing comes from deep within me and I experienced the feeling of "living the song"! Later when I was in Cordoba as an FCJ candidate I had an opportunity to learn to play the guitar. I met a young couple who gave me guitar lessons. Since I was very interested and loved this kind of music, I learned very quickly. On top of all this my brother gave me a guitar for my birthday. I give praise to God for the gift of music and song and I want to use this gift to bring life and joy to others. I think music is a wonderful way of gathering people together.

**Fe y Alegria ('Faith and Joy') schools are a network of joint Catholic and State sponsored schools founded by the Jesuits for the urban and rural marginalized populations. The State pays the teachers' salaries, and the schools do fund-raising to cover other operating expenses.*



... and they filled the air with joyful sound.

(1Chronicles 15:16)

Why not visit our web-site at www.fcjsisters.org

It could make your heart sing!



A Woman for our Time

The Venerable Marie Madeleine d'Houët

... a good judge of character

September 2009 issue # 9

As a child, Marie Madeleine, the FCJ Foundress, was unusually shrewd and perceptive.

Born a few years before the French Revolution, she grew up in turbulent times, so perhaps it is not surprising that she developed a capacity to look thoughtfully and reflectively at what was happening around her. She seemed to possess a wisdom beyond her years. Her father used to call her his 'little counsellor' (*God's Faithful Instrument*, p.9), trusting his little daughter's judgment even when she was only nine or ten years old. It seems that, from her earliest years, she was gifted with a discerning heart, seeing and sensing what was happening, reading between the lines, able to make an inspired guess, understanding intuitively how it would be appropriate to speak or to act in tricky situations.

This gift of wisdom and good judgment stood Marie Madeleine in good stead as she built up the Society in those early years. Her companions admired her keen grasp of a whole variety of matters affecting the establishment and development of the Society. We find in the testimonies, written shortly after her death to support the *Cause for her canonisation*, that her contemporaries recognised this gift for what it was, genuine spiritual discernment, which would help her to do what God wanted in her life and in the congregation she founded. Sister Magdalen Lynn wrote of her: *'She excelled in naming for each undertaking the person most apt for the job. At the beginning of the congregation, when the subjects were few, she was sometimes obliged to place quite young sisters in positions of responsibility, but in those cases, she kept an eye on them, supported them, in a word, she 'formed' them with such care that at her death the Institute functioned in the most perfect manner'*. It was not only the sisters who were aware of this gift in the foundress. Fr. Louis Glorieux says much the same thing: *'She knew how to choose those who were best suited to particular jobs and positions'*.

Marie Madeleine's discerning approach was evident in the way she inter-acted with her first companions. She encouraged them to be themselves with her, to let her get to know them. This, she knew, would help her, as general superior, to place them where they would flourish themselves and also where they would be likely to work most fruitfully for the Kingdom of God. She was quick to see the giftedness of her sisters, yet equally aware of their need for affirmation and support.

Age was no barrier to Marie Madeleine when it came to the delegation of authority. Julie Guillemet was a case in point. Julie, in spite of her relative youth (she was 25 years younger than Marie Madeleine, and had entered the Society at the age of 13), was judged by the foundress to be capable of carrying considerable responsibilities. In England, where she lived for many years, Julie was expected to take important decisions for the Society – about candidates, about buildings, about schools and pupils. In the letters, we find Marie Madeleine frequently telling her, *'Do what you think best'*, even in complicated and sometimes sensitive situations. Sisters deemed less competent or less likely to take prudent decisions, would be given detailed instructions on how to proceed. For Marie Madeleine, 'being known for mission' was an important ingredient in discernment of ministries.



Marie Madeleine founded the Faithful Companions of Jesus in 1820, and died in 1858. In those 38 years, after a slow beginning, the Society and its apostolic works grew rapidly: 17 houses were founded, first in France, and then later in England, Italy and Ireland. Time and again, Marie Madeleine proved herself to be a woman of astute judgment, not only in admitting suitable candidates to her fledgling congregation, thus giving it a firm foundation for the future, but also in her choice of places where the sisters could offer the service of education, faith formation for women, and care of orphans – all of which were so much needed in the Church and world of her time.

Text and research Teresa White fcj

Being a good judge of character today

Knowing 'how to choose those best suited to particular jobs and positions' is as important today as it was for Marie Madeleine. Today's context may be more complex and civic requirements more demanding but astute judgment and a discerning heart are as crucial as ever in ensuring good appointments and a firm future for FCJ institutions.

Patricia Cowling, Principal of Genazzano FCJ College, Melbourne, Australia, shares with us some reflections about staff appointments.

While there are some very good processes in place through legislative controls it is always essential to ensure that there is appropriate "fit" between the prospective employee and the vision, mission, ethos and philosophy of the organisation. This is not always easy and takes time, care and diligent attention to candidate conversational responses as well as to referee and reputational checks.

The interview is essential in seeking an alignment between the candidate and the College. It is important to spend considerable time in establishing the candidate's capacity to fulfil the functions of the position and in determining whether s/he is right for a position at Genazzano. In addition to the main interview we have a second one with the Principal. This takes the form of a "conversation" so that the candidate is sufficiently at ease as to disclose something of his or her relational style and opinion. Given our context we are always interested in ascertaining the candidate's opinion on matters such as: adolescent spirituality; girls' educational issues; commitment to wider educational development rather than a narrow academic or task focus; expectations of working in Catholic school environment; and, importantly, what the candidate has learned from things that have not gone well in the work environment in the past. Careful listening to what is said and unsaid is crucial along with careful observation of the candidate's ease of response.

This conversation also provides us with an opportunity to ensure that the candidate is aware of the educational philosophy of the College by sharing the story of Marie Madeleine D'Houët, and ascertaining whether the prospective staff member will be able to contribute appropriately to that vision. While ensuring that this is a conversation it is critical that the interviewer does not "over talk" however –in our enthusiasm that can occur and must be avoided!

How does one judge character? *Along with gaining a sense of the candidate's alignment with the College through conversation, referee checks need to be thorough. Where possible this is not just with the referees cited by the candidate as long as one makes this clear to the candidate – and it is always essential to speak with the current employer and to ask "would you employ this person again without any reservation?"*

There have been times when we have been saved from making an appointment because we have been careful in seeking answers to the right questions and recognised that the alignment between candidate and prospective employee was not what was needed.

A major lesson to learn is that it is better not to make an appointment at all than to make the wrong one.

.... Being known for mission is as important as ever.



Marie Madeleine Victoire de Bengy de Bonnault d'Houët
Foundress of the
Faithful Companions of Jesus

We have highlighted that Marie Madeleine was a wise judge of character.

Within her life time, Marie Madeleine was known for her deep goodness. In fact both in life and in death people spoke of her as a **saintly** woman.

In 1970 the Church recognised the heroicity of Marie Madeleine's virtues and gave her the title **Venerable**.

The next step in the process is beatification. Before this can happen we need to have proof that through her intercession something wonderful has taken place, something that is surprising and welcome; something that is inexplicable by natural or scientific laws! In other words we need proof that through her intercession a **miracle** has taken place.

Whilst this seems an enormous task one way to begin is to ask for favours of her in our every day life. Marie Madeleine is a 'friend' who is looking out for us, praying with us and ready to assist us. So ask her to pray with you for what you need.

Why not visit our web-site and learn more about the congregation that Marie Madeleine founded.
www.fcjsisters.org

Check out our new blog at
<http://fcjsisters.wordpress.com/>



A Woman for our Time

Marie Madeleine ... and children



Photo: Haitian child receiving medical aid. Reuter

March 2010
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A newsletter issued by
the **Faithful Companions of Jesus**
Stella Maris Broadstairs Kent England

Why not visit our web-site and learn more about the congregation that Marie Madeleine founded?
www.fcjsisters.org

On 25 January 2010 UNICEF issued a press release about Haitian orphans 'We know from experience of past emergencies that trafficking takes place in the chaos that follows a natural disaster. Unscrupulous individuals prey on vulnerable children who may have become separated from family members. Children may be abducted to meet a demand for trafficked children as **cheap labour** or for sexual exploitation. ... Having survived the earthquake, it is absolutely vital that children now be kept safe and protected from the pernicious activities of child traffickers.'

Children always suffer in the wake of disaster but with the right help, their natural resilience can pull them through. **Marie Madeleine** d'Houët, the foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, saw this first hand and came to understand it more fully. Her own life had its share of suffering. Between August 1804 and September 1805 she experienced the joy of marriage, the grief of widowhood, the wonder of motherhood. She saw in every child her own child and owned that he, Eugène, was never far from her mind. In her own words, *'that string vibrates always with the deepest tones in my heart.'* She showed a practical love for children.



Seated Mother and Child: Adriaan Boshoff

In 1820 when the first Faithful Companions came together they looked after children exploited for **cheap labour**. It was in Amiens, one of France's great textile cities, and because of war, blockades and sanctions were in place and the industry was in recession. The textile workers were suffering severely and just as in today's world it was children who were the prime victims.

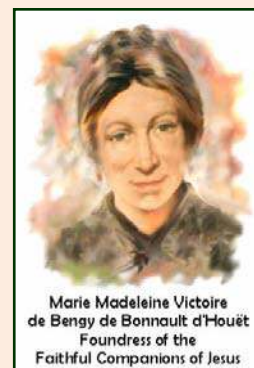
Marie Madeleine persuaded the civic authorities to let her use a disused building and turned it into a centre of care and training for these **exploited** children who came carrying baskets of cotton ends to be unravelled and taken home at night. This somewhat thankless task was an indispensable contribution to the family income. The Foundress and her sisters loved and cared for these children and helped them grow in **resilience**.

A sweet treat for the children

'Notre Mère, (the title given Marie Madeleine by her sisters, literally, 'Our Mother') has decided to allow the school she set up last year to continue for a while longer. She often goes to see these poor children, taking an interest in everything that concerns them. She happened to go in on their teacher's feast day, and took advantage of the occasion to give them a pleasant surprise. She called the teacher to her, telling her to go and knock on the kitchen door at midday. When the young Sister went there, the cook presented her with two trays of cakes and tarts, saying, 'Take these for your little ones. It was Notre Mère's idea.' As she went over to school, the Sister had to pass in front of Notre Mère's room. Looking towards the window, she caught sight of Notre Mère, who was watching out to witness her joy.' (Paris Annals 1850)

Marie Madeleine died in 1858

and according to her wishes was buried with the orphans at Gentilly, Paris.



Marie Madeleine Victoire de Bengy de Bonnault d'Houët
Foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus

In 1970 the Church gave Marie Madeleine the title '**Venerable**' recognising that she had lived a life of outstanding virtue.

The following stories from Manila, Jersey and Romania show the variety of Gospel-inspired work that carries forward the vision of Marie Madeleine

FCJ Sisters in Manila in the aftermath of recent floods, write:

Children here love water! Whenever it rains they dance and splash under the drain pipes, swim in the puddles and generally have great fun. Sometimes they share a sachet of shampoo or bring along some soap so that they can enjoy a communal bath! But on the 26th September, 2009 things were different. The torrential rain coupled with the opening of the dams which were at breaking point, meant that the water gushed through many areas of Manila, sweeping people and homes away. It was very frightening. In the immediate areas where we FCJs work fortunately nobody died, but many homes were badly flooded and the people lost many of their simple possessions.

So how have the children coped? With their usual resilience! Children here, and indeed adults, are used to hardship. Their daily experience is that life is precarious. When the flood waters subsided the people returned to their homes, cleaned out the mud and debris, salvaged what they could and got on with their lives. Much practical help was offered to the families – food, sleeping mats, blankets, mosquito nets, hygiene supplies, underwear, new school uniforms, exercise books and pencils. For the children it seemed like Christmas! They are still playing their usual games, still running and jumping and laughing. Today is a new day and they are living it to the full.

Maureen Doyle, Principal at FCJ Primary, Jersey

writes: Jersey is a small island with a population of around 100,000. It is an international finance centre. Tourism is in decline, as is farming. The smallness of Jersey makes it very difficult for anyone to maintain a sense of anonymity or privacy. Anyone in trouble with the police, however minor, is sure to be reported in the Jersey Evening Post!

There is a big divide between those who 'have' and those who 'have not': there are those paid extremely high salaries in finance, law and commerce and those paid extremely low wages in the hospitality and farm labour. Many 'in between' struggle to keep up the appearance of affluence and this can lead to large debts. There are drink and drug problems in Jersey and a huge divide in housing provision. Poverty exists but is well hidden to maintain the image that Jersey is an affluent, stable society. One would be hard pressed to find social housing on a main road.

Jersey children share the same island and many of the same problems – but for different reasons.

At FCJ Primary, learning the reasons for inequalities and building children's self-esteem and resilience is seen as crucially important.

Gabriela Lunga fcJ writes from Romania

I work with children in a Centre in Galați. Children come to do their homework after school. They get help with their homework as well as a hot meal. They also do other activities such as collage, drawing, learning practical skills, general culture, role-play, as well as outings to the theatre or to museums.

The children come from very poor families and more often than not are deprived of affection. They can't do schoolwork at home because of the conditions and because their parents cannot help them. Those who live far from the town leave home about 6.30 and get home around 18.00 in the evening and the children find this very hard.

I often see tiredness on the children's faces and I have the impression that they are already like grown-ups going out to work. Most of them have limited intellectual capacity and they work more slowly and with difficulty.

Seeing beyond the more difficult days when they are frustrated because of too much homework, or because of the deprivations at home, it is clear that these children are fighters. Today I witnessed the joy of victory after a struggle. I have worked for three months with a little boy who has difficulty learning the multiplication table. I have sent messages home asking his mother to help him. Sometimes she has helped but when she hasn't, the child has been disorientated and not known whether to listen to his mother or to me. Today he didn't know all his tables but to my surprise he knew most of it. I asked him how he got all the right answers. He replied "I don't know, I just let myself do it."

Often the children are struggling with a fury which comes from the frustrations, injustices and rejections they experience in their families, or from the lack of appreciation and trust. They are often confused because of the difference between the way of living and behaving that we offer in the centre, and what they see at home. When they go home in the evening everything that we have built in the daytime as regards values and responsibility is shattered, and the next day we start all over again. I feel limited every time I put myself in their shoes to try to understand a bit better what their behaviour means. And I realise that I will never understand completely as my experience of family is so different from theirs.

The small signs of progress in attitude and behaviour will only be seen over time and it is hard to start all over again every day. But when I say to them every day "Bravo", "Very good", "Excellent", "You're wonderful" it is not really so hard. I realise that what is more difficult for me is to have to acknowledge, now and again, that I have not loved or encouraged the children with the whole of my being. This is the only thing I can do to make something fresh and new happen in their lives.

**Thank you to all
who contributed to this newsletter!**



A Woman for our Time

Venerable Marie Madeleine d'Houët ...friend and companion

May 2010
Issue #11

A newsletter issued by
the Faithful Companions of Jesus
Stella Maris Broadstairs Kent England

Why not visit our web-site and learn more about
the congregation that Marie Madeleine founded?

www.fcjsisters.org

Marie Madeleine was companion and friend. Her deepest desire was to be a companion of Jesus and inspired by the example of Mary Magdalene and the other women disciples she companioned Jesus, 'providing for him out of her own resources' (based on Luke 8; 1-3). Throughout life she experienced the joy and support of friendship.

We might ask how are friendship and companionship linked and what is the difference. We cannot explore the difference at depth here but suggest that whilst one can offer companionship, friendship is a gift and it is reasonable to suggest that whilst they are inter-linked and on the same continuum of human relationship or within 'circles of friendship' there is a mutuality to friendship that is not necessarily part of companionship. Friendship provides a safe space to let personal difference come to light and can enable us see things differently. If we are to live a spirituality of companionship we need to keep trying to see things from the perspective of others, even if there is not the easy give-and-take of friendship. This deep respect for the uniqueness of the other opens us to transformation, to stretching beyond our comfortable boundaries and assumptions. Opening to the difference of others in our daily life gives us practice in opening to Jesus, and vice versa.

Marie Madeleine's '**circle of friends**', that group with whom she shared the joys and sorrows of everyday life, included her sister companions, her family, friends from girlhood, priests. The roles were varied and sometimes overlapped. (Contributions by Mary Campion McCarren fcj and Joanna Walsh fcj)

There was Constance de Rochfort her girlhood friend from Issoudun. Marie Madeleine Victoire married Joseph de Bonnault d'Houët on 4 August 1804 and three months later Constance writes: *Mama has urged me to go to the Comedy tonight. So I must resign myself and dress for the occasion. Joking apart, I have need of distraction to disperse my sad thoughts. My dear friend if you were here I would not go looking so far for distractions. All that friendship holds of the most pleasant and of the greatest attachment I would find in you. 28 November 1804*

Marie Madeleine first met **Father Denis-Auguste Affre**, when he was Vicar General of the diocese of Amiens. Subsequently appointed as Archbishop of Paris it was he who in 1847 invited the FCJs to Paris. It was a time of civil unrest and the Archbishop was killed by a stray bullet while trying to effect a truce on the barricades in Paris in 1848. One can feel still the pain as Marie Madeleine writes: '*...from time to time, just when the need is greatest, God raises up a protector for us; he then withdraws him, leaving us again without human support. Monseigneur was our one support in Paris.*'

Julie Guillemet - was only 13 when she first met Marie Madeleine. This young woman became one of the first Faithful Companions. Julie was quite diffident and Marie Madeleine mentored her. Despite a significant difference in age, their companionship grew into a deep spiritual friendship. It was Julie who accompanied the foundress on her first visit to England and who became the first provincial of England and Ireland. There is extensive correspondence between Marie Madeleine and Julie.

In a recent book of reflections on Marie Madeleine, Verónica Schreiner fcj comments on a letter sent to Julie: 'My heart goes out to her and to Julie, sensing the deep friendship that links them. Who could not understand Marie Madeleine's desire to talk to Julie and not just write to her, and yet, she is torn, she has other obligations she needs to fulfill. She is clear-sighted about what is happening, and she talks to Julie about it openly. She reveals the way she has to accept people as they are, in this case, a 'friend' who is so attached to her. She cannot hide her desire to be about her own business and an even greater desire to have Julie visit her beside the sea in Boulogne. -But it is not possible.'

'Reflections on the Life of M.M. D'Houët. Foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus' 2009, p 115.



*Julie died April
30th 1858 just
four weeks after
her friend and
companion*

Julie Guillemet fcj

Companionship in a refugee centre

The FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto, Canada began in 1991 as a collaborative venture between the FCJ sisters and the Rico family, refugees from El Salvador. It began with 2 rooms for women who found themselves in difficult circumstances. The project has grown to 3 houses for women and children refugee claimants plus an office where all newcomers are welcomed. Loly Rico and her husband Francisco are co-Directors of the Centre and are also Companions in Mission. **Lois Bordowitz fcJ, President of the Board of Directors and Loly Rico, co-Director write:** *'The FCJ Refugee Centre is a place where we welcome the stranger. It is more than an office where people can get help with their documents. We open the door to men, women and children who have faced the trauma of being uprooted from everything that was familiar to them. Their needs vary from a onetime referral to long term accompaniment.'*

Maria (not her real name) came to us alone and in great distress. She was living in one of our houses with other refugee women, but she couldn't trust anybody. Loly patiently worked with her, building up a trust relationship. Although she had to move out of the house, she continued to be welcomed in the Centre, at first coming to say hello, and making coffee for the staff. Gradually she came to cook a meal for us, and is now a regular volunteer in charge of food distribution. Over the year and a half she has started to trust many more people, started to learn English, and gain her self-confidence back.

Many of the women who have lived with us do come back to visit, to share the good news when they receive their permanent residence, graduate from college, have a new baby, etc. Two of the women have volunteered to be on our Board of Directors.

Many refugees volunteer and work as staff in our Centre. I believe that is what makes our Centre such a welcoming place for the uprooted person. Like Marie Madeleine, we open the door to women in need, helping them in their time of greatest need, companioning them as they gradually become more integrated into their new home.'



Within her life time, Marie Madeleine was known for her deep goodness and even before her death she was spoken of as a *saintly* woman. In 1873 the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris got permission from Rome to begin an inquiry into the holiness of Marie Madeleine's life. The **process** of taking evidence from people about the way a person lived is known as a '**Cause**'. It can lead to the canonisation of the person. In 1970 the Church recognised the extraordinary heroicity of Marie Madeleine's virtues and declared her **Venerable**. The next step is her beatification. Before this can happen proof is needed that through her intercession something wonderful has taken place, something that is inexplicable by natural or scientific laws! - Putting it another way, proof is needed that through her intercession a **miracle** has taken place. This can seem enormous and one way to begin is asking favours of her in every day life. **Marie Madeleine is a 'friend'** who is looking out for us, praying with us and ready to assist us. **So ask her to pray with you for what you need.**

Friendship in School

Marie- Geneviève Renault fcJ writes from Paris: *'Marie Madeleine emphasized the importance of friendly relationships with pupils in the FCJ schools. She knew them by name, was interested in their progress, asked about them, sent them messages, asked for their prayer, and let them know they were loved.'* Her natural love of children was influenced by the spirit which permeated St Acheul, the Jesuit school attended by Eugène her son'. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, put great store by friendship and good relationships.

Ely Peralta fcJ writes from Salta, Argentina: *'Fe y Alegría in barrio Solidaridad is permeated with an 'Ignation ethos'. This is not surprising, as all Fe y Alegría schools have a Jesuit foundation. Perhaps this is one of the most striking and beautiful aspects of our school. Among the pupils and staff there is a great sense of friendship.'* Ely fcJ, who is a tutor in the school, says that frequently the pupils choose to stay on after school hours; they like to talk with the staff whom they know have a special care of them.

From the Paris Annals 1853

'We celebrated our venerated Mother's feast on 22 July. She had expressed the desire that a feast-day hymn should replace the usual address, so we composed a hymn for the occasion in honour of Saint Mary Magdalene. The truest praises were delicately introduced but Notre Mère did not recognise the ploy and even wanted the hymn to be sung at Benediction. We quote here just the refrain:

<i>'You, so rich in graces,</i>	<i>« Vous si riche en grâces</i>
<i>Companion of Jesus,</i>	<i>Compagne de Jésus,</i>
<i>Lead us in your footprints</i>	<i>Menez-nous sur vos traces</i>
<i>To the abode of the chosen.'</i>	<i>Jusqu'au séjour des élus. »</i>

It is in companionship with Jesus and others that FCJ Sisters and Companions in Mission fulfil their mission.

'The love of God which is poured forth in the heart of each sister through the Holy Spirit is the source of genuine love and true friendship, especially with her companions in the Society.'

FCJ Constitutions 191



A Woman for our Time

Venerable Marie Madeleine ... and the Communion of Saints ...

September 2010

Issue #12

A newsletter issued by the **Faithful Companions of Jesus**
Stella Maris Broadstairs Kent England

www.fcjsisters.org

Celebrating the Communion of Saints!

On **19 September** the Pope beatifies **John Henry Newman**. **17 October** will see thousands of Australian pilgrims and Scottish ones, converging on Rome for the canonisation by Pope Benedict of **Mary MacKillop**, Co-foundress of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. Then on **19 November** it will be 40 years since Pope Paul VI proclaimed the holiness of **Marie Madeleine d'Houët**, the foundress of the **FCJ Sisters**.

We say '**we believe ... in the Communion of Saints**' but very likely don't think about it much. This mystery of faith has been described as '*an intergenerational band of the friends of God and prophets that include the living and the dead, joined in community with the cosmic world, all connected in the gracious, compassionate love of Holy Wisdom who, in the midst of historical struggle, sin, and defeat, continuously renews her gift of saving healing grace.*'¹ The Church '*recognises*' saints, it doesn't '*make*' them. This is the work of God's Spirit, who '*from generation to generation passes into holy souls and makes them **friends of God and prophets.***' It is an unceasing work of love and challenge whereby Holy Wisdom marks the world as her own.' *Friends of God and Prophets* E A Johnson p 244 & p 262

So let's celebrate these 'friends of God and prophets'

Mary MacKillop, 1842 - 1909, will be Australia's first canonised saint and has been described by many as a *pioneering woman* breaking new ground in the field of Australian education and religious life. Her life reflects the values which are at the heart of the Australian story, a sense of fair go for everyone, a willingness to stand on the side of the battler, an egalitarianism, a tenacity in facing difficult situations and a pragmatic approach to life all speak to the Australian reality. Her life reflects values that are at the heart of the Gospel—an inclusiveness that makes all welcome, an ability to challenge the situation without judging the person and an attentiveness to the movement of God in her life. Marie Madeleine d'Houët's philosophy of education certainly shared these gospel values and the first FCJs who arrived in Melbourne soon learnt the Australian ones!

Marie Madeleine d'Houët, 1781 – 1858 and John Henry Newman, 1801 – 1890

Pope Paul VI described **Newman's Journey of faith** as '*the greatest, the most meaningful, the most conclusive that human thought has ever travelled in the modern era.*' *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 55, 1963. It is interesting to place aspects of Marie Madeleine's spiritual journey alongside John Henry Newman's.

Marie Madeleine and John Henry grew up in happy families; as eldest children they were kind to the younger ones and aware of the need to be thoughtful for mother in times of stress. Each was taught in the home to love the word of God and delighted in Bible stories and pictures. Each had memories of a rural childhood; each loved music: Marie Madeleine had her harp, John Henry his beloved fiddle. One loved pears, the other gooseberries, one spoke admiringly of magnolias, the other of rhododendrons! Both were entertaining conversationalists.



In adulthood, both believed in the power of education as a life changing force at every level of human existence; arriving in Rome each made straight for the tomb of St Peter; both were ultramontane in the face of gallican opposition; in the course of their life's work both faced opposition and trials with peaceful equanimity rooted in belief in the all encircling love of God.

They shared some memorable dates too. 1817 was the year of great graces for Marie Madeleine and in that same year John Henry went up to Oxford and rejoiced in the university motto: *The Lord is my Light*; it was on Trinity Sunday in 1817 that Marie Madeleine made her vow of chastity and on that Feast in 1847, John Henry was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic church; Corpus Christi 1817 for Marie Madeleine was the day when she realised that Jesus is 'the First Jesuit and Master of them all'; on that feast in 1847 John Henry said his first Mass.

Whilst Mary MacKillop reflects the values at the heart of the Australian story, Marie Madeleine d'Houët and John Henry Newman reflect in their lives something of the struggles of people in Europe.

In 1820 Marie Madeleine's mother died and her father expected his widowed daughter to become mistress of his household; in 1824 John Henry's father died and as eldest son he became responsible for his mother and sisters who were still at home. In 1822 as Marie Madeleine began the first FCJ Novitiate, John Henry was elected Fellow of Oriel and thought his future secure in that Oxford College for the rest of his life.

But in 1824 he doubted the evangelical teachings which he had previously held and began to reflect on the significance of baptism. That was something Marie Madeleine had always treasured and in 1838 when the Sisters had to leave Châteauroux she asked M. Anna Gasnier to go, on her behalf, one last time to the church of St Martial and thank for the grace of baptism granted to her there.

The two Servants of God knew a sense of responsibility for those in their charge. At Parassy, Marie Madeleine's care for her tenants extended to both their physical and spiritual needs, a philosophy which underpinned everything she and her companions tried to do for the cotton pickers, laundresses, factory workers and destitute immigrants in the poor schools; in Oxford Mr Newman saw his students as persons to be encouraged and supported and in his attendant parish at Littlemore he who believed he had been ordained to serve God and his people was happy to involve his mother and sisters in visiting the sick and poor, and encouraging habits of cleanliness. (The fact that they also embroidered altar linen was something else that Marie Madeleine would have approved of!)

Reading any account of the founding of the *Oratorians* (in the footsteps of St Philip Neri whose Church, *Chiesa Nuova*, figures so prominently in Marie Madeleine's account of her journey to Rome in 1837) one is reminded of the early days of Marie Madeleine's Society. As she had taken possession of the old derelict Benedictine Convent at Châteauroux and set about making it habitable and fit for purpose, so he took over the stable block at Littlemore.

And of which community was this written: *Life there was hard and strict. They rose early...meals were plain and not very frequent...yet it was happy there. The prayer, the voluntary poverty brought them nearer to Our Lord and so hearts were tranquil and spirits gay; at recreation lively talk, no church gossip or pious chatter*¹

And these two apostolic souls, where did they send their companions? Circumstances placed John Henry in Birmingham, product of the Industrial Revolution, a city of factories and furnaces, with warrens of streets and alleys, houses infected by fleas and fever. When he was offered the chance of preaching a course of Lenten sermons in Rome his eloquent response was 'Birmingham people have souls'.² Marie Madeleine's Sisters were in similar sites in Birkenhead, Manchester and Liverpool. Indeed in the latter, the relationship between the FCJs and Fr Dominic Barberi CP who received Newman into the Catholic Church was so close that he was frequently in the house and one of the apparitions after his death accepted for the Cause, took place there³.

Text on MMD'H and JHN by Mary Campion McCarren f.c.J

Text on MMacKillop based on writings by Monica Cavanagh rsj

It was enough for both that they had the consolation of the Blessed Sacrament in the house. Marie Madeleine's first care was always for the Chapel, and John Henry felt it '*such an incomprehensible blessing to have Christ ... within one's walls, as... to destroy every pain.*' And for each of them there was pain in plenty arising from misunderstandings, comparisons with the life they had previously led, difficulties with companions and stern opposition from church authorities. John Henry described himself as having borne so much criticism and contempt that he was like a skinned eel that could no longer feel pain; Marie Madeleine endured so much that often her travelling companions wondered how she could appear so calm. The secret of both was their determination to accomplish what they recognised as the will of God for them.

Bien faire et laisser dire would have spoken to John Henry! And **Cor ad Cor Loquitur** would have spoken to Marie Madeleine. Both knew the importance of 'heart' in relation to their God, each tried always to deal as person to person with those whom they met and strove to serve. Marie Madeleine's oft repeated 'Courage and Confidence' found an echo in John Henry's beloved snapdragon: the flower of courage. As for John Henry's most popular words –

*Lead, kindly Light, amid th'encircling gloom,
lead Thou me on!*

*Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.*

Marie Madeleine too moved by discernment!

References

¹Joyce Sugg: Sanpdragons on the Wall, the Story of JHN 1978 page 91

²Letter to Mgr Talbot 25 July 1864

³Three FCJs, Mother Mary Frances MacNamara, M. Mary Joseph Ryan and M. Julia Slack, returning to Gt George's Square from Night Classes in St Patrick's, Liverpool, saw, as they neared the house, Fr Dominic kneeling just by the door. As they passed him each one heard him say 'Pray for Fr Dominic' and they thought he was performing some penance and when they joined the community recreation said so. In fact Fr Dominic had died in Reading, Berkshire. (*Urban Young CP: The Life and Letters of Venerable Dominic Barberi 1926 Page 394.*) Another account says one of the Sisters actually patted him on the head as she passed in and that the superior sent them down to bring him in but they were only in time to see him disappearing round the side of the Square....

In July 2009 Pope Benedict XVI recognised the healing of Deacon Jack Sullivan (of Boston, USA) as a miracle attributable to the intercession of the Venerable John Henry Newman.

**We pray with the Venerable Marie Madeleine
for the healing of several of our friends**



A Woman for our Time

Venerable Marie Madeleine d'Houët ... snippets

A newsletter issued by the
Faithful Companions of Jesus

Stella Maris Broadstairs Kent England

March 2012

Issue # 14

Why not visit our web-site and learn more about
the congregation that Marie Madeleine founded?

www.fcjsisters.org

No one ever claimed that Marie Madeleine, Foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, was 'pretty', but everyone was struck by her presence. She radiated happiness and brought peace and joy wherever she went and her going left 'an aching void'.

All her life she was a wonderful storyteller with numberless tales, 'racy accounts and such true ones of her experiences, and anecdotes of all sorts of things that she made every one laugh – she was a wonderful story-teller, and kept us spell-bound... ' She would play on the harp and sing, social skills she never lost and unashamedly in everything her heart was turned to God. 'I remember' writes **Mother Aloysia Reading**, 'when she would play on the harp and sing this beautiful hymn: "O céleste flamme du saint amour! Embrassez nos âmes, la nuit et le jour." At the end of each verse, she would pause, to speak to us of the Love of God, but at the last verse, above all, her voice seemed to become sweeter, more harmonious –there was something celestial in her tone and in her countenance... "Yes" she would say, in an outburst of love, at the conclusion, "let us love forever, a God so good, so amiable!"'

In addition to favourite hymns she had **favourite prayers**. To **Euphrasie Delaporte** she said: 'You must build a little solitude deep in your heart, where you will establish Jesus and Mary. Here you will often come in the midst of your occupations. In your troubles and difficulties, in weariness and despondency, come here, as Moses did to the Tabernacle.'

Some **Scripture verses** she never tired of repeating and such was her own joy in them that she would beg others to use them too. She suggested to M. Philomena Parsons the words of the Cantic: 'Say often: My Beloved is all mine, and I am all His.' Another verse of the Cantic she spoke of to many: 'Draw me after Thee, O Lord, we will run in the sweet perfumes of Thine ointments.' These words fell from her lips 'inflamed with the love of God – laying stress on **we will run**, saying we should not run alone, but draw others with us.'

"Oh, how I delight in that psalm *Quam dilecta!* How lovely are Thy Tabernacles etc...' she said to M. M. Josephine de Pretis and Soeur Marie Pilet recalled her devotion to Psalm 121 'I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the House of the Lord.' 'What have I in Heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth!' (Psalm 71) was another recommended to **Euphrasie Delaporte**.



Clearly as Marie Madeleine advised others, 'often speak to our Lord in the centre of your heart and try to acquire the habit of aspirational prayer' in her own comings and goings she did just that.

Each early FCJ seems to have had her own memory and Marie Madeleine obviously thought carefully as to which prayer she would suggest as appropriate to each Sister:

'With what fervour she used to say: My Jesus, mercy!'

(M. Aloysia Russell)

'My good Master!' Her favourite and habitual aspiration – **but** said with such fervour!

(M. Suzanne Chanteur)

'I have heard her say in a tone I cannot forget: 'Jesus! Infinite Goodness!'

(M. Victoire Thiery)

'O my God!
How great Thou art!'

(Sr. Anne Marsollier)

Repeat often and with fervour:

Holy, Holy, Holy!

Lord God of Hosts!

The earth is full of Thy Glory.

(M. Josephine Cuniffe)

There is a homecoming this year! In September and after 108 years in England, the mortal remains of Marie Madeleine d'Houët, Foundress of the FCJ Sisters, will be interred in the church of St Dominique in Paris. The next two editions of our newsletter will be devoted to this event and the reasons surrounding it. In this edition we share some 'snippets' about Marie Madeleine, for which we thank Mary Campion McCarren fcj.

Prayer for healing

God, our Creator, Jesus our Companion
Holy Spirit, Source of Wisdom
Marie Madeleine believed in your power,
hoped in your promises and lived for
your glory and service.

We ask her to pray with us for ...

Through her prayer may your
healing presence be shown
and your name glorified.

We make our prayer

In the name of Jesus the Christ.

Amen



Venerable Marie Madeleine Victoire
de Bengy de Bonnavault d'Houet
1781– 1858
Foundress of the
Faithful Companions of Jesus

Sometimes Marie Madeleine exhorted gatherings of Sisters, as around Pentecost 'the reflections made aloud for us on the words: *Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful...* were full of fervour and unction. "Repeat them often," she used to say. "*Entreat this Holy Spirit to come to you ...*" Also the fervour with which she commented on these other words, which she urged us to repeat continually: *Send forth Thy Spirit, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.* (M.M. Therese Juat)

Comings and goings around the house, school and garden was one thing – comings and goings on the scale that Marie Madeleine knew was another. Amidst so many dangers by carriage, boat, and later bus and train she was vividly aware of her **Guardian Angel**. Remember this, she would say: *Your Guardian Angel is always with you, ever ready to intercede for you and give you help.* Or again: *Courage! The Holy Angels will take care of you.* Leaving **M. Irma Barbe** in the infirmary one night she said to her: *I leave you with your good Angel...* and on another occasion she said to **Soeur Delphine Lebeau** at midnight: *Let us kneel down and invoke the Holy Angels.*

No-one can have read anything of Marie Madeleine without reading the words **Courage and Confidence!** They were in truth her motto. It would seem that she imbibed them from Fr Joseph Varin but made them her own.

In the word of the Psalmist she knew in whom she put her trust, and insisted always that Jesus 'says with the *most lively* tenderness "Courage and Confidence, my child...Courage and Confidence, my Faithful Companion."' **M. Stanislaus Lawless**, who knew her so well, writes that 'she only expected from each of us what we could do or give and she knew so well how to urge us on and how to console us. She so often said: "O my Sisters, Heaven is well worth the sacrifices we make!"'

More 'snippets' ...

It was Marie Madeleine's constant awareness that 'Heaven is our home' which spurred her onwards in all her undertakings. '*Discouragement,*' she maintained, '*is the daughter of Pride; nothing is more injurious to the Mercy of God than mistrust of His Bounty... Let us hope for all from the Goodness of God. He is such a good Master... Take courage and God will bless you.*' (M. Catherine Carew)

Indeed, trust, confidence in God, she saw as fundamental: '*You must have great courage...we must never allow ourselves to be overcome by sadness – a vice that is prejudicial also to those who see us in that state*' (M. Josephine Caron) and to her dearly-beloved **Emilie Guers** she wrote '*Have confidence! Place the matter in God's hands. Tomorrow is not today!*'

Mother Emilie (born in 1807) was indeed a woman after M. Madeleine's own heart. In 1849 Marie Madeleine wrote to M. Josephine Petit: '*Like Mother Emilie you must have a face and a heart of a person twenty years of age.*' Four years later she wrote to **M. Emilie:**

'My dear daughter, remain always young, it is a happiness for me to know that you feel so fresh and vigorous.' Not that M. Emilie always found it easy. In 1854 the foundress wrote: '*Tell me that you feel as if you were but forty years of age – or even 30! By what you say I imagine I can see a countenance of 60 or 70! Reassure me on this point!*'

It may be salutary to ask what control we exercise over our faces, over our expressions!

But more to the point – what short scripture verse or aspiration would Marie Madeleine choose for me or suggest I choose for myself in all my comings and goings?

A Woman for our Time

... a woman of the Church ... the Venerable Marie Madeleine

A newsletter issued by the **Faithful Companions of Jesus**
the Generalate, Gumley House, London, TW7 6DN

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A kaleidoscope of Memories from September 2012

The following reflections and memories were written very soon after the weekend of September 21st 2012 when the mortal remains of Marie Madeleine d'Houët were returned from England to France. More than fifty FCJ sisters were in Paris for the Mass of Thanksgiving and soon after the event they were asked to write a reflection or memory of the experience.

Though time has passed these memories must be shared. The initial plan was to edit them into one document but instead they are presented virtually unedited. Some are long, some shorter, some very brief but all are beautiful and with a freshness. Expressions of thanks have been left in place and are addressed to the team that enabled the whole event go so smoothly.

The memories are presented randomly but for the record it is worth remembering the sequence of events:

Thursday 20th September 2012

The casket containing the mortal remains of the Marie Madeleine was sealed by the French consulate and the Postulator in Stella Maris chapel

Friday 21st September 2012

The casket was taken from Stella Maris, Broadstairs to 63 rue de la Santé, Paris. That evening there was a prayer vigil in chapel

Saturday 22nd September

*The casket was taken to the church of S Dominique and at 6.30pm **Mass** was celebrated by Mgr Eric de Moulins-Beaufort. After Mass the casket was interred.*

*A reception hosted by the parents of Notre Dame de France followed.
Lights lit the path to the venue ...*



ad maiorem Dei gloriam

Marie-Geneviève Renaud fcj

For a few years, I have been working on the letters of our foundress and I have learnt to know her quite well and to love her deeply, and for many years I have been praying that she would come back to Paris. In my heart I knew she would one day come back, her Cause being introduced in Paris, but I did not know if I would see the day. When I went to Stella Maris, several times a day I would go to chapel and sit near her tomb and would pray her to listen to me and my needs! She attracted me there, I knew it was powerful and could not explain why. When I heard that we had to prepare her venue to Paris, I felt relieved and peaceful about it, and felt a great joy indeed. The preparation has been a hard job, no doubt, I found myself in Stella Maris for the opening of the tomb, what a privilege did I think, yes, but what a painful experience, When reading her letters, M.M. is alive, I am often reacting to what she said or did, she is alive in her letters, I may not agree, but there is life. In front of her mortal remains, I felt absolutely lost, maybe I was expecting her to come out in a miracle! And it was a sad reality of death. Of course, she was not present in her tomb, she is glorifying God eternally in love and joy. A step was taken to go forward. When the reliquaire arrived in our chapel it was fascinating, her presence was felt at once, her bedroom door being opened, everything seemed familiar, and she attracted us. I thank God for this extraordinary grace of having her with us for a day. What a privilege we got, she was ours! When the funeral Agency came to fetch her, and take her to the church, I was submerged with feelings, we had to say good-bye, forever, she was not going to be ours any more, we were giving her to the Church. It was a strange experience. Another step was taken forward! The Postulator told me that it was a beautiful experience that each FCJ and also her family have to do from now on, if we do not want to have a shock when she will be beatified and when the gift will be made public. The church was beautifully decorated, the celebration was superb, the singing, the participation, the devotion of the assembly was palpable. Mgr Eric de

Moulins-Beaufort spoke beautifully of our foundress. We thought and prayed in union with all the FCJ and companions in the world. The Lord has been glorified in a beautiful way. Now our foundress is resting in a beautiful reliquaire near the Blessed Sacrament. Let us hope that her presence will attract people to let themselves being loved by the Lord and be companions of Jesus for the greatest glory of God.

Ruth Casey fcJ

A letter written to the sisters in Kersal.

I have the memory of you being so interested in what was to happen in Paris that I thought I would write you my impressions of the Celebration there on the evening of Saturday 22nd September. There will surely be official records, but here are my impressions!!

Rita and I had been in Belgium for the council meeting and we arrived in Paris on Saturday afternoon. We took our cases to the Cluny sisters where we were to sleep, and then went straight to the church to practise the singing of the psalm. We were thrilled to find Sr Joan McGeough in church, looking very confident and sure of everything that was to happen. She made sure we had microphones and we were able to practice our psalm in an empty church and for this we were grateful. Joan provided a



lovely calm presence and knew all that was to happen, and where everything was, so no one needed to be anxious! Just as Rita and I finished our practice, Sr Katherine Mary arrived to practise her words at the microphone and she, too, had peace and quiet in which to test the sound. The church was looking beautiful – much lighter than I had remembered it and the benches were new since I was there the last time. The flowers were beautifully arranged by a Mme de Bengy and also Sr Juliet. They seemed to be white roses and lilies and there was a simplicity about them.

On the steps in front of the altar there was a place prepared for the Casket containing the mortal remains

of Marie Madeleine and here Juliet had prepared a lovely arrangement of flowers.

At 5.30 the Casket arrived from rue de la Santé, and was placed in front of the altar. By this time many people were arriving, - about 50 FCJs, perhaps the same number of members of Marie Madeleine's family – some de Bonnault d'Houët, and some de Bengy. In the front bench was Antoine de Bonnault d'Houët, Marie Madeleine's most direct descendant with his family. Two of his children were in the bench with him, and the third one was among the altar boys; this was Louis, for whom we prayed for a long time. Many people came from our school – Notre Dame de France – and in fact the teachers led the singing with voices and instruments. There were also many parishioners as it was the Sunday Mass for the parishioners of St Dominique.

Françoise Massart and Françoise Féret



lovely calm presence and knew all that was to happen, and where everything was, so no one needed to be

England and Ireland. There was even a teacher from Genazzano in Australia – and perhaps others whom I didn't meet.

The Bishop who celebrated seemed warm and happy to be with us. He had just read Marie Madeleine's life and communicated his enthusiasm as he spoke about her during the homily, about her desire to provide education especially for the poor, about her reaching out to the poor in many ways, and of course about her search for God's will and her desire to quench the thirst of Jesus.

The whole Mass was beautifully prepared and there was a great sense of participation. During the Mass there were some special moments: one was when all the FCJs present stood up and renewed their vows, together, in French! We had each been given a scarf to wear – as a

distinguishing mark, I think – and so we must have looked quite impressive. It was only as we were half way through the vows that I realized we were doing it in French – it just seemed so natural and it was a good, strong sound. I heard afterwards that some people in the congregation had been moved to tears at this point. Another very powerful moment for me was the Bidding Prayers. In the booklet the prayers were in French, but they were read by Irene in Italian, Bernadette O'Malley in English, Yustin in Indonesian and Ely in Spanish. I was moved to tears as I listened, because it was so touching to see Yustin and Ely, whom I had just met for the first time that day, reading the prayers in their own language. It is one thing to read about the fact that the Society is in many different countries; it is another to hear the young women themselves, praying the prayers in their own language! That must surely have been a powerful moment too for members of Marie Madeleine's family.

Two members of the family carried the Casket, at the end of Mass, to the Chapel of Our Lady where a place had been prepared in the wall. The Casket was then enclosed with a beautiful piece of metalwork, which you can see in the photo and which expresses Pentecost and the flames of fire. The FCJs at this point sang the Dolly Bramley Magnificat, unaccompanied, but it seemed to be a lovely sound, although the acoustics are supposedly not at all good in that church. This was yet another



moment which brought tears to people's eyes.

Sr Katherine Mary had to speak several

times in French: she welcomed everyone at the beginning, she introduced the renewal of vows and then at the end she thanked all for coming and invited us to school for refreshments. Everything was done to make the celebration easy to follow for those who might not have known what to expect.

A team of young people from our school served the 'finger food', on the playground outside the Lycée, and it was a perfect space to meet and talk to all sorts of people. There was a great atmosphere of chat and laughter and reunions and the only difficulty was in trying to get round to everyone.

I felt deep joy that evening, and gratitude, and everyone seemed to feel the same. There was a very special atmosphere of consolation, and a sense that 'all will be well and all manner of things will be well'.

The celebration and its preparation had required amazing organization, and the team must have felt so proud! Claire Sykes (as the Vice-Postulator of the Cause), Joan McGeough, Marie-Geneviève Renaud and Lorenza Magagnin were the core group who had done much of the work, though there were lots of other people involved too, as you can imagine. Everything went well, it couldn't have gone better – and that is surely

because of all the prayers of the people left at home!



Some of us were privileged to be there, but you were the ones whose prayers helped to make the celebration such a lovely, peaceful and memorable occasion for all who came.

Christine Anderson fcj

I hadn't expected to be so excited and moved by seeing our Foundress' remains brought back home to Paris. It was a gracefilled occasion

Irene Maria Spinato fcj

Que d'émotions en ces jours de fête pour accueillir les reliques de notre Vénérable Mère !

Une voix au téléphone me dit : « Je suis baptisée Marie Madeleine de Bengy, je suis une directe descendante de votre Fondatrice ».

Une autre voix demande que les Sœurs FCJ prie Marie Madeleine , sa grand-mère, pour elle qui est malade et

angoissée. « Ma grand-mère ne peut pas oublier ses petites filles! », dit-elle.

... Ces voix au telephone, ... la rencontre avec les nombreux descendants de notre vénérable mère, présents à la magnifique celebration, ... l'arrivée du reliquaire contenant les restes mortels enveloppé par un ruban bleu, blanc, rouge, ... la présence dans la chorale des professeurs de l'Ecole de Notre Dame de France, ... 51 FCJ représentantes nos Communautés dans le monde qui ont prié en différentes langues * qui ont renouvelé leurs vœux et ont chanté le MAGNIFICAT de D. Bramley avec tout leur cœur, ... me font percevoir que Notre Vénérable Mère est encore bien vivante parmi nous (en dépit de notre petit nombre) et dans l'œuvre que Dieu a voulu commencer à travers elle.

Que dirait-elle à chacune de nous, aujourd'hui ? Je pense : « COURAGE ET CONFIANCE ! »

It is an expérience that will never depart from me.

Dominique Kaufmann fcJ and Klara Brumann fcJ

For us it had been a real privilege that we had been able to take part at the ceremony in Paris on the 22nd of September 2012.

The celebration in the church St. Dominique was really very moving and a wonderful

experience. We were very touched at the moment when the reliquary was being put into the wall and the choir sang so beautifully the *Litany of all the Saints*. This was a very powerful moment. Another moment we recall very specially when the FCJ's sang the *Magnificat*.



It also was great to see the crowd who was so moved and interested to see all what was going on and to meet with so many FCJ's and friends at the reception afterwards.

A huge work went into this celebration we would like to thank you Claire and all your helping team for all you did to make this day so memorable for us all. We had a good journey back home and we will never forget the 22nd of September 2012.

Gloria Calabrese fcJ

Just being present in St. Dominique's was a very powerful and moving experience for many reasons:

... praying with a large group of FCJ's from around the world, ... meeting many members of Marie Madeleine's family who all seemed so delighted to be there

... celebrating the beautiful and dignified liturgy with so many celebrants and servers on the altar, and the

excellent choir, especially when Ruth and Rita sang the psalm together, ... the powerful moment when our Foundress was finally placed inside the reliquary and we all sang the Magnificat of Dolly Bramley.



Kathryn Lennon fcJ

There were several 'special moments' for me during the transfer of Marie Madeleine's remains to Paris.

The moment that the people from the French Consulate put the ribbon round the casket and sealed it with the French seal was very touching as it said to me that this French woman was going home after all those years.

The moment when the remains arrived in Rue de la Santé and we FCJ's sang the 'Magnificat'

The 'vigil' in the Chapel in Rue de la Santé was a very special time. It was as if she had just died in the room next door.

When the casket was taken to be placed in the wall so many ordinary people, 'the faithful' rushed over to be there. It seemed to be the moment when she was received again by the people of St Dominique and by her family.

Maeve Shannon fcJ

I was particularly moved when the car bearing the relics of our Foundress, (accompanied by Katherine-Mary, the Postulator and co.) drove into the property. It was a real 'home-coming' to a place she had bought, where she had set up a school 165 years ago, where she had lived, worked (in such simple surroundings) and died....

- Another moving moment for me was meeting our sisters from almost every country where Marie-Madeleine's charism has been carried and knowing that they too had answered the call to be 'Faithful Companions of Jesus'.
- Praying in our own chapel in front of her remains, whether alone or in community was also very special..
- Finally, being part of that very beautiful ceremony at St. Dominic's, surrounded by so many FCJs, family of Marie-Madeleine and friends was indeed very special (even if I had a few strange moments when I thought she is no longer 'ours' but belongs to the Church!)



Margaret Hill fcJ

My first memory is the wonderful feeling of having the Church, Marie Madeleine's family and our FCJ Sisters all gathered together, ... I was very struck by the similarity of Marie Madeleine's shrine to a tabernacle.

Imelda Zandona fcJ

Grazie molto, molto per tutto la didizione che hai messo per la preparazione, grazie il Dignore ti colmi di tanta pace e serenita.

Marie-Annick Guillouche fcJ

Un immense merci du fond du coeur à toutes celles qui ont si bien organisé ce week-end depuis de longs mois

depuis l'Angleterre jusqu'à Paris. C'est un week-end inoubliable pour moi et une grande joie d'avoir été présente pour cet évènement lié avec nos racines fcj et sa famille et le retour de Notre fondatrice sur sa terre natale, où elle repose dans cette Eglise St Dominique. Continuons de la prier avec courage et confiance. *Le bon Dieu a tout conduit lui-même.*

Mary Costello fcJ

I have so many good memories of September 22nd but at the moment I'm thinking of the school's contribution. Congratulations to Notre Dame de France! The staff orchestra added joy to the evening of September the 22nd by helping us celebrate in song a unique event in our history. After the Mass we were welcomed to the school by parents and our steps to the refreshments were lit up in a fairylike way. The pupils of the school served us graciously giving us FCJs the opportunity to mingle with the guests. *Well done to parents, pupils and staff of Notre Dame de France.*

Mary Murphy fcJ

I was just thinking that I had better just write my impressions. If I wait until I have time I'll never get round to it. At one moment during the Mass I had a strong feeling of the presence of Marie Madeleine. I was

sitting near to the resting place/ niche...It was surprising to see so many people rush forward when the casket was put in place. I felt they thought Marie Madeleine was a saint. A feeling of awe when someone introduced herself as Sylvie de Bengy, a descendant of Sylvain.

... a feeling of joy at meeting Marie Sturdza again. Her grandmother was Marie Madeleine Victoire de Bonnault. Her mother was there and described being sent to St. Georges' Broadstairs as a child. She later married a Romanian prince in exile. When I was introduced to him I didn't know how to address him so settled on "Monsieur".

Yustina Tukiye fcj

Twenty-six FCJ sisters plus the postulator and his secretary, had vigil prayer in the chapel in Rue de la Santé in the presence of Marie Madeleine whose

mortal remains was in the casket on the night before being reinterred in St. Dominic Church of Notre Dame. Behind the chapel is the very simple bedroom of Marie Madeleine when she was in community in Paris until her death. On

the evening of the vigil, I felt as if all of us were staying and keeping watch, feeling sad because someone who loved us and whom we loved had died. On the other hand, being aware that we are here now because of her courage and confidence in founding this little society, I was full of gratitude. She died physically but her spirit is alive in our hearts.

The second moment that touched me was in St. Dominic Church. After the Mass I was seeing many people (her direct descendents and others) come to the place where Marie Madeleine's mortal remains is reinterred with the grill open and candles alight. They were praying there. Marie Madeleine is really a holy woman. I am grateful that she is reburied in the church, because she now belongs to the public not only to us FCJs and her descendants. Her life is now known by more people in Paris/France. It gives me great hope that many people will be touched by her life and want to join FCJ.

My experiences in Paris have strengthened my desire to be an FCJ as I make my final vows on October 28, 2012 and to live the Charism that Marie Madeleine lived and passed on to us.

Anouska Robinson-Biggin fcj

'If you love her, let her go.'

My over-riding memory of the installation of Marie Madeleine's mortal remains in the Church of St. Dominique, Paris was when the casket was carried

from in front of the altar to the side chapel and the FCJ sisters stayed in their places whilst the parishioners, clergy and family gathered around. For me this was

hugely symbolic of us handing her over to the Church and to the world. Some of the priests and people blocked my view but rather than being cross about this I just experienced the rightness of this action. We, the FCJs in England may lose the intimacy we have had the privilege of having for so long but rather than that being a sad thing, it reminded me that Marie Madeleine did not do any of her work for our good alone, but she searched and found God's will in her life in order to give glory to God. By returning her to a public place where people from all walks of life can pray through her intercession she continues to be a companion of Jesus, at the service of the poor, educating all who visit St. Dominique's and she continues being on mission, all of which she desired in her life and now models to others in her death. I love her and although I did not necessarily want to let her go, having had the experience of the Mass in Paris and returning to the Chapel on the Sunday morning, I know it is the right place for her to be and so give thanks to God and to all

those who made the transfer possible. Amen, Amen, Amen.

Moira Cashmore fcj

The atmosphere in the church was more like a wedding: there was a real 'buzz' as people greeted each other with joy, ... both branches of O.V.M's family were seated in their respective places, ... the happiness and great joy of the fcj sisters was very apparent, ... the singing and music throughout the Mass was just beautiful – especially the singing of the Magnificat as Marie Madeleine was placed in her last resting place; it was a truly wonderful occasion in every aspect.



The singing of the Litany of the Saints reminded me of our Final Vow ceremonies and it seemed so appropriate – almost like a seal of approval for her ‘coming home’.

Lorenza Magagnin fcJ

The moment that touched me...

Looking back at the experience I have lived over the weekend of the 22nd – there are some special moments that have touched me deeply but I would say the one that touched me most was the arrival on Friday noontime.

We were – but for two people – all FCJs and there was expectation in the air....and the car arrived...Marie Madeleine was coming back to a place she had bought, a house she had opened and where she had lived and died. And she came in “by the back door....”

I found myself wondering...Here was the woman who had done so many things, who had opened and closed so many places, who had undertaken so many difficult journeys, who had sent her companions all over Europe and who was able to hold her own in front of powerful people coming back in such a small reliquary...At this moment she spoke to me of humility, of simplicity, of a desire not to occupy too big a space, of not being the center of attention.

So there she is, back to her own country. Is this the end? Or is it a new beginning? Now she no longer is “ours” and I have a sense of loss hanging over me, but at the same time I know that this is right, Marie Madeleine is for the Church and the people of God.



The whole celebration was so good, everybody was so serene and happy that I am sure that Marie Madeleine had arranged it to be so and now she may even decide to obtain that famous miracle we have been asking her for so long....

Rita McLoughlin fcJ

When I think of the celebration of the transfer of Marie Madeleine’s remains, the very first thing that I think about and feel is awe and deep gratitude as I remember again the extraordinary and amazingly detailed planning that made of the complicated process such a wonderful occasion. Then I just want to thank God, Marie Madeleine herself and all the FCJs and other people, too many to name, who had a part in bringing into being this amazing historic event.

Among many other significant or touching moments one picture remains vividly in my mind and brought a lump to my throat. It was after Communion when two members of Marie Madeleine’s family approached the altar, lifted the casket together, gently carried it in the procession, as the Litany of the Saints was sung, and placed it in the wall. This solemn moment was extended as the very beautiful silver grill depicting the flames of the Spirit at Pentecost, was placed in front of the casket and we continued to respond to the canted Litany of the Saints.

Installing the reliquary on French soil, in a public Church not far from Rue de La Santé where Marie Madeleine had lived and died, felt so right, proclaimed a new era in the following of our Foundress, and was a momentous home-coming for her family and our sisters in France and Mainland Europe.

Another deeply moving part of the ceremony was the singing of Dolly Bramley’s Magnificat immediately after



the prayer at the reliquary, by FCJs from around the FCJ world. It always carries so many memories and so much meaning for us, but for those of us privileged to be there in the Church at this time, I think this occasion's singing of it will be unforgettable. It was beautiful, filled with feeling, love, and humble pride in Marie Madeleine and all that she was responsible for bringing to birth around the world for the 'glory of God' and the 'good of souls'! It spoke to me of our union of minds and hearts and a realisation, in part, of Marie Madeleine's dreams invoked by the 'I Thirst'. - For these memories, and so many more, I say a deep-felt 'thank you' to God and the Society.

Marie-Antoinette de la Villetanet fcj.

Quelques réflexions de Sr. Marie-Antoinette sur les célébrations en honneur de Marie-Madeleine

En plus de mes impressions personnelles de joie et d'action de grâce pour le retour de Notre Fondatrice à

Paris, je veux souligner l'impact que la célébration et les reliques ont eu sur les paroissiens de S. Dominique : la beauté très remarquée et

enthousiasmante de la cérémonie, ... la présence de Fidèles Compagnes de Jésus venues de pays éloignés, la simplicité de l'intervention de Sr. Katherine Mary, le poignant Magnificat chanté par les religieuses, le nombre impressionnant des descendants de Notre Vénérée Mère ont suscité chez les uns et les autres un vif intérêt pour la Congrégation peu connue à ce jour et pour son œuvre missionnaire. Les livrets sur la vie de Marie-Madeleine disparaissent des présentoirs au fur et à mesure du remplissage de ceux-ci. Les publications paroissiales ne cessent de nous faire connaître. Nous sommes appelées à animer l'heure d'adoration du 1^{er}



jeudi de ce mois et Sr. Irénée, à la demande du Frère Mariste, responsable des rencontres des religieuses du quartier, a témoigné, à la Messe de ce dimanche des activités des FCJ à Paris.

Merci à Sr. Katherine-Mary d'avoir favorisé, par le retour de Marie-Madeleine à ses origines et à celles de la Société FCJ, le nouveau dynamisme de la mission à la Paroisse et à Notre Dame de France.

Susan Boyce fcj

I'm still re-living some of the wonderful experiences from the 22nd September ceremony; the bright yellow colour of the church, the chatty FCJ sisters with their blue scarves as they welcomed us and the large number of Marie Madeleine's family who were present. Some of the French phrases from the songs and posters such as: *Les Mains Overtes devant toi Seigneur*, Marie Madeleine, une femme de Dieu and the encouragement from the homily to be self-sacrificing.

Veronika Schreiner fcj

For me the whole celebration, although so beautiful and moving, was linked with other things and I was wondering whether it was the end - or the beginning of something new. Maybe Marie Madeleine Victoire herself will see to the answer to this question.

Mary Rose Rawlinson fcj

When I think of the weekend of September 21st, 2012, in Paris, the words that come to mind are beauty, generosity, hospitality, talent, dedication ... purposeful, peaceful, joyous, vibrant.

I think of the beauty of the casket and the reliquary, the radiant faces of FCJs, the peacefulness on the face of Père Slavek (Parish Priest), the joyousness of the music and singing, the simplicity and apparent ease with which one event led to another (obviously the fruit of careful, generous planning), the involvement of so many, the faces of Marie Madeleine's family, the interest of parishioners of St. Dominique.

As I stood behind the video camera and looked at the FCJs, of course I saw aging, but far more importantly I saw 49 strong, committed women who were genuinely glad to be with each other. I saw women of 3 or 4 continents, depending on how one defines a continent. I saw seven women (of five nationalities) who had been

part of 'Courage to Dare', a gathering of younger women in the Society. I saw happy women, rightly proud of their heritage and enthusiastic to share with the whole Church the woman whom God had called to have the name 'Faithful Companion of Jesus', a name for which she was willing to give everything, 'even my only son for whom I would give a thousand times my life!'



I remembered from her Memoirs, the time when she had been to Paris where she was diagnosed with a mortal illness and then returned to Amiens to find Mère Louise (her only adult companion) whom the doctors thought was also dying. Believing that the Society was God's work, she called Julie Guillemet and entrusted the work to her. 'Julie promised to do her utmost. So it was, that after two years of effort and most painful crosses, all now depended on a child of thirteen, obliged to work for her living'. I felt her present with us in Paris, I felt she would look at us with love and pride and say, 'Go for it, Look at you, What's your problem?'

Mary Campion McCarren fcl

Magnificat anima mea Dominum

The Vigil

lights, flowers – a real celebration
the casket in chapel next to the room where she died... a sense of rightness – homecoming - full circle
Marie Madeleine's voice across the years in the French readings – 1820 and the CTS quotation very fresh, very powerful despite (English) familiarity

The Church

given (back) to the People of God... we have perhaps kept her to ourselves too long... like the charism she is not just given to us – but to us for the Church; the tangible joy of the Bishop, Père Slavik, the crowd which gathered at the reliquary IMMEDIATELY; the speed with which the literature etc went...
DNA in casket - DNA across the aisle in church – *spiritual* DNA in us!
again – the great sense of celebration – joy – thanksgiving

the rightness of the LAY Heads being there and taking such a part in the celebration
(*The river*)

*that is without the least dapple or shadow –
that is nothing but light –scalding, aortal light
in which we are washed and washed
- out of our bones
(Mary Oliver):*

These lines were with me very powerfully in church –
light / fire/ pentecost theme – purgation - purification
... Marie Madeleine body - dust – bones – further reduction? the very essence distilled...

Notre Dame de France

'wholeness' – people (family, Society, colleagues, friends, students, nationalities etc)
- place (Berry, Paris, Nantes, Italy, Torino, Suisse, Belgium, England, Somers town, Gumley, Great George's Square, Lingdale, Ireland, Laurel Hill...) her whole life was there – and the aftermath ... (Canada, USA, Philippines, Indonesia, South America)

the beauty of the lighted paths in the darkness – *Your word is light for my feet...* and there she was again looking out from all the lighted lamps

a simple family style celebration

Claire Sykes fcl

*An overwhelming sense of gratitude to God...
that all worked out so well
For a team of wonderful workers
A sense of awe as the ordinary people of God crowded in front of the shrine
The pride of Andrew Nobes, the craftsman as the reliquary was fitted into place
The joys of talking with David John, the artist who designed the reliquary*

David John, liturgical artist who designed the reliquary

Thank you for your invitation to give some reflections on the making of the elements for the Paris reliquary. These rememberings crowded in – but the writing down simply did not happen. Now however this has somehow become possible.
The revolutionary times and visionary life of Marie Madeleine d'Houët took me back to my teens and the

reading of 'the Tale of Two Cities' by Charles Dickens. The turmoil of the French Revolution and its effects on all including a small group of English travellers vividly affected me at the time and - and remains with me.

In reading the biography of Marie Madeleine it became clear that her guiding spirit derived from those very first chapters of the new testament – Pentecost – also by the earlier anxious gathering following Christ's death and Resurrection featured in the very end of each of the Gospels – where he consoled, reassured –pressing them into teaching and missionary work.

Pentecost became the theme of the visible signs for Sister Marie Madeleine's reliquary in the shape of flames divided and appearing above each of those present. Pentecost which came at the end of the harvest festival of the Jewish communities brings with it an element of seed, the new life and the spreading of Christ's example and teaching . All of this came to me during the intense period of work in the early days of the project. The meetings with the Sisters from various continents during the course of this year simply confirms - ***Pentecost - and the continuing inspiration.***





A woman for our Time

Marie Madeleine ... a Pearl of Great Price

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The image of the pearl is a fitting one for the faith quest of Marie Madeleine. A foreign substance penetrates the shell of the oyster whose response is to transform it by covering it layer by layer with soft nacre until it is formed into a luminous and precious pearl.

Anchored in God, Marie Madeleine responded faithfully to God's will as soon as it became known to her until she grew into the Pearl that we know her to be.

Awakening

In 1815 Marie Madeleine d'Houët offered refuge to a Jesuit priest, Father Varin, who was on the 'wanted' list of the Imperial Government in France. At her secluded property in Parassy, she set up a chapel where she attended daily Mass and spent prolonged hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Father Varin stayed with her for five months and during that time she had long spiritual conversations with him and absorbed the spirit that animated his religious community, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). She listened to the Spirit within her and was moved to abandon herself to whatever the divine plan might be for her.

Trusting

Marie Madeleine prayed that she might be an empty vessel ready to receive the graces which God offered. It became clear to her that there were four companions from whom she should never separate herself: **poverty, humility, obedience and gentleness**. Over a period of time, with the spiritual guidance of Father Varin and other Jesuits, she recognised that God was calling her to a way of life which was as yet not clear to her. She trusted that God's Provident Love would sustain her in any decision making. ***I desire nothing but the accomplishment of your holy will***, she said.

The Jesuit way of life appealed more and more to Marie Madeleine, so much so that she was convinced that God called her to join them. She was mulling over these thoughts and yearnings when, during the Corpus Christi procession as she gazed at the crucifix, the answer became clear to her: ***Behold the first Jesuit and Master of them all***.

The One whom she was seeking was seeking her. It was to Jesus himself and to Jesus in his people that she would give her whole heart.

Let it be done

Marie Madeleine continued her spiritual journey with the counsel of Father Varin. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart, June 12, 1816, she spent time after Mass reflecting on the happiness of those who gave themselves entirely to God. She recalled Jesus' words from the cross, ***I thirst***. They penetrated to the very marrow of her being. She would slake that thirst of Jesus in the needs of God's people and in the whole of creation where she found herself. She reflected: ***My name is Magdalen: I will follow my patron as far as Calvary***. She would gather a group of women who would be faithful to Jesus and be his presence in the contemporary world.



Marie Madeleine Victoire
de Bengy de Bonnault d'Houët
Foundress of the
Faithful Companions of Jesus

*Why not visit our web-site and
learn more about
the life of Marie Madeleine and
the community that she founded*
www.fcjsisters.org

When the FCJs in the Province of the Americas gathered in Calgary in December 2013, they chose one of the Chapter Directions as a priority route to follow during the following months.

Route

*In the Risen Christ, present in creation, we recognise a new impulse moving us to **more love, more union, more compassionate solidarity**. We seek to be in transformative relationship with everyone and everything.*

The Task

Look with new eyes at documents about the life of Marie Madeleine. Unearth a gem or two and share your treasures with the rest of the Province in a manner of your choosing.

We unearthed many gems which we share with you over the page....



Invitation from the General Chapter 2013

"We hope that our Companions in Mission,
family, friends, colleagues...
will find meaning and inspiration here
and will share the richness
of their inspiration with us."

Gems from the Province of the Americas

Gems ...

Pressed down,
Shaken together,
Overflowing

Luke 6:38



More Love

She was born into a loving family, she *worshipped* her father, had an ideally happy marriage, was *besotted* by her son, Eugène, who reciprocated: *Ask Mommy she knows everything*; she took students at St. Acheul *under her wing*. She maintained deep friendships with Constance, with Anne Augustine, with the early Companions, with the people whom she served.

- ◇ She had a unique understanding of the human person and often forestalled others' needs.
- ◇ She showed loving concern for the Sisters, "...make them take recreation in Tottenham ... every week".
- ◇ "Your letters are always a subject of consolation to me."
- ◇ "Money does not count when it is a question of the Sisters' health."
- ◇ "Last week the 'flu took me by the ears and kept me still for 8 days.... tell Madame Euphrasie to make her laugh."
- ◇ "She is to take care of herself; send her some chocolates and some wine."
- ◇ "I am convinced that if the Sisters continue without a garden, their health will be affected."
- ◇ "I am very much in favour of the little presents you have given to your brother. ... You may have the rosary ... and another, if you wish, set in silver."
- ◇ Some phrases used about M. Madeleine: "[she] surrounds us with the most meticulous and delicate care."; "... she was coming to do her hair and help her dress."; "...they felt loved and guessed that this affection came from love ...greater still;" etc.
- ◇ She sent detailed instructions to those caring for the sick children in the boarding schools and the Sisters in the community: "... she is to eat a little chocolate..."

More Union

- ◇ Marie Madeleine was lead by the Spirit
- ◇ Her life was a constant all-embracing prayer
- ◇ Long periods of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament
- ◇ Unique Devotion to the Sacred Heart.. Christ physically active in all things
- ◇ Deep appreciation of the beauty of nature, she created artistic gardens, loved the singing of birds, "We will have beautiful terraces overlooking the sea."
- ◇ Direct in communication: "...tell me the facts, don't be afraid to disagree with me... so we will reach the truth."
- ◇ Trusted God's faithfulness: when summoned to court by her opponents ... put the summons in her pocket and went to chapel to pray... the event "blew over".
- ◇ took responsibility for ruptured family relationships.



Resources that we used

The Memoirs of Marie Madeleine
FCJ Constitutions
God's Faithful Instrument (Patricia Grogan fcj)
Grit and Grace (Anne Rennie)
Letters from, Marie Madeleine
Lives of early FCJ Sisters
Lives of 2nd and 3rd General Superiors
Notes from Retreat on the Constitutions (B. O'Leary SJ)
Marie Madeleine d'Houët (Michel Schepers, Paris)
Resources about Marie Madeleine on the FCJ website

More Compassionate Solidarity ...

- ◇ Represented to the administrators the cause of the patients at the hospice when the employees were cheating them of their rights
- ◇ Established a bond of friendship with the harvesters in her vineyards
- ◇ Showed concern for the happiness of Sisters in community: "If Sister X is not happy in the community, I can arrange to place her in a more suitable house."
- ◇ Aligned herself with the disadvantaged (on one occasion she was seen collecting dead leaves in the woods to make a mattress)
- ◇ When embracing the cause of the disadvantaged and the *little ones*, she did so from her own pain: physical, psychological, rejection, discrimination, etc.
- ◇ "Don't get upset about anything..."
- ◇ She gave instructions that she be buried in the cemetery with the poor...
- ◇ She entrusted the future of the Society to the 13 year-old Julie Guillemet

Other Insights from our Reflections

Spiritual tradition of Society: Trinitarian:

God: source of life, of Faith, Hope, Love,
Jesus ministering to the disadvantaged
Risen Finding God in all things
Spirit source of spiritual gifts and fruit

Reflection

God communicates with us, encourages, consoles us through:

persons: the unknown woman who spoke to Marie Madeleine about the future of the Society;

Illness: Marie Madeleine about to leave Rome without meeting the Pope. Her companion falls ill and she is forced to remain in Rome and is then summoned to meet the Pope who affirms her future mission.

circumstance: because of the political situation in Belgium, Marie Madeleine is led to Somers Town, London, England.

Notable: Her integrity, her business acumen, her indomitable courage, her indefatigable energy, her fortitude, her forthrightness, sense of humour.

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