

A Woman for our Time

... Celebrating Marie Madeleine ... and her work for Women

November 2021

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

This newsletter is 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, the Foundress of the FCJ sisters.

Marie Madeleine is a **woman for our time**; a French woman of inspiration and courage. She was ... daughter, sister, friend, wife, widow and mother, and ultimately a religious sister and foundress. Her husband, Joseph 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 child, Eugene, she founded a group of Catholic sisters known as the Faithful Companions of Jesus. Her story is remarkable!

The health and happiness of mothers

It is not surprising that, wherever she started a community, Marie Madeleine was concerned to reach out particularly to children - often to those who had been orphaned and to women. She recognised the importance of the health and happiness of mothers of families especially where there was economic, educational or spiritual poverty.

At a time when religious were normally enclosed, she resisted enclosure, recognising the importance of freedom of movement for her apostolic vision.

She equally resisted the pressure put on her by some bishops who wanted to direct the activity of all convents within their diocese. Marie Madeleine understood that this would inhibit the nature of the Society in which she wanted the members to be available to go anywhere and to be united under one overall superior who would send them in the place of Jesus Christ.

Care shown in different ways

Inspired by Marie Madeleine's example, concern for women has continued across the years and continues to show itself in various ways. In 1863, in Birkenhead, England, a Union Workhouse was opened for destitute women and men. FCJ Sisters from the nearby Holt Hill community, visited the workhouse on a regular basis bringing comfort to the women. This practice continued for *decades* until a congregation of women religious specifically dedicated to social work took over the visiting and care.

This concern for women continues ...



*In particular, we offer our
compassionate action to:*

*Migrants,
Refugees and asylum seekers,
Trafficked persons,
The economically
disadvantaged, **Vulnerable
women and children***

FCJ General Chapter 2019



Venerable
Marie Madeleine
d'Houët

Marie Madeleine is a
'friend' who is
looking out for us,
praying with us and
ready to assist us.
If you need help
with something ask
her to pray with you

Partnership with Women

FCJ Learning and Development Center in Manila

Partnership with the women in the community is at the heart of the work of the **FCJ Learning and Development Center in Manila**. Girl children, young women, mothers, elderly women all play an important part in the life of the community and are instrumental in shaping its future.

Women have enormous potential and many gifts and talents. Sometimes, because of the circumstances of their lives, they have not been able to develop their talents as they would have wished. It is never too late! One way in which the FCJ Center is able to help is by providing a variety of opportunities to acquire new skills or to revive and develop ones that were long forgotten. Often these new skills enable the women to generate badly needed additional income for their families. The extra money is not the only benefit. Increased independence and confidence are beyond price. Many women offer generous and effective leadership in their communities. They are instrumental in bringing about change in many aspects of life. The support of a group of like-minded women gives them courage to challenge the status quo, whether it be within their family, or in the wider community.



Educational opportunities are important. Some women left school early and the Alternative Learning System enables them to start again where they left off, and eventually to graduate High School. Enabling families who struggle financially to send their children to school and to College is also something that provides opportunities for girls and young women to develop their potential and to create a better future for themselves and their families.

Another aspect of our partnership with women is the women's development groups where women come together for mutual support and to work to create a better life not just for their own families but for their community. In these groups the women can express their ideas and develop their creativity. These groups are a safe place where they can share their pain and struggles as well as their hopes and dreams. For some of them it is the only place in their lives where they feel that others listen to them and care.

The elderly women in the community have a particularly important role. Often they provide a stable environment for the young ones in their families, and they do so with amazing generosity. When they come together in the senior citizens' meetings they take time to relax and enjoy being together after lives which, for the most part, have been shaped by sacrifice and hardship. It is a joy and a privilege to partner with the women involved in the FCJ Center. Meetings are always lively and the resilience and courage of women who do all they can to make a better life for their families, often in very difficult situations, is truly inspiring.

*Vanessa Reposar fcj,
Salvacion Sodusta fcj, Paola Terroni fcj*



FCJ Learning and Development Center in Manila.

Merlyn Arpon working with a senior's group in Calamiong in September 2021, showing how she repacks



condiments (pepper, garlic, bay leaves etc) into small quantities and then sells and makes a small income from it. The 8 elderly women are going to begin a communal small business along the same lines. The seniors were very interested in Merlyn's presentation.