

***Journey into the Third Millennium
In Service of the Mission***

Our Mothers' Voices

Ubi Caritas

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The Journey Into The Third Millennium: In Service of the Mission

There is the spirit of the Society. Our first movement is to linger at the feet of the Master; that is the contemplative life, that is what we do in prayer. But it is then that Jesus says to us: 'Go, tell My brother,' and Mary becomes an apostle. Why can we not say to the universe: 'Know His Heart?'

St. Madeleine Sophie Barat

The lifeblood of the Society is too powerful, too overflowing to be held in bounds by any frontier.

Mabel Digby, RSCJ

The strength of love is shown in giving unstintingly, not out of our abundance as do the rich, but giving at our own expense what it costs to give, like the widow's mite in the Temple treasury – all that we have and possess...

Janet Erskine Stuart, RSCJ

It is thus that the children of the Sacred Heart, past, present, and future, are at one, cooperating in the great Work for which the years of their education prepare them: to make known to the world the immense love of the Heart of Jesus.

Life at the Sacred Heart

By the power of His Spirit, Jesus Christ transforms our capacity for the service of mission.

Constitutions of the Society, 1982

...International communion is created by the interaction of the provinces throughout the world,

and by the richness of our diverse cultures. We are called to become one body in Christ....

Constitutions of the Society, 1982

Mission: the call of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. At the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation is the mystery of mission. Jesus was 'anointed to preach the Good News to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to announce that captives shall be released and the blind shall see, that the downtrodden shall be released from their oppressors.' Closely allied to the reality of mission must be the creating, liberating power of Jesus who alone can give us the strength to be open to the Spirit who enables us to struggle against injustice and who 'makes all things new.'

Concepcion Comacho, RSCJ, Superior General of the Society, 1970-1982

In this year of preparation may we be immersed in the Heart of God. May our contemplation be fresh and alert, our action deeply contemplative, and may both find their source in our intimacy with the mind and heart of God. From there may we be empowered to journey outwards to our brothers and sisters and to recommit ourselves to the service of God's reign of love, peace, justice, and reconciliation.

*Patricia Garcia de Quevedo, RSCJ,
On the celebration of the Society's bicentennial*

You have been chosen to a mission that is great because it embraces the universe.

St. Madeleine Sophie Barat

Ubi Caritas

We stand now and reaffirm our commitment to the heritage of Sacred Heart education, a heritage rich in tradition, courageous voices, inspired leadership, and an ever-hopeful vision for a just and peaceful world.

Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est.

It is not easy to write of things that are actually in being, between a past that is only beginning to lengthen into distances and a future that is still unknown. Events move quickly, and living things modify themselves as they move. But at any time in the life of a corporate body that owes a debt of gratitude to God, to the Church, and to its first authors, a true picture, though a fleeting one, may be given of it as it stands today; thankful for the past and hopeful for the future, striving to be in the present to realize the purpose for which it has come into being.

Janet Erskine Stuart, RSCJ
The Society of the Sacred Heart

Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est.

It is not merely for our own sakes that we should try to become interior souls; we should have constantly before our eyes the children who will come to claim spiritual help from us. Help that without prayer we shall never be able to give them.

St. Madeleine Sophie Barat

Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est.

We cultivate a very small field for Christ, but we love it, knowing that God does not require great achievements but a heart that holds back nothing for self.

St. Rose Philippine Duchesne

Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est.

Those who have to educate them to something higher must themselves have an idea of what they want, they must believe in the possibility of every mind and character to be lifted up to something better than it has already attained; they must themselves be striving for some higher excellence, and must believe and care deeply for the things they teach. For no one can be educated by maxim and precept; it is the life lived, and the things loved and the ideals believed in by which we tell, one upon another.

Janet Erskine Stuart, RSCJ
The Education of Catholic Girls

Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est.

As members of the community of Sacred Heart education, we ask Your blessing and Your help, Lord, in being women and men who are courageous and for whom love for You and for others is the center of our lives. Help us draw closer to one another and to

You through the sharing of our commitment to Sacred Heart education. Be with us. Send Your spirit of wisdom so that our efforts this day will bring forth a deeper understanding of your will for us. We pray in the name of the One who is Perfect Love. Amen.

*Prayer Service from the Midwest Institute on Mentoring and Heritage
July, 1995*

Education in the Society

Maryvonne Keraly, RSCJ

This address was given at the First International Conference of Heads of Sacred Heart Schools in Joigny, France, April 23-30, 2000.

Before I begin, I would like to bring you the greetings of our superior general, Patricia Garcia de Quevedo, and other members of our council. For myself, I was happy to be able to participate in the meeting held in Amiens in July 1998, and I was a witness to the birth of this project. I would like to address a cordial thank you to the organizing committee who have made this original idea a reality and to all of you who have answered the invitation.

In preparing this presentation, I was helped by information from the organizing committee which I have combined with my own thoughts. So what I have done is to put myself in your place, asking what you might expect a councilor general to say to you in this situation. It occurred to me that you would be interested to see the image that I have of formal education in the Society as it is today: a photograph taken from my point of view, an aerial view taken by a camera which moves round the world wherever the Society has a presence. I do not want to give you a static photo, but a dynamic image, not taken in a single frame, but from different points of view which take into account the evolution and trends and the challenges of the educating mission of the Society.

It seems to me that you also might be expecting the word of authority, since I am here delegated by the council general. Words of authority are those which encourage, which open, which "authorize," which show trust, call to action, which also question, which send you on your way... I shall be happy to speak to you in these terms in the second half of my presentation.

The exercise I undertake is not an easy one because of the wide variety of situations that you represent, and it is impossible to give a general talk which speaks to all your circumstances

and in which you can find your own reality adequately described.

Formal Education in the Society Today

1. **Formal education is a live and dynamic part of the educational mission of the Society.** In saying that, I am aware of the lack of statistics to assess the number of schools (I think it is about 130, but I have been told it is nearer 150, so let us stay with that figure), the number of pupils, teachers, educators, even parents, associates, and friends who work with and in the school. I do not think I am mistaken when I say that these numbers would be very large. In any case, I can tell you that during my six years on the council I have seen very many children, young people, and adults in the course of my visits. In most of the countries where the Sacred Heart has a presence, there is at least one school; in some provinces there are more than twenty. The places where there are no schools are those where the Society has only recently arrived, for example Indonesia, and of course Haiti, our most recently born, or in re-foundations like Cuba and Hungary where we had a presence thirty or forty years ago, but there are Religious of the Sacred Heart in those countries who teach. We also have religious teaching in the Orthodox and Catholic faculties at the University of Moscow, and there is a similar situation in the Philippines.

So this is a living and dynamic area, thanks to the commitment of the administrators and the educators. When I visit, I am aware of their concern to offer both solid teaching and high quality education, in whatever context, and to welcome the young and underprivileged.

2. This brings me to the **economic situation** which is very different in the range of Sacred Heart Schools. In certain countries there are government grants, which even if they come burdened by certain terms and conditions, do give easier access to our establishments. I am thinking of several European countries that have been able to democratize recruitment as a result. On the other hand, in places where there is absolutely no help from the government, or very

little, freedom can be seriously limited, particularly that of being able to take in young people in difficulty. Forced to function on the basis of tuition or fund-raising, these establishments run the risk of becoming elitist. But this situation has somehow given both parents and teachers a spirit of responsibility, as I have seen in the United States, for example. There is a third group, which includes our schools that find themselves in a very precarious situation. Some of these are dramatic: teachers cannot be paid and, due to lack of resources, some children cannot come to school. Last year in the Congo, two schools remained closed, partly because of the war, but also because of the economic situation.

3. There is an **enormous variety of both cultural, and in particular, religious situations**. There are schools in regions which are predominantly Catholic, notably in Latin America, where any reference to Christianity is seen as the norm. There are schools in countries where Islam is dominant and there is not always tolerance. However, a Catholic school, even one which welcomes Muslim children, still represents for the Christian minority a place of safety, bearing the mark of freedom. In Asia, the Sacred Heart label represents a pledge of openness, tolerance, and an educational system based on care of the whole person. In most countries of the first and second world, strongly marked by the forces of secularization, it is very often suggested that the open expression of faith only reaches a small minority lost in the middle of a vast body of indifference.

4. **Collaboration among schools** in the same country keeps growing. This takes the form of work in networks that become a forum for communication and formation; at the same time they give the opportunity for stimulating educational research and renewing the spiritual dimension. Directors in Europe formed a regional network about twelve years ago. Latin American schools have produced a document based in the tradition of a Plan of Studies which

will in the future be used as a guide and reference.

5. If you have been working in a Sacred Heart School for some years you will have seen a **reduction in the number of religious**, which sometimes now means total absence – no religious. There are several reasons for this. Of course there is a reduction in the number of vocations. But also among those who do have a vocation, the professional training of some cannot be used in schools, but is appropriate in other parts of the educating mission of the Society. At the very heart of the congregation, there was a time during which the institutions, and in particular the educational institutions, were the object of criticism and disaffection. We saw the phenomenon of polarization: for example in Latin America formal education versus popular education; to work in an institution versus to work among the poor. You, heads of schools, have seen one or other Sacred Heart sister, fine teachers, remarkable educators, leaving your schools. It seems that today we have overcome this polarization, or at least we are coming through it. But there still remains for our young religious the fear of the burden of an institution, in particular the responsibility that you all carry as heads of a school.

6. This poses or has posed problems concerning the **future of these institutions** and the way in which we carry on that responsibility. On the whole, we do not envisage closing schools, but we are concerned with finding new ways of managing them, which means that now calling upon **lay directors** is an inevitable solution. I say inevitable, but not in a negative sense; I mean this is an inevitable and happy solution. I am thinking of the United States, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand where many schools are directed and sustained largely, and sometimes totally, by lay people with the final responsibility being held by the congregation. It is the congregation who appoints the director and who gives them the means to ensure continuity in the spirit of Sacred Heart education. The increase in the number of lay people in positions of responsibility is

not without resistance, sometimes on the part of some religious. This obviously can make future planning very difficult.

Challenges and Calls to Action

Now, following from this presentation of the current situation in formal education and our schools today, my second part has the title – **Challenges and Calls to Action**.

The educational project of St. Madeleine Sophie was born from within the call she received from Christ. In replying to this call she was answering the needs of the world in educating children and girls capable of finding their place in the world and transforming it. Therefore it is from an interior vision of the Heart of Christ and a vision of the world that the educational mission was born and found its original form.

Two hundred years later we are called to take the same step. The world at the beginning of this new millennium is very different from that which faced Madeleine Sophie. However, her charism which is still alive makes us particularly sensitive to certain aspects of this world which questions education, particularly the sort of education that we would like to provide in our schools. There are four points which seem to me to be particularly important, with which you may or may not agree.

1. One of the effects of globalization is **interdependence** among regions, countries and groups of individuals. Unfortunately, this contributes more to the creation of imbalances which favor some and disadvantage others, rather than helping these inequalities to be eradicated. Does not Sacred Heart education have for its essential task that of **transforming this interdependence from fact to willing fellowship**? Education must have as its end that of bringing people to understand themselves and to understand others through a better understanding of the world. This education facilitates true understanding of events, beyond the

simplified, distorted images delivered by the media, and should ideally help every individual to become a better world citizen (Karan Singh, *Educating for World Society*).

Equally, knowledge of the world, by bringing people to understand others, leads them to go beyond generalization towards the very essential of identity. Reinforcement of the solidarity of a group is a need in the young, but if badly understood, can render communication and dialogue with others impossible. Knowledge of other cultures leads to a two-fold realization: an appreciation of the uniqueness of one's own culture but also an appreciation of the existence of a common heritage in the whole of humanity.

Some months ago, I was in Lima, Peru, at a meeting of delegates of schools in the capital, including students from our women's university and young men and women from our Teachers' College at Monterrico. One of these boys asked me, "Is the congregation international? But what do you do with this internationality?" You must bear in mind that there are students in Peru who suffer not just extreme poverty, but real misery. So now I ask myself the questions: "What are we doing with the internationality of the Society? Who benefits from it? Does it create solidarity in action?" The Chapter of 1994 asked the questions in the following terms:

What can we do to make our internationality good news for the poor? How can we ensure that our decisions to cooperate, to unite in our own countries and beyond, profit the community at large? Can we see in our own efforts to become an international community, a parable for what the human community might become if we managed to create an international Society in our world?

2. New technology has brought humanity into the age of **communication**. In one way or another, we are all touched by this even if, paradoxically, half the population of the world has no access to a telephone. Because of their considerable cost, information systems remain in the

hands of the great powers or in those of individuals, which confers on them enormous power and creates both a so-called “world” culture and distressing poverty which can cause severe damage. We can see the indispensable role played by education in forming minds who can manage, interpret, and criticize the sheer volume of information received. However, this flood of images, by trivializing suffering and human pain, can actually close the heart instead of making it more sensitive to the cries of the oppressed and opening it to compassion. This is the moment to remember that the Religious of the Sacred Heart, faithful to the inspiration of Madeleine Sophie, choose to include in the Constitutions, in the section on the educational mission: “...like them, open to new situations, we make our own her desire that every individual should be awakened to truth, love and liberty....”

3. Interdependence and communication in its negative forms can engender a world of violence, from which as you know, our schools are not protected. The young as witnesses can themselves become perpetrators of violence. This can appear under various names: intolerance of others who are different; fundamentalism, sectarianism in the name of a God who is nearer to the *tout Autre*; envy, jealousy faced with opulence to which they will never have access; bitterness and rancor which distills hatred and permanent frustration. A Sacred Heart School which justly carries in its name the words *Sacred Heart*, does it not have as its first duty, that of educating for peace and reconciliation? The school in Graz in Austria has developed over several years, a program oriented towards peace which involves educators, teachers and pupils. The Chapter of 1994 made the choice to educate in Reconciliation, which involved religious in the first instance but which has been taken up by certain schools: in South Korea with regard to North Korea in the form of a program based on the formula “seeing, judging, acting,” exchanges between young people from Japan and from Korea; visits by Japanese students to the Philippines; and last

summer, a camp in the Philippines gathered young people from our institutions in Asia.

4. Finally we know, and here some know better than others, that education is already a privilege to which so many children have no access. There are 880 million illiterates over the age of fifteen (therefore considered adults) – that is to say 20% of the world population, and 125 million children who have had no schooling; also 150 million who leave school before they have been able to acquire a minimum of education. This is a particularly negative situation for girls, since of the adult illiterates, 70% or 600 million are women (Unesco) – a phenomenon even more unacceptable in a world that creates exclusion and poverty. Our institutions, in spite of their continued efforts, cannot open their doors to everyone. But still, the call to give preference to the poor never ceases to trouble us. The document drafted by the International Commission on Education in 1988 is still valid:

Nothing perhaps has posed a greater challenge to the Society's understanding and practice of education than "the option for the poor" formulated in 1970. It was not an accident of history, this option, nor a passing trend. It was linked inevitably with the Church's new self understanding expressed in Vatican II; with the revolution in global consciousness brought about by new technologies; with the convergence of social and political liberation movements around the world.

It is of course a good thing that there should be room for social open-mindedness and consciousness of huge injustices, both local and worldwide, in a program of education. But surely the conversation will have so much more power if the school itself is a place where the poor and the little ones can find their place and be the object of individual attention. Above all, that school then becomes a place which proclaims justice and the love of Christ which is represented by the open and wounded heart.

In 1995, the Council General, following a request by the chapter of 1994, created a network for “Justice and Peace,” with an International Commission of individuals who took responsibility for this at the local and regional level. The five members of the International Commission, at a meeting in Rome last January, expressed the desire that a dialogue and a work in common with the schools of the Sacred Heart be established in the future.

In another connection, our visits around the provinces have shown us at which point it would be beneficial if exchanges and a dialogue could be established between the various fields of education, not to erase the differences in approach and method, but for mutual enrichment and in order to learn from each other.

To know in order to become united in purpose and interests, to use communications to open ourselves to compassion, to develop a culture of peace, to give the poor and the excluded a chance, these are the four great challenges that face educators.

In conclusion, I would like to sketch a portrait of a head of a Sacred Heart school. This portrait is not a totally abstract one, because I am drawing it from all of you whom I have had the joy to meet in the Society. It is a woman or man of conviction who despite the difficulty of the task and of its many constraints stands fast in the fulfillment of his or her responsibility.

So, this is a woman, a man of faith and hope. They find courage and the strength to persevere through the love of children and of young people. Never will the burdens of administrative concerns prevent them from regarding every one of their pupils as a unique being, capable of growth and progress – with a preference for those who struggle along the way and who sometimes remain far behind.

It is a woman or man who has the ability to inspire a team. It is his or her responsibility to remind that team of the true meaning of a Sacred Heart School, because he or she has received a

mandate from the congregation. With the team, he or she is seeking to give life to the spirit of Madeleine Sophie.

It is a woman, a man who is willing to return to school, the school where Jesus is the master teacher: "Learn from Me for I am gentle and humble of heart."

The lay heads often have come to the Sacred Heart quite by chance, or at least without actually choosing the school, because there were no other possibilities open. But little by little, they have come to realize that they are part of a mission that is much larger than themselves. We religious of the Sacred Heart, when we speak of this mission in our own words and with our own symbols, say: "Our educational mission: a space and a way to announce the love of the Heart of Jesus." That is the theme of our Chapter in July 2000. We all, whether we be lay or religious, have a duty to take on and accomplish this mission, each one of us with our own gifts, our own personal history made up of shadows and light, quests and discoveries, with God always with us and always working with us.

Today, I am the voice of the congregation, sending you out once more to the mission of education by means of schooling. The congregation is grateful to you for having accepted this responsibility and for accomplishing it with such effectiveness and devotion. It has entrusted to you a precious part of its apostolic mission and it is counting on you to bring to fruition this heritage and trust in a spirit of creative faith.

Maryvonne Keraly, RSCJ, of the Province of France, is a member of the General Council of the Society of the Sacred Heart at the Motherhouse in Rome.

Saintes Savantes: Learned Saints for the Twenty-First Century

Lynne Lieux, RSCJ

Our times are not unlike the times of St. Madeleine Sophie – unrest, turmoil, extraordinary change, and moral and ethical issues that shake the foundations of our beliefs. The education envisioned by St. Madeleine Sophie has for two hundred years developed young people who could face the challenges of the world with faith, wisdom, compassion and a sense of justice. Because her vision of education, of changing society by changing the minds and hearts of the young, is not bound by time or space, it will equip future generations, not by the same methods, but certainly in a similar way.

At the heart of the mission of Sacred Heart educators is the mandate to educate to a personal and active faith in God. St. Madeleine Sophie believed that this faith was “at once the foundation and the crowning point” of our education (1815 Constitutions). What does it mean to have a personal and active faith in God? Intrinsic to this statement is relationship: first, the personal relationship that one has with God and then the relationship that one has with self, with others, and with the world because of one’s relationship with God. St. Madeleine Sophie knew well this dynamic of a vertical relationship with God lived out in the many and varied horizontal relationships in her life. She spent hours at deep and intense prayer in union with the God who had captivated her heart. She spent an equal amount of time tending to others, directing their spiritual lives, forming them as teachers, educating them about their faith, in her words, being “a mother to them all.”

For St. Madeleine Sophie, a personal relationship with God, an interior life, was the foundation. She wrote in the 1815 Constitutions of the Society, “The Spirit of the Society is essentially based upon prayer and the interior life since we cannot glorify the adorable Heart of

Jesus worthily except inasmuch as we apply ourselves to study His interior dispositions in order to unite and conform ourselves to them.” For her, the interior life was rooted in the love of Jesus Christ. It is to His heart that generations have gone to learn, to know, to unite, and to conform themselves to His interior dispositions, so as to become more like Him. It is to His heart that we and future generations and we must go to find the love, the compassion, the mercy, the hope, the joy that the world so desperately needs. The development of an interior life will always be the “foundation and crowning point” of Sacred Heart education.

The life of faith that St. Madeleine Sophie envisioned was not a pious devotion. It was a life of faith based on a deep and profound knowledge of God. This life of faith was enhanced through the study of sacred Scripture and the writings of the saints and theologians and through quiet time spent in prayer and in reflection. Sacred Heart students will always need opportunities that ground them deeply in the knowledge of their beliefs while also providing them with time to experience the deep and profound mystery of God.

The development of faith in a person’s life requires that much time be spent grappling with what one truly believes. For young people, this grappling is more real and more urgent. It is in this arena that they take what they have been taught and discern what really belongs to their own personal faith. Hence, all the more reason why Sacred Heart education must always expose its students to sacred Scripture, to the teachings of the Church, to the writings of great religious leaders of the past and present, and to other religious traditions. In this way, Sacred Heart educators lay a firm foundation for the life of faith, which their students must ultimately embrace for themselves.

At the end of the eighteenth century, St. Madeleine Sophie saw clearly the evils of society. She believed that if each student and teacher could know the interior dispositions of the

Heart of Christ, attributes such as love, compassion, mercy, joy, and hope, they would not only become more like Christ, but they would also *act* more like Christ and have a profound influence upon the world in which they lived. St. Madeleine Sophie knew from her own prayer life that the more deeply one came to know the person of Jesus, the more deeply one felt the call to work toward the building of the Kingdom of God. For St. Madeleine Sophie, that work took the form of educating young women in academies and in poor schools attached to those academies.

The injustices in the world may change with time, but the call to work towards the building of the Kingdom does not. The more deeply one develops a personal faith, the more one begins to see and experience the world as Jesus did. One's inner eye becomes the eye of Jesus. One sees the poor, the marginalized, those who suffer from injustice or who are oppressed, and one cannot simply stand by and watch. One's faith, one's personal relationship with God, moves one to live his or her faith in an active way, to do something about the injustices in the world. To work toward building the Kingdom of God becomes imperative to anyone who wishes to follow Jesus, and it must be the work of every generation.

The building of community as a Christian value is not only inherent to Sacred Heart education, but it is a direct mandate of the Gospel. To live as Jesus lived requires that each one grow in his or her understanding and appreciation of others. Sacred Heart students of the twenty-first century will need more than ever to be builders of community as they live in a more global and interdependent world. The mobility of both today's work force and the work force of the future will require that individuals be able to build community in whatever job they do. As the world becomes more and more diverse, they will also need to appreciate cultural, ethical and religious differences in order to create a sense of community. In this century, the deterioration of the family unit has been a driving force in undermining an individual's sense of belonging. As

Sacred Heart students enter the twenty-first century, they will need more than ever the tools for battling the forces that destroy a sense of family and a sense of community. They will need to believe and own that it is their responsibility to create community wherever they are.

St. Madeleine Sophie and the first members of the Society of the Sacred Heart saw a need to educate the young women of France, who would have influence on the next generation and hence, upon the political, social and cultural milieu of nineteenth century France. In St. Madeleine Sophie's words, "Education must be concerned not only with studies but also with whatever may be required for the right ordering of life and requirements of cultivated society." The mission of Sacred Heart schools has always included imparting to students a strong intellectual foundation. However, the course of studies was meant to do more than simply impart knowledge to students. The course of studies, the daily routine and life of the school, every aspect of a student's experience at school, was meant to develop within them a love of learning. A finished product was never the aspiration of these educators. As Janet Erskine Stuart asserted "Our education is not meant to turn the children out small and finished, but seriously begun on a wide-basis. Therefore, they must leave us with some self-knowledge, some energy, some purpose...If they leave us without these three things they drift with the stream of life." These women sought to give their students the knowledge and the tools and skills needed for being responsible and contributing citizens. Creating within a student the desire for knowledge and understanding was of utmost importance because then a person would for a lifetime continue to seek opportunities for learning. Developing each student's gifts and interests was paramount. In Mother Stuart's educational conference she further stated "We must remember that each one of our children is destined for a mission in life. Neither we nor they can know what it is, but we must know and make them believe that each one has a mission in life and that she is bound to

find out what it is, that there is some special work for God which will remain undone unless she does it, some place in life which no one else can fill....We must bring home to our children and to ourselves the responsibilities of our gifts. We must put our talents at interest, not bury them in the earth and the reason is sufficient, that they are God's."

As the twenty-first century begins, the world can be characterized by rapid change, an abundance of information and global connections. The call to develop young people who are lifelong learners, who are capable of discerning the information needed for their own knowledge and growth, and who appreciate and are capable of thriving in diverse environments, seems to be greater than ever. More than ever the world needs people who believe that they have "a mission in life, some special work for God which will remain undone unless she does it...." In whatever generation, the work of the Sacred Heart educator will be to convey an understanding of the content of the body of knowledge available to humanity, but more importantly it will be to give each student some self-knowledge, some energy, and a sense of purpose in life.

For St. Madeleine Sophie, education was formation, the formation of the mind, the heart, and the soul. To her, it made little sense to educate only one part of the person and not the whole. For generations, students have come as they are to Sacred Heart schools and each has been loved, cared for, and nurtured. St. Madeleine Sophie knew well that to educate was to draw out of each one all that God had created the person to be. To educate young people who are willing to share their knowledge, their love, and their gifts in the developing a better world will always be essential to Sacred Heart education. To give to the world young people of integrity, young people who show concern and respect for others, young people with a deep faith in God, young people who live out of both their hearts and their minds will always be at the heart of the mission of Sacred Heart educators. However, to do this will require that Sacred Heart educators develop

within the students self-knowledge and a sense of purpose so that they will be able to share with the world, and to share with courage and conviction, their gifts of faith, intellect, compassion, and integrity with courage and conviction.

In 1833, St. Madeleine Sophie wrote to Mother d’Avenas, “If you only knew how much the Society needs *saintes savantes* you would hurry up and become one. Here in the Roman noviceship we have a number of saints but of savantes, not one. It is all well to lay the foundation of solid virtue but only the union of virtue with learning will give our work its perfection. Unite these two things closely and you will understand the whole extent of your vocation.” Philippine Duchesne offered the same insight: “You may dazzle the mind with a thousand brilliant discoveries of natural science. You may open new worlds of knowledge which were never dreamed before. Yet, if you have not developed in the soul of the child strong habits of virtue which will sustain her in the struggles of life, you have not educated her but only put in her hand a powerful instrument of self-destruction.”

Both St. Madeleine Sophie and St. Philippine Duchesne recognized that it was necessary to educate the whole person, and for two hundred years, following in their footsteps, Sacred Heart educators have sought to develop the mind, the heart, and the soul of each person. The mission has been clear: to educate young people to be all that God intended them to be, to give them a clear sense of their purpose in life, to instill in them a sense of their responsibility for others and the world in which they live, to inspire in them a desire to learn and to share their knowledge with others; in essence, to help them to learn how to live out of their minds and their hearts with confidence and with a sense of purpose. At the beginning of the twenty-first century and a new millennium, with all the challenges and issues that await the next generation and those to come, it seems that the world is more than ever in need of what St. Madeleine Sophie clearly

saw in 1833, *saintes savantes*, learned saints, young men and women who are able to live out of their minds and hearts with confidence and a sense of purpose for the greater glory of God.

Lynne Lieux, RSCJ, attended the Academy of the Sacred Heart, Grand Coteau, and Maryville; she is high school principal at the Academy of the Sacred Heart, New Orleans.

Internationality in the Society of the Sacred Heart

Mary Blish, RSCJ

The early promises of the international aspect of the Society of the Sacred Heart can be found in Madeleine Sophie Barat who as a young religious found herself on fire to be a missionary. In 1806 she wrote to Philippine Duchesne that as she stood near the harbor at Bordeaux and watched the ships, she dreamed that the two of them were “setting out to convert the savages,” but she knew it was only a dream for herself. She would prepare Philippine as well as she could to replace her.

These first missionaries, like many after them, sometimes did not master the new language, but all had the distinct purpose of living and spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart, making known the love of God manifest in Jesus Christ, particularly through the work of education, whether for young women whose families sought a more classical education for their daughters, or for those in the free schools, or for Indians (beloved of Philippine).

In 1853 an RSCJ from Eden Hall traveled with Ana du Rousier to found the first South American Sacred Heart Convent: Santiago, Chile. Just as the first foundation in St. Charles, Missouri, was followed by those across North America, so that in Chile was followed in the nineteenth century by houses in Peru (1874) and Argentina (1880), and in the twentieth century by those in Brazil (1904), Colombia (1907), Uruguay (1908) and Venezuela (1961). RSCJ from the United States served in all of them, some thirty-eight

taking the long journey to the southern end of South America before 1900, with most remaining in their adopted country until death.

Also during the nineteenth century, foundations in Cuba (1858), Puerto Rico (1880) and Mexico (1883) were made from American vicariates, with large numbers of RSCJ from North America serving in these houses both long and short term. And in 1880 a group left St. Louis to make the first Sacred Heart foundation in Oceania – Timaru, New Zealand; of the twelve who served in New Zealand and Australia (1882), eight never returned to the United States. All these, like most RSCJ foundations in new areas, included religious of several nationalities.

In the early years of the twentieth century, RSCJ from the United States continued to go to the Antilles, Mexico and South America – fifty religious went off to these houses in the twenty years after 1900. Beginning in the 1920s, many went to join religious from Oceania and Europe in Japan where a house had been established in 1908; other Asian countries followed: China (1926), India (1939), Korea (1956), Taiwan (1962), the Philippines (1969) and Indonesia (1991), with more than sixty American religious serving in these countries during the twentieth century. Also, in the years since 1950, twenty RSCJ from the United States have joined those from elsewhere in African countries, principally in Uganda (1962), Kenya (1973) and Congo/Zaire (1927). Currently, religious from the United States Province serve in twelve other countries, including the first foundation in the twenty-first century, Verrettes in Haiti.

The early Asian houses were in non-Christian lands. As an example, Japan remains today a country where all Christians number fewer than 1% of the population.

However, Sacred Heart education there is strong although the percentage of Christians in the schools is small. The active religious in the Japan Province now are virtually all natives. Most received the gift of faith while they were in school and were baptized, often as the first Christians in their families. In the summer of 2000 that province offered a workshop on the Japanese spiritual heritage. Twenty-two RSCJ and a lay educator from Japan, Europe, North America, Africa, and Australia attended. After her return, one of the organizers wrote: "The workshop was not meant to be about internationality, yet together we found that the Society's insight that internationality is at the heart of our charism was being enfolded in a new way among us." The riches implied by this are illustrated in these comments by participants.

Dorothy McMichael, RSCJ, wrote: "Sister Yayoi Hayami's talk left me with much to ponder. . . . For example: westerners hear the sound of the bell. Asians hear the echoes of silence after the bell has ceased to ring: 'listening to the echoes of silence' or listening to 'No Sound.' In nature we listen to the echoes of silence. In art Zen ink paintings always include blank space which gives life to the painted forms. In the famous Zen garden of Ryoanji, there is vast empty space with 15 rocks of various sizes placed like islands in a vast sea of white pebbles. Contemplating the empty space has a calming effect and emphasizes how complicated and cluttered are most of our lives. I plan to establish more blank space on every level. We have much to learn from the East about contemplative prayer.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to have a truly international experience – to be in a city where I could not read any of the signs, hadn't a clue how to use a bus, the

subway, or the telephone, and where I could not understand any of the conversation around me. In the train station I felt like a native from a jungle village exposed to a sophisticated civilization for the first time. It is good to have this experience and to be totally dependent on others. It is also good to enter into another culture where customs are so different from our own."

Sachiko Tanase, RSCJ, commented, "I must point out that Christianity, in its two thousand-year history, unfortunately, has encouraged the development of colonization. The attitude which regards Christianity, or maybe Christendom, as the Absolute has certainly been connected with political and economic colonization. I believe that God is Absolute, however, neither the culture in which Christianity is molded nor the race that developed it, is. Do know that I am not blaming Christianity or the Western Culture which has so greatly influenced Christianity as we know it today. Nor do I overlook our own Japanese history of invasion and colonization which is such a great source of sorrow for me. Rather, I emphasize here how harmful it is to regard one's own perspective as absolute. To do so is to stand in opposition to God who created a variety of people in God's own image, as revelatory of God's own Mystery."

Finally, Georgiana Logan RSCJ, one of the organizers, summed up: "Truly, the fabric of the Society around the world was strengthened this summer by the interweaving of our lives. The quality of the hospitality, interaction, prayer, reflection, conversation, humor, curiosity, gratitude and love that was exchanged over the course of twenty-one days by twenty-two people reinforced and revived who we are as a whole Society. We are no longer strangers or distant relations. For one another and for all those that each of

us belongs to, we all count. The Spirit of Christ/the Spirit of God which Sophie followed so faithfully is alive among, within, around and through us. As this small international gathering of RSCJ, seeking to deepen our life in Christ by taking the road to Japan, shared a bowl of rice, a cup of tea, and the story of our lives, our hearts were left burning within us. I certainly left Japan feeling like my heart had been bathed in the love of Christ and of my sisters."

Over the two centuries during which the initial seeds of internationality have become rooted in the Society and flowered in countries on all continents around the globe, the external forms of religious life in the Society have changed from those of a French convent, with further restrictions imposed by canon law, to those suited to the countries and cultures of the local people. According to the 1970 Chapter Document, internationality "will require understanding, respect for the character of each country, and a common effort to strengthen the bonds which unite us in the Spirit...[I]n a divided world, where the Church seeks ever more to bring about the reconciliation of all [persons] in Christ, our unity will be a sign of fellowship open to all." This sign of fellowship is experienced in the warm welcome received by RSCJ wherever they go and is evident to all. The indication of its strength is best seen in the spirit of co-responsibility and sharing among the religious and with those among whom they carry on their various ministries.

Mary Blish, RSCJ, attended Maryville; she was on the faculty of the University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, and now assists with research projects.

**Thoughts on Culture and Mission:
The Spirit of Internationality**

Judith Vollbrecht RSCJ, 1997

I have tended to think of globalization as positive, as a growing awareness of and openness to other cultural ways of being and relating, as respect for other life-experiences, and reverence for other God-experiences; as carrying the seeds of world peace, an end to hunger and a revitalization of our planet earth.

Lately, I have been forced to admit that present realities are moving in quite other directions. So I ask: Must modern technology and western secular values engulf and smother thousands of years of cultural traditions, highly developed forms of social organization, languages, religious rituals? Can others adopt or adapt benefits of western technology, yet withstand our extreme individualism and not be chewed up and assimilated as individuals (and whole countries and cultures) within the global economic system? What is mission in this context?

We cannot know our own culture until we have been outside of it, until we have experienced its effect from within another culture. We go to another culture, not really to bring anything, but to learn more fully what it means to say the Word of God became human and pitched His tent among us. We learn new ways of being loved by God and responding to that love. We become more human ourselves, more catholic, more humble. And we bring Emmanuel to that new place, for in us our hosts also see the face of God in a new way. They may want to incorporate what they see into their own lives and culture.

When we return home, the moment arrives when we truly become missionaries; seeing the truth of our own culture more clearly in the light of the Gospel and our cross-cultural experience, we are ready to proclaim the good news. If this is true, then the missionary call is to be prophet to our own people. For us, does that mean to challenge the extreme individualism that masks a loss both of the sense of the value of each individual person and of the meaning of community?

Sister Virginia Fabella, in her address to the 1996 Conference of the U.S. Catholic Mission Association, suggested that we need a new paradigm of the Trinity as the Source and End of mission. The Christian revelation that God is Trinity, rather than reinforcing a hierarchical structure, startles us with its affirmation that God is a community of interrelated Persons! Individualism has no place. Each One Exists for the others; their shared Life and Love is an overflowing fountain and we and our world are the result of that overflow. God's Life becomes a fountain in us as well, springing up to everlasting life, and overflowing into the lives of those around us.

Jesus shows us the meaning of the call to be human: service, compassion, interdependence, vulnerability, companionship, prayer, living the truth even in the face of hostility. Or, perhaps, standing with those on the margins of society, building communities of faith and hope that cross boundaries of class, race, wealth, gender, language, and culture. I can do this in other countries and cultures, and be applauded. Have I the courage to be a missionary in my own country?

Judith Vollbrecht, RSCJ, attended Eden Hall (Philadelphia) and Newton College; she is a member of the community in Haiti, the first foundation by the Religious of the Sacred Heart in a new country in the 21st century.

The Society in Indonesia

Mary Ann Flynn, RSCJ

From its early days, the Society of the Sacred Heart has had to meet the persistent challenge of responding to apostolic needs with limited numbers of personnel to fulfill its involvement in its many diverse works. Why, then, at the end of the 1980s, would the Society begin a new venture in Southeast Asia?

Actually, in 1938, following several different requests for the Society to establish a foundation in Indonesia, a small group of Religious of the Sacred Heart from the Netherlands had secured passage for Indonesia, formally the Dutch East Indies. The outbreak of World War II prevented the mission from taking place, and this dream deferred was only realized in 1988, the year of Philippine Duchesne's canonization.

To honor Philippine's sainthood and missionary zeal, the Society looked for a project that would relate her frontier spirit to our day. After lengthy investigations and prayer, Indonesia was chosen. A developing nation struggling economically and politically to find its voice in the modern world, Indonesia seemed to beckon us. Jakarta, the capital of this diverse and deeply religious country, was chosen as the place to begin the mission. The first religious thought that living in the capital would give them a sense of the entire country, rather than of just one region.

Fifty years after the Society in the Netherlands tried to start a foundation and 160 years after Philippine's arrival in the New World, the actual work of the Society in Indonesia began in February 1989 when Sister Nance O'Neil, RSCJ, began teaching and studying language at the University of Atma Jaya. This university is unique in the country, founded by Catholic laity

more than thirty years ago because they wanted to offer something of value to the development of the nation. Education is what they embraced as their contribution.

In Jakarta, Sister O'Neil lived with the Ursuline Sisters, a situation reminiscent of the early days of Mother Duchesne and her stay with the Ursulines in New Orleans when she first arrived in the New World. After a year and a half, the Society was able to begin its own community when Sister Barbara Dawson, RSCJ, also from the United States Province, joined the burgeoning mission. Soon Sister Chizuyo Inoue, RSCJ, came from Japan and worked with the language institute associated with Atma Jaya to begin a Japanese language program. Our community grew and quickly became a truly international group. RSCJ from England, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and the United States have been part of the community during these foundation years.

In addition to our formal university teaching, our commitments have grown to put us in contact with many groups in this rich and varied culture. We have tried to respond to specific needs, such as the request to teach English to groups of social workers and nurses who needed to learn English to communicate with international visitors or to study abroad. This opened the door, in turn, for our ongoing work, in collaboration with the Jesuit-founded Social Institute of Jakarta, of assisting factory workers and other disadvantaged groups, chiefly the street children who have become a primary focus of our work. In response to subsequent requests, we have been able to provide classes for seminarians, informal teaching of street children, translations, retreats, prayer groups, and workshops.

The stories of the street children remind us of Philippine and her "urchins." One example is Edi. We first knew Edi when he was about seven or eight years old. He had run away from

home and had to make his own way in the capital. But, of course, when he came to Jakarta, the big city, like the other countless thousands of street children, boys and girls, Edi discovered there was no work, no place to live, and nothing to eat. It was through the Social Institute of Jakarta, where Sister Inoue was working, that we met Edi and many others. Through the help of the Children's Bureau of the Institute Edi, along with many other young boys, learned to work by day, shining shoes, helping at food stands, or selling newspapers. Like many others, he became involved in minor crimes and drug abuse, but he always seemed to come back for the help he needed and the love he received. Eventually, Edi found his family again, and, through a long struggle, he has decided, at the age of seventeen, that he wants to read so that he can be a driver. Edi is a fine young teenager facing a future full of hope.

Eventually, young Indonesian women whom we knew through teaching and other involvement began to join our community for regular days of prayer. After several of them had a “live-in” experience, we actually began our formation program, finding our way with the help of St. Madeleine Sophie and the Holy Spirit as we tried to honor the culture and Church of Indonesia. In January 2000, a novitiate opened, and currently, there are two novices. The formation program focuses on honoring the national and ecclesial culture of those in formation while sharing with them the spirit and international character of the Society. Several young religious from other countries have made their pre-Probation experience in Indonesia, and more than sixty RSCJ have come to help or to visit on their way to or from some place else.

Indonesia as a nation has undergone immense upheaval, change, and suffering, and now is at the threshold of a new beginning. It is the fourth largest nation in the world, and the largest Muslim nation, with a ninety percent Muslim population. Indonesia is a nation of young people

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who are about to take the future of their country in their hands. We feel extremely privileged to be among them and to learn from them, and to be able to contribute anything we can to their future – in service of the vision and mission of St. Madeleine Sophie and St. Philippine Duchesne.

Sister Mary Ann Flynn, RSCJ, Villa Duchesne and Maryville, served in Indonesia from 1994 to 1998. She is assigned to the Spiritual Ministry Center in San Diego, California.

[190 words]

The Newest Mission: RSCJ in Haiti

Mary Blish, RSCJ

In 1987 Virginia McMonagle, RSCJ, joined a priest and several others in a project that resulted in an orphanage and a hospital for infants in an area near Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Since then she and Anita Von Wellsheim, RSCJ, have visited Haiti many times for periods of several weeks or months. Additionally, lay volunteers from fifteen countries, most of them young professionals, give their time and talents to care for the children. Sister McMonagle wrote: "We have our own little League of Nations who generously and lovingly pour out their love and service to our little and not-so-little Brothers and Sisters in Haiti. Several RSCJ have come to offer their services and support dating back to our very first year when two from Venezuela came for the summer."

Now, since January 2000, RSCJ have a permanent presence in Haiti, the first country to be added to the Society's directory in the twenty-first century. Judith Vollbrecht, RSCJ, who previously had served in Uganda/Kenya, joined two from the province of Puerto Rico to open a house in Verrettes; there they will gain experience of the culture and language before deciding on a long-range project.

[1296 words]

Claiming Our Heritage: What Is It We Are Claiming?

Sally M. Furay, RSCJ

This was the keynote address at the Associated Alumnae and Alumni of the Sacred Heart Western Regional Conference Los Angeles, June 20, 1998.

“What Is It We Are Claiming?” It is a significant question, but it is not important for its own sake. In fact, it could be a self-indulgent question, unless we take the next step and ask “Why claim our heritage?”

It is a strange word, heritage. In its narrower sense, it often means “lot or portion by birth,” that is, something about which we can do nothing except receive it. But we more often use it, as here, in its broader sense of values or traditions passed from earlier generations: for example, our American heritage or our democratic heritage, our Catholic or Christian or Jewish or other religious heritage, our family heritage, and so on. Much of this is something we could not and did not choose for ourselves initially, though we can confirm and celebrate that heritage later – or even reject or ignore it.

I said earlier that “What Is It We Are Claiming?” could be a self-indulgent question, and I meant it. If I claim any heritage – American, democratic, Catholic, family, Sacred Heart – in order to bask in it, to pride myself on it, to feel superior to those who do not have it, I am abusing or violating that heritage in a very real way. In the meaning of heritage in its broad sense, that is, values or traditions passed from earlier generations, there is an implicit assumption that what I have received will in turn be passed on by or through me to future generations. That is the nature of a heritage. Hence, when we claim it, we accept a solemn responsibility: what I have been given must be passed on to others. This is the reason we claim a heritage. Thus, implicit in the question “What Is It We are Claiming?” is an obligation to the future. We have a duty or, even stronger, a mandate – to pass along what we

have received; we are accountable to those who came before us and answerable to those who come after us.

In preparation for this talk, I sent a request several months ago to a dozen or more women in the southwest whom I believe have an understanding of the charism and mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Some are currently involved with Sacred Heart alumnae groups, others are communicating the heritage they have received in other ways. I sought their insights on the nature of the Sacred Heart heritage we are claiming, asking them to respond to one or several of the following questions in ways which would capture their sense of the heritage and what it means to the person responding:

- How would you describe the Sacred Heart heritage?
- How has it been transmitted to you?
- What is your sense of its constituent elements?
- How has the heritage empowered your life?
- Are there identifying factors which have enabled you to recognize the heritage?
- How can this heritage shape our future?

The comments moved me and inspired me. These are generous, caring women... united with Christ in their own way, empowered in their service of family and others, giving freely to all those around them the gifts of intelligence, education, and faith which they have received from God, from their families, and from their education.

Their responses to the way in which the Sacred Heart heritage is transmitted struck a resonant chord in me. Years ago, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Society of the Sacred Heart focused on the mandate of Vatican Council II to religious congregations within the Church to renew themselves in the spirit and charism of their founder or foundress. In community discussions, in general meetings and chapters, RSCJ probed the charism of St. Madeleine Sophie; where is it to be found? How do we identify it so it can be communicated? There was a lot of wisdom and insight in those discussions. My own conclusion, strengthened in the years since, is that the charism, though subject to some articulation which does not

convey the whole of it, inheres in the people and is transmitted through them. Many respondents to my survey said the same thing, that is, that the spirit and charism are transmitted by contact with RSCJ and with others whose lives have been permeated by the charism. Others spoke of communication by example and by subtle expectation. Still another spoke of enduring affection, almost unconditional love. The spirit of the Sacred Heart, they said, creates a common bond – tangible, empowering, open-minded, steadfast.

Certain themes were repeatedly cited concerning the nature of the Sacred Heart heritage as respondents to the survey felt this heritage impacted their lives; I will touch upon seven categories which they highlighted.

Spirituality: gratitude for God’s personal love and for the caring and deep affection from RSCJ and from other Sacred Heart alums; witness of prayer life and recognition that Christ’s love lives as we live the heritage;

Generosity, Commitment, Service: total dedication to the task at hand; giving to others the gifts received; awareness of the world, its trends and its needs; the importance of influencing others for good, one by one – spouse, children, friends, neighbors, associations, – all geared to improving the human condition for the billions around the world, all of whom are God’s people;

Empowerment: instilling self-respect and self-confidence, being “happy with one’s self,” and working to empower others; ability to take leadership in large or small ways, to make a difference, to implement change;

Excellence: intellectual breadth and depth; fostering of responsibility for solid principles and values, for high standards and goals;

Respect for others: all are God’s creations and God’s presence in the world and should be treated with the courtesy and caring which acknowledge God’s continuing life in us;

Discipline: order in life, without which there is little ability to function; the importance of beauty, which comes through order, harmony, truth;

Internationality: the increasing significance of inclusion, of acceptance and celebration of diversity.

Where much has been given, much is expected. I said earlier, and I say it again, that “What Is It We Are Claiming?” could be a self-indulgent question. Implicit in the question is an obligation to the future. I give you again this challenge: we have a duty – or, even stronger, a mandate – to pass along what we have received; we are accountable to those who came before us and answerable to those who come after us.

The turn of the century brings us the two hundredth anniversary of God’s gift to St. Madeleine Sophie Barat of the charism and spirit of the Society of the Sacred Heart. This charism and spirit which she gave to us and which all of us transmit to others will remain the same, as it always has. But the expression of the spirit and charism will be different, both in our own country and around the world as the Society celebrates its internationality. Gifted with participation in the charism and spirit of the Society, Sacred Heart alumnae and alumni are called to be leaders for tomorrow as they have been for today and yesterday – by the depth of their personal lives with God, and by witnessing to that inner life in all their efforts to communicate what they have received through the Sacred Heart heritage. I leave you with the message of hope expressed in the words from St. John’s Gospel which Reverend Mother Rosalie Hill gave as a motto to the former College for Women of the University of San Diego: “That they may all be one.” There can be no finer expression of the “common bond” which characterises the Sacred Heart heritage.

Sally Furay, RSCJ, attended Duchesne Academy and College, Omaha; she was provost of the University of San Diego and is an educational consultant.

[302 words]

AASH

The Associated Alumnae and Alumni of the Sacred Heart (AASH) is an organization of all alumnae and alumni of present and former schools and colleges directly associated with the Religious of the Sacred Heart in the United States and parts of Canada.

AASH was founded in 1933 when the first national gathering of alumnae took place in St. Louis, Missouri. With alumnae associations of individual schools emerging and doing so much good, and with federations forming such as the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae (IFSCA) and the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW), whose first president was a Sacred Heart alumna, it was not surprising that Sacred Heart alumnae saw the value of a national association based on “federation, spirit, and service.” In her letter of greeting to the gathering, the Superior General of the Society, Manuela Vicente, RSCJ, suggested the group motto of *Pietas, Caritas, Magnanimitas*.

Currently, with more than 50,000 members and fifty member associations in twenty-seven states and British Columbia, AASH attempts to foster a spirit of unity and ongoing communication among alumnae and alumni and their respective associations throughout the nation and the world. AASH supports and promotes the Network of Sacred Heart Schools and other ministries served by the Society of the Sacred Heart. AASH commits itself to nurturing in its members dedication to faith development, intellectual values, respect for personal integrity, social justice, and the unique philosophy of life that is rooted in the Christian vision of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat.

AASH is governed by a regionally balanced board of directors. The group sponsors national and regional conferences, has a national office in St. Louis, sponsors a web-site, and

offers college and career networking. In 1995, AASH changed its name to recognize the many male graduates who are part of its membership.

[247 words]

AMASC

Association Mondiale des Anciennes du Sacre Coeur (AMASC), the World Association of Alumnae of the Sacred Heart, was founded in 1960 at the request of the Superior General, Sabine deValon, RSCJ, who saw what an important and vital role alumnae worldwide could play in fostering the work and the spirit of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

AMASC unites hundreds of thousands of Sacred Heart alumnae in:

Argentina	England	Netherlands
Australia	France	New Zealand
Austria	Germany	Peru
Belgium	Hungary	Philippines
Brazil	India	Poland
Canada	Ireland	Scotland
Chile	Italy	Spain
Columbia	Japan	Taiwan
Congo	Korea	USA
Costa Rica	Malta	Uruguay
Cuba in Exile	Mexico	Venezuela

AMASC is a member of World Organization of Former Pupils of Catholic Education (OMAEEC) and of World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (UMOFC-WUWCO.)

A president, vice president, and board of advisors direct AMASC. Worldwide meetings are held every four years to address social, moral and religious issues and determine appropriate

responses and action in light of Gospel values. The meetings also offer an experience of the ineffable bond alumnae of the Sacred Heart share. An ongoing fund-raiser of saving stamps allows alumnae of third-world countries to attend the meetings.

AMASC sponsors a web-site as well as an international hospitality program, begun and organized by an American alumna. AMASC is gratified by the thought that at the new millennium, the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights as well as the High Commissioner of Refugees are alumnae of the Sacred Heart.

Hearts to Heart: Associates of the Society of the Sacred Heart

Catherine Bouzon

As stated in the documents of the General Chapter of the Society of the Sacred Heart, 1994, Religious of the Sacred Heart have the deep conviction that their spirituality does not belong to them alone. It is a gift to be shared, a treasure others help us to discover. The religious in the United States answered the challenge of the 1994 General Chapter to share their spirituality with lay colleagues through the Associates Program.

Begun in 1995, this new initiative now involves more than seventy-five women and men across the country. Through collaboration and collegiality, RSCJ and associates are discovering what lay spirituality will look like in the twenty-first century. Associates draw on the wellsprings of the Society's history and charism; RSCJ walk "shoulder to shoulder" with associates to explore their shared vocation to holiness and mission. Together they risk being changed as they allow new perspectives, new language, even new rituals to emerge.

The program includes: personal reading and reflection, regular input on the history and charism of the Society, and gatherings several times a year for mutual support and reflection. As associates we explore ways of living the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus according to the spirit of the Society. Through a deepening of our sense of mission within professional commitments of life and a familiarity with the Society's mission and Chapter documents, we share a common mission of making known the love of God. Through regular personal prayer, association with a spiritual director, yearly retreats, and faith-sharing among religious and associates, we continue to search out a faith that gives significance and pattern to life. Through a commitment to build communion within one's own personal and professional relationships and a growing awareness of the poor and marginalized of our society, we stand in solidarity in service to a suffering world.

In these ways, association with the Society is a choice to respond more fully to one's lay vocation to live the Gospel in the world through a life of prayer and mission.

In the New Orleans area, the Associates Program evolved slowly and through the work of the Spirit. The RSCJ had welcomed me into their hearts and homes for weekly liturgy and dinner, attentively caring about my joys and struggles of raising two daughters as a single parent. They became friends in the truest sense. I attended more formal events such as eight-day retreats with the nuns, the RSCJ co-workers program, vows ceremonies and liturgies in Philippine's Shrine, and quad area meetings on the charism of the Society and prayer. Whether through ordinary or special events, the charism has made its presence known in the gentlest way. In due time, the Society's mission, opportunities for shared prayer, and gatherings of mutual support came together in a formalized Associates Program. For me it was a moment I had long awaited.

Over the past ten years I had prayed that the Spirit would lead me, a lay-person, to a deeper relationship with the Society of the Sacred Heart, to a better understanding of the roots of St. Madeleine Sophie's vision. This desire to know the Society goes back to a specific moment in 1989 when I had the privilege to celebrate the liturgy at Oakwood, the RSCJ retirement community in California. As I sat among the legends of the Society, I felt an awe for something I could not name. There seemed to be something very profound in being there, enjoying our mutual presence as friends and strangers, just "breathing the same air." A simple moment became very holy. Later I came to realize that what I felt then, and often feel today, is the magnetic quality of the charism of women devoted to making the love of Christ known in today's world, wherever they might be.

This magnetic charism is an amazing thing. As I look back I realize that the seeds of this awe go back to the thirteen years I spent at the Rosary as a student. There I knew firsthand the

deep love and nurturing of many RSCJ, at a time in my life when I needed it most. The seeds also come from the ten years I have spent as an administrator in our school, where the vision and mission of the Society are thriving. In both instances, the formation process has been gradual and deeply meaningful. In both instances, I have come to know the idea of "the life lived" at a deep, personal level. I know it and feel it in moments when the simple is made holy. The Associates Program weaves together the threads of invitation, mutual presence, the simple made holy, and commitment to "the life lived."

Through our gatherings three or four times a year I see untapped possibilities to study the history of the Society through dialogue with RSCJ, to delve into the beauty of St. Madeleine Sophie's vision that thrives amidst the chaos in today's world, to deepen my own faith journey inward and outward, to give back the gift I have received through many years of Sacred Heart education and the blessings of RSCJ friends, and to get at the roots of how the Heart can be made known in and through my life.

I know my hopes and needs that the Associates Program can address, but at our first meeting I questioned, what do the RSCJ expect from me as an associate? What can I possibly give to them? The answer was both simple and profound. They said, "You can help us understand how the Heart of Christ touches your daily life and how you live out the call to make the Heart known in today's world as a lay person, parent, fellow journeyer." And all I could think was, "This has to be the Spirit at work!" As we look at the energy inherent in the new millennium we have great opportunities to celebrate our bicentennial as RSCJ and associates. It is a great joy to be part of a groundswell in which RSCJ and lay colleagues find new ways to walk hearts to Heart. I feel privileged to join them in the journey.

Catherine Bouzon attended the Academy of the Sacred Heart, New Orleans, where she is principal of the lower school.

Children of Mary Sodality

There have been sodalities to honor Our Lady in Sacred Heart schools probably from the beginning. But early on, those who had finished their education felt the need for such an association in their new lives. In 1832, a group in Lyons, France, took the initiative and asked Madeleine Sophie: can we establish a sodality separate from that of the boarding school? Can others who did not go to a Sacred Heart school but who have the same spirit join us? And can these receive the same official approbation as the school sodality has? The answer was yes to all the questions. The aim, as in all sodalities of Our Lady, was to help women persevere in faith, in piety, in charity and modesty, to encourage them to fulfill the duties of their state of life, and to bring them spiritual help in the difficulties consolations, and sorrows of life.

Earlier, at the school joined to the motherhouse in Paris, the school sodality had chosen a motto, “Cor meum jungatur vobis,” which was incorporated into the special medal struck in 1824 with the Sacred Heart on one side and the Immaculate Conception on the other. One of the first to receive this medal was Madeleine de Laureal who moved to St. Louis after her marriage and was present when the adult sodality of the Children of Mary was established in St. Louis in 1853 (her grandchild, Nancy Bakewell, was cured miraculously in 1867 and that miracle counted for the beautification of St. Madeleine Sophie, May 25, 1908).

Adult Children of Mary pledge themselves to personal prayer, lives of service in a way appropriate to their position in life, and a shared, corporate service when this is possible. For the first century of the sodality, this was often a Tabernacle Society providing for the needs of poor and mission churches. But more importantly, the members are to be creative in individual efforts and in cooperation with good works. In general, it is a service organization as well as one which

deepens the life of prayer and the life of holiness of the individual members, and through them the lives of their families and all with whom they associate. The members find a particular strength in their long association in a faith community centered on women. Today groups of adult Children of Mary meet in several cities in the United States.

Mater, Model for the Millennium

Catherine Baxter, RSCJ

This was the keynote address at the AASH Western Regional Meeting, May 5-7, 2000 in Scottsdale, Arizona.

I remember one day when I was a junior in high school. In the midst of an ordinary conversation, I suddenly saw my mother differently. She became for me another person in her own right, quite distinct from her relationship to me and my needs. She became another woman with her own emotional and physical needs, with her own dreams, disappointments and limitations. We were united not only by the biological bond of mother-child, but also by a shared humanity. Perhaps you have had that experience with your own mother or with your daughter. I think that something similar happens in our relationship with Mater.

I am sure that those of you who attended St. Philippine's canonization remember the night that all Sacred Heart alumnae converged on the Trinita for a reception in numbers far greater than had been expected. Trying to find a chair or elbow one's way to the rapidly depleted food tables paled in comparison with the challenge of squeezing into the lines slowly inching their way up the stairs for the opportunity to pray before the original fresco. Hymns and prayers to Our Lady in different languages and different keys signaled to those below that one group had made room for another – and held out hope that we, too, might make it.

Thinking about that event later, I found myself wondering, "What is it about a painting on a wall, a painting that is really not great art, that is certainly not a realistic depiction of a young Jewish girl that inspires this kind of devotion?"

I think it is that the painting of Mater is for us an icon – an image that draws us into and beyond the actual representation, that serves as a gateway into deeper knowledge and experience of

God's presence and action in Mary's life and God's presence and action in our own lives.

Whenever and wherever we see the image of Mater, we touch into our own life stories. For those who attended a Sacred Heart school as a child, Mater evokes memories of the young girl you once were, memories of your teachers, your friends, pink frosted cupcakes for goûter, writing letters to Mater – maybe you even recall what kind of person you asked her to help you become, and maybe you hear God now asking you what is taking you so long to get there.

I had no childhood association with Mater. When I finally made it up the stairs to her shrine that night at the Trinita, I felt in touch once again with the young and gradually not so young nun I had been at Newton Country Day School and Carrollton and was filled with awe and gratitude for God's faithfulness during all the years of extraordinary changes that have intervened since then.

Whenever we gaze upon a reproduction of Mater, I think we see more than the lovely young girl in the pink dress, more than the distaff, the lily and the book. We see the whole mystery of Mary's life; we know that she grew up; she became a mature woman. Pauline Perdrau in 1873. painted another Mater. "Unlike the first Mater, the spinner is not beginning her labor; this depicts the skillful weaver finishing her cloth, with scissors in hand about to cut the thread. This new Mater contrasts with the lovely glowing teenager. The same youthful features have turned into an older, aged woman, living and praying on the threshold of the eternal dwelling." Step by step, throughout her life, Mary experienced the consequences of God's choice of her. Being pregnant, giving birth, watching her child grow, letting Him go when the time came for Him to leave home, watching Him die, holding His dead body. Mary, as some of you, experienced the death of her husband; she missed his love and companionship; she experienced loneliness.

But far from passively submitting or grimly enduring what happened to her, Mary, both as

the teenager depicted in *Mater Admirabilis*, and as the mature woman portrayed in *Mater at John's House*, stepped into each day and embraced her life, sure of only one thing – that her God was faithful; her God was with her. "Blessed is she who has believed that the promise of the Lord will be fulfilled" proclaimed Elizabeth, and Mary acknowledged the truth of her greeting, "My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord."

What can Mater be for us today? We are no longer school girls in the safe and secure environs of a Convent of the Sacred Heart. We live in a pretty chaotic and frightening world, a world of unprecedented problems and almost limitless possibilities. What can Mater teach us today? What are we open to learning?

At the very beginning of her existence, at that mysterious moment when her human life began in her mother's womb, we know that God drew her into a relationship of friendship and love, a relationship so intense and so intimate that it freed her to live centered in God rather than self. The power of love within her kept her face to face with God, kept her from trying to escape her fears and doubts and heartaches.

I think what she wants to show us today is to believe in ourselves, to believe that, through our baptism, we, too, are full of grace, drawn into the very life of God. We, too, are highly favored daughters in whom and for whom God has done, is doing, great things. Why should it be hard to accept that? More than thirty-five years ago we heard in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church that "All the faithful of Christ, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity. In the various types and duties of life, one and the same holiness is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God."

If we really believe that God's spirit is working in us, leading us to holiness, we can begin to

realize that union with God is ours now; fullness of life is ours now – not in some misty afterlife, not as reward for eating our vegetables, keeping our room neat or not “losing our notes.” We are never going to be loved by God more than we are at this moment. Our capacity to recognize that love, to respond to it and take delight in it may increase, but God’s love for us is steadfast, unchanging. In our uniqueness and humanness, we are called to be new manifestations of God’s holiness in our world today, in this new millennium.

Pope John Paul II, in proclaiming this a Jubilee Year, stated as its objective "to inspire in all the faithful a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal, in a context of ever more intense prayer and solidarity with one's neighbors, especially the neediest."

I think Mater challenges us to take those words seriously, to look at our attitudes, behaviors, and choices in the light of our call to holiness. Are they reflective of the mind and heart of God? Do they promote the coming of God's kingdom, of God's reign of justice and peace, in our cities and our neighborhoods, in our families and workplaces? We need to be in our time as she was in hers, prophetic women.

The role of the prophet as described by Walter Brueggemann, a contemporary Old Testament scholar, is "to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us." The prophet stands within the community and proclaims, by her life more than her words or deeds, that there is another way. The prophet goes about the business of our ordinary, daily living in an extraordinary way, a way that befits a people who have been made like unto God; a way that bespeaks a people whom God has chosen, a people for whom God's love is enough.

I think that in the new millennium, Mater also wants us to meet the challenge of living as

women of hope. Hope is not wishful thinking that things will get better “once I get my driver’s license, or my degree, or once I’m married...once the children are grown or Jack makes partner, or the mortgage is paid off – everything will be better, everything will be all right”. As we grow older we gradually recognize that there is no magic moment free of difficulties or disappointments. We experience that things do not always get better; sometimes they get worse. We need to believe, not in a time when we will be free from pain or failure, from loneliness or heartbreak, but in God’s promise that I am with you always; you are precious to Me; I hold you in the palm of My hand; fear not.

Hope enables us courageously to set about the task of our life again and again. Hope empowers us to live with the conviction that something new and dynamic has already begun through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. If we are women of hope, we will have the energy to hold together in creative tension the "already," the reality of God's reign in our midst and the reality of all that is "not yet" that we experience in our personal lives, in our society, and in our Church. Hope frees us from complacency or rigidity, from apathy or anger. A woman of hope questions the way things are and keeps on moving onward, looking outward, convinced that God never ceases calling her to a new and more abundant life

I think Mater wants us to believe, to proclaim the goodness of the Lord and the great things God has done for us, and to accept our giftedness and call to holiness. She wants us to be women of hope who point with their lives to another way of being and acting. But perhaps her strongest call is that we become women of prayer and that we not make that more difficult than it need be. God has not set us up for failure or called us into an endless cycle of searching and never finding. God is always drawing near to us in invitation and self-disclosure.

Prayer is about presence and relationship. It is not about making God present. God is already

present to us. It is the process of opening ourselves to that presence and letting it transform us.

Prayer is not about methods or formulas or resolutions or finding answers. Prayer really is not about us or our agendas. Prayer is about God, about God's presence to us and our presence to God as we are at this point in our life. The real difficulty about prayer is that it has no difficulty. There are no norms, no rules. God never ceases looking at us with love, but He needs our consent if His love is not to be powerless.

St. Madeleine Sophie, who spent many hours praying before Mater at the Trinita, wrote once to one of her nuns, "Be in peace about the state of your soul and your manner of prayer; only love and do what you please. The essential thing, and the proof of true love, is forgetfulness of self and of one's own interests; to think only of the One loved. So what difference does it make how you pray, provided that your heart is seeking the One whom you love?"

I would like to close by reading from a letter from our Mother General, Patricia Garcia de Quevedo, to the Religious of the Sacred Heart throughout the world calling us to a year of preparation for the celebration of the Society's bicentennial. "In this year of preparation may we be immersed in the Heart of God. May our contemplation be fresh and alert, our action deeply contemplative, and may both find their source in our intimacy with the mind and heart of God. From there may we be empowered to journey outwards to our brothers and sisters and to recommit ourselves to the service of God's reign of love, peace, justice and reconciliation."

Let us recommit ourselves now, asking Mater to be our guide and support, and say together the following prayer adapted from a letter of Reverend Mother deLescure:

Under the pressure of over-activity which at times consumes us, disturbs us, or scatters our energies in doing what is visible and accidental let us come to our Mater.

She is the Mother of the Invisible and the Mother of the Essential.

Let us ask her to detach us, to free us from all that is not important,

to lead us on, and to fix our gaze upon the Invisible

which her own eyes look upon:

the Invisible Presence, the Invisible Life,

the Invisible Action, the Invisible Love,

all those things which are eternal values in us

and the great realities of faith.

May she keep us throughout our busy and overcrowded days

in the radiance of things that are not seen

and firm as if we beheld the Invisible.

In the midst of non-essentials

which invite and often distract us,

we run the risk of encumbering our beings

and confusing our values.

May she give us the right understanding of the Essential

and a hunger for it.

One thing alone is necessary—

the will of God and the work of God's love.

May Mater give us this singleness of vision

so that we, too, may see

the Invisible and the Essential in all.

Catherine Baxter, RSCJ, attended Manhattanville; she is administrator at Oakwood, the RSCJ retirement community in Atherton, California.

Letter to the Society of the Sacred Heart

Helen McLaughlin, RSCJ

Easter, 1992

Dear Sisters,

As the Feast of the Sacred Heart falls at the end of June this year, I have decided to bring our annual meeting forward to another great feast, that of Easter, the day on which the Risen Lord sends us out to announce and share with all our sisters and brothers the great wealth of His Heart, the joy of His Resurrection.

All the varied events that have taken place in the world since our last meeting – natural calamities, wars, the search for democracy, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the freeing of the hostages in Lebanon and the experiences they recounted – have led me to reflect during these months on the attitudes that should characterize us as RSCJ when we discover and come face to face with suffering, pain, injustice.

I felt confirmed in my choice of the theme for this letter in listening to a homily in Tokyo and later during my visit to the Philippines where I realized more acutely the effects that natural disasters have on everyone, especially the poor. *Compassion* – our theme – is an essential aspect of our charism, an expression of our spirituality but a reality that our world has little to say about.

“Today we are more than ever conscious of being in the presence of a wounded humanity,” Father Nicholas, SJ, told us in his homily. Perhaps this is where we shall find the greatest challenge in living out our apostolic vocation. As I looked at this wounded, troubled world, this world of contrasts and suffering, I felt that the Lord’s call to us is the challenge of *compassion*; it is a call to develop in ourselves an attitude of heart in union and conformity with the wounded Heart of Jesus, this wound which never closes.

If we are called by our vocation to make known “the revelation of God’s love, whose source and symbol is for us the Heart of Christ” (*Constitutions.3*), then compassion, *Hesed*, that characteristic of God’s Heart must live in us and permeate our whole educative mission. I would like us to allow ourselves to be challenged and questioned during this reflection. It is not a question of learning something new nor of trying to understand a mystery. It is rather allowing myself to be touched and seeing with the eyes of the heart what I am experiencing and what I really feel in order to respond with compassion.

The word “compassion” means, as we know, “being stirred to the depths;” “having an anguished gut-reaction,” or “accepting to suffer with.”

Compassion concerns essentially the Heart of God who, to save wounded humanity, dared to stoop low enough to become incarnate, to be one with it. That is the great news of God’s Love. In Jesus, God’s compassion is made visible.

On several occasions the Gospel tells us that Jesus was stirred to the depths. His compassion and God’s are one. It is no mere emotional reaction, but a critical one which has the courage to react, and to act against insensitivity, against the indifference and social numbness of His time; in a word, against all that wounds humanity

The compassion of Jesus is the most radical kind of criticism, for it tells us that the wound of humanity has been taken seriously, that it is not something normal to be accepted passively. Everything in Him shows us that what lies within God’s Heart is compassion. In Jesus, suffering and love have met. He came to live God’s love, to share it at the heart of every human suffering.

Is it possible that compassion moves no one but God and God’s son, Jesus? In the New Testament, Jesus challenges all human beings to be as compassionate as He is compassionate. Is

it too much to ask of us? Why is compassion so little spoken of today? Does our world look on it as a value of the past?

But being compassionate as a way of life is far from easy. Compassion, the feeling that all humans have deep within them, is a feeling that hurts. “Suffering with” to the point of being stirred to the depths upsets our comfortable, sometimes selfish life, our indifference, our individualism. And because it upsets us, we try to lull it to sleep, to reduce it to what today we call “armchair compassion,” the kind we feel fleetingly when the television screen shows us such widespread suffering.

For the most part humankind flies to avoid suffering, to avoid all that stirs us to the depths, rather than going forward to meet it, to enter into it. But there is a contradiction within us, for we all want to be compassionate, or see ourselves as more or less compassionate. The problem is that our compassion is selective. We are compassionate, but not every suffering moves our hearts. The different characters of the parable of the Good Samaritan are all within us; we are capable both of hard-heartedness and of compassion.

In that parable Jesus does not say that the Good Samaritan was compassionate on account of a commandment, or because the wounded man was of the same race, but because he was moved. He shows us what it means to be human. To be human is to be capable of experiencing from within the suffering of the wounded person I meet on my way, and of taking action.

Compassion is a quality specifically characteristic of human nature. And yet it cannot be said that compassion is characteristic of our civilization. Compassion practiced unconditionally, without being selective, cannot fail to be dangerous and I would say even to bring revolution to our economic and political systems. It is a call to interdependence; anything happy or sad that

affects another person or country, affects me as well. When instead of interdependence it is dependence that holds sway, there is a wound, there is need for healing.

The other point that I would like to make is that compassion implies a link with justice. Being compassionate means having the courage to take a stand when circumstances require it. In certain conflicts, one side is right and the other wrong, one side is unjust, the other suffers as a result. I do not think that in such a case we can seek a consensus. Being compassionate does not mean reconciling justice and injustice, but seeing what can be done to prevent injustice.

Compassion exists, but sometimes seems blocked, dormant, and then there are grave consequences: greed, the thirst to have and possess, individualism, and so on...and these produce oppression, poverty, and injustice. “When will justice come to Athens? Justice will come when those who are not injured are as angry as those who are.”(Thucydides)

In this situation I sense a challenge for us. We have what I could call *the power of compassion*, and that power has a transforming force. It is a grace which does not impel us to control, as political and economic power can do, but to be concerned, like Christ, with the suffering of humanity, in order like Him, to heal and set free.

The power of our compassion – a compassion which is never completely pure but is intermingled with weakness – will help us to struggle against all that brings suffering to so many of our sisters and brothers. Becoming and being compassionate means becoming and being human.

We are called to live this particularly through our service of education. St. Madeleine Sophie wanted each person to become aware of truth, of love and of freedom (*Constitutions, 11*). Educating for compassion, awakening compassion in children, adolescents and adults – this is

our duty and our mission. Our world calls us to it by the very fact that it makes such efforts to put compassion to sleep, to obstruct it.

Compassion, incarnate today in our educative mission and lived in community and as community, is for me the salt our world needs to prove that our religious life still has a passion, the passion to show forth Love at the heart of every suffering.

Wherever we may be, whatever work we do, we are called to be compassionate.

To be compassionate is to heal:

- the wounds of the poor, of those on the fringes of society, of women wounded in their human dignity;
- the wounds caused by contempt, competitiveness, the consumer society;
- the victims of unjust systems of education.

And, finally, we are called to be compassionate towards nature, for it too is wounded by human greed and neglect.

During Holy Week we have been contemplating the pierced Heart of Christ, and this has led us to contemplate the Christ who suffers in our brothers and sisters today. Let us allow ourselves to be touched, to be stirred to the depths. Isaiah tells us: “In his wounds we have been healed” and this word, this conviction, gives us new life and new hope, as well as the courage to be women of hope, women of compassion.

A Happy Easter – A Happy Feast of the Resurrection to everyone!

With much love
Helen McLaughlin, RSCJ
Superior General

Helen McLaughlin, RSCJ, of the Ireland-Scotland Province, was Superior General of the Society of the Sacred Heart, 1982-1994; she is director of the House of Prayer, Edinburgh.

A Blessing

O Holy Spirit,
 you breathed into the heart of Sophie Barat,
 we call your blessing upon the North,
 the land of snow and ice,
 of clarity, of the midnight Sun,
 of cold and cleansing wind.
 Bless the peoples of the North, of Canada,
 of the Scandinavian countries of Northern Europe,
 of the Asiatic steppes, of the frozen Arctic -
 Bless our sisters in Sweden, Netherlands, Germany,
 Poland, Belgium, Britain, Ireland
 and Russia, All who live in northern lands.

O Holy Spirit,
 you have inspired our mother and sister,
 Sophie Barat,
 we call your blessing upon the East,
 the land of dawn and the Rising Sun,
 of new beginnings and of hope for better days.
 Bless the peoples of the East
 you who are Orient from on high -
 Bless our sisters in Japan, in Mainland China,
 in Taiwan, Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines,
 the Middle East.
 Fill them with the breath of your love
 and with the ever-renewed hope of every dawn.

O Holy Spirit,
 you whose breath enlivened our foundress, Sophie Barat,
 we call your blessing upon the South,
 the lands of fire and warmth, of hot passions and vast poverty,
 lands where new life is striving to break forth
 from centuries of oppression.
 Bless the peoples and our sisters of South America, Central America,
 Mexico, Italy, India, Spain, Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica.
 Send your breath of love especially upon our sisters endangered in Africa
 and those laboring to help the poor in struggling Latin countries and in India.

O Holy Spirit,
 you who drew the vision of Sophie and Philippine
 westward toward the setting Sun,
 breathe your blessing upon the lands of the West,
 the territory of adventure, of discovery, of new openings -
 Send the winds of renewal into our communities of Western Europe,

of the United States,
that a new spirit may go forth from here to spread your good news everywhere.

Madeleine Sophie Cooney, RSCJ

Madeleine Sophie Cooney, RSCJ, attended the Academy of the Sacred Heart, St. Joseph, Missouri, and Barat; she was editor of RSCJ: A Journal of Reflection. She died in 1994.

Bicentennial Prayer for the Network

Gracious God, as we stand on the threshold of the bicentennial of the Society of the Sacred Heart, of the twenty-first century, of the third millennium, we ask you to help us prepare for this crossing by joining together as a Network of Sacred Heart Schools throughout our country. Help us deepen our commitment to spread the love of Your Heart to one another and especially to those most in need of Your love. We pray that this time will be one of reconciliation for all of us in union with the universal church.

Instill in each of us a bolder faith in You, our ever present Lord, a deep respect for intellectual values, a passionate desire to serve others, especially those most in need, an instinct for building community, and a profound and honest commitment to our own personal growth and integrity.

May we have the attentiveness of Your Mother, Mater, the generosity of St. Madeleine Sophie, the courage of St. Philippine Duchesne, the companionship of one another, and the presence of Your Holy Spirit as we enter this new frontier with great faith, hope, and love. Help each of us be, as were Philippine's beloved Potawatomi, "keepers of the flame," knowing deeply that Love has been and always will be the most powerful source of energy in the Network of Sacred Heart Schools.

Amen! Alleluia!

Shirley Miller, RSCJ