

Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this fifth week (February 12) of our 2024 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in prayer our Sisters and Associates serving in **Burkina Faso** as well as all the people in that West African nation.

Responding to Pope Pius XII's 'Fidei Donum' to send missionaries throughout Africa, in 1959 the Sisters of St. Joseph of Bourg-en-Bresse sent four Sisters to Tougan in the Diocese of Nouna (then called Upper Volta) and the St. Joseph of Rodez Congregation sent Sisters to Tiassale in the



Diocese of Yopougon in the Ivory Coast. Given the close working relationship between these congregations – having even created inter-congregational communities -- the Bourg Sisters joined the Lyon Congregation in 1996 and the following year, the Rodez Sisters joined the Institute. Three years later (in 1999), the West African Region was established. Today, three congregations -- **Aosta, Lyon, and Springfield** – have ministries in Burkina Faso, which include: retreat centres, a hostel for girls, schools, a social centre with clinic, an educational and nutrition centre, an orphanage, and pastoral work. You can read about the Aosta Congregation's mission in Burkina Faso on [their webpage](#) which features both updates and pictures. On page 10 of this recent Springfield Congregation newsletter you can read about [a visit to the Sheltering Wings Orphanage](#). The Lyon Congregation [website](#) also shares updates about their ministries the country. (Image: Lyon's Sister Nadège Zerbo in activities with Preschoolers in Burkina Faso – from their website).



Country Background: Formerly called the Republic of Upper Volta, Burkina Faso was renamed in 1984. It is a landlocked West African country with a growing population of just under 24million (2024) of which approximately 40percent live below the poverty line. Burkina Faso, which means "land of honest men", has significant gold reserves, but the country has faced domestic and

external concerns over the state of its economy, human rights, recurring droughts, and military coups. In fact, in its 2023 report, Human Rights Watch noted that "Burkina Faso's human rights situation seriously deteriorated in 2022 as deadly attacks by Islamist armed groups against civilians surged, military forces and pro-government militias committed violations during counterterrorism operations, and political instability deepened as a result of two military coups". Environmentally, the country (and, indeed, entire Sahel region) is at risk of various natural disasters including drought, flooding, epidemics, heat waves, wind storms, and insect infestations. Given the situation in Burkina Faso, in 2023 our Sister of St. Joseph United Nations-NGO (together with other non-governmental organizations) co-authored a report on the human rights situation in Burkina Faso which became part of the UN record for the country's Universal Periodic Review (i.e.: the regular examination of a country's human rights record) at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. (Sources: Climate Change Knowledge Portal, congregational websites, Human Rights Watch, International Centre website, Sisters of St. Joseph UN-NGO, Wikipedia, World Bank, Worldometer)



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 7850 Sisters, 5700 Associates, 34 Agrégées in 45 countries, listening to the heart of the world.