

Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this thirteenth week (April 8) of our 2024 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the Sisters and Associates ministering in **Denmark** as well as the people in that nation.

The Sisters belong to the Chambéry Congregation which began its mission in Denmark in 1856 as the first Catholic religious to go to Scandinavia after the Reformation. The Sisters served in both health care and education, and established primary schools connected to Catholic parishes. Some of these schools later developed into so-called 'French schools' - a kind of secondary institute for girls that specialized in languages (primarily French) and the humanities. Although the original community is aging, there has been a renewal with a number of women from



Vietnam seeking formation and the Community is again engaged in education, pastoral work, retreats, support of migrants, and hospitality to university students. For example, the Sisters are the founders of the Institut Sankt Joseph Copenhagen – which offers kindergarten to grade nine classes and focusses on “community service and giving back with a mandatory service program for all eighth-grade students, a peer mentoring program and a summer service initiative”. The school’s diverse community includes Catholic and non-Catholic students from 59 countries who speak 33 languages. The small plaque on the wall of this Copenhagen

building (see image) translated reads: “In the basement behind this wall, the first Roman Catholic monastery since the Reformation was established in 1856 after the introduction of religious freedom. The Sisters of St. Joseph established themselves here in connection with Garrison Church and laid the foundation for extensive charitable work in the Danish school and hospital system”.



**Country Background:** The unified kingdom of Denmark emerged in the 10th century as a seafaring nation in the struggle for control of the Baltic Sea. Under the Kalmar Union (of 1397), Denmark, Sweden and Norway ruled together until Sweden left the union while Denmark and Norway remained under the same monarch until 1814. The Constitution of Denmark was signed in 1849. Today, Denmark consists of a peninsula, Jutland, an archipelago of 443 named islands, and two autonomous constituent countries in the North Atlantic Ocean, both with

home-rule: the Faroe Islands and Greenland. With a population of 5.9million (2024) -- of which approximately 2million live in the capital city Copenhagen -- Denmark is considered to be one of the most economically and socially developed countries in the world: with a high level of income equality, the lowest perceived level of corruption of any nation and high rankings in terms of education, health care, democratic governance, prosperity, and human development. Despite this high standard of living for native Danes, a [2022 Amnesty International report](#) noted several issues concerning refugee and migrant rights in terms of discrimination and specifically cited housing evictions, revoked residence permits, and favorable treatment of Ukrainian refugees

