

Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this sixteenth week (April 29) 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, Associates and Charisma Passers serving in **France** as well as all the people in that nation.

As the founding place of the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1650, today the congregations of Annecy, Chambéry, the Institut des Souers de Saint Joseph, and Lyon continue to serve in France. Their many ministries (see map below) include parish and pastoral work, care of the elderly and



disabled, education of youth, catechesis, and service in non-governmental organizations and associations. At the same time, many Sisters work on important social justice issues confronting France. For example, in February 2023 the Chambéry Congregation organized a [World Day of Prayer](#) and Reflection against Human Trafficking. In the Lyon Congregation's museum and heritage room, visitors can see Mother St. John Fontbonne's chamber (see image), and other important items such as her original portrait. France is also home to the International Centre St. Joseph - first conceived of during the 350th celebration of the founding of the Sisters of St.

Joseph. Today, the International Centre in Le Puy offers a variety of onsite [programs](#) for Sisters and laity, and this October will be celebrating its 20th anniversary.



Country Background: Historically, the region was part of the Celtic territory called 'Gaul' and renamed Francia around 486 AD. Victorious in the Hundred Year's War (1337-1453), France emerged as a major power, and by the Renaissance period had become a global colonial empire. France has experienced a revolution, regional conflicts and two World Wars on its territory. In fact, the [Zone Rouge](#) (a chain of non-contiguous areas throughout northeastern France) that covers

more than 1200 square kilometers is still deemed too physically and environmentally damaged by conflict for human habitation. Today, more than 80 percent of France's 65million (2024) population live in urban centres, and its economy is the third-largest in Europe. In fact, the World Bank classifies France as a wealthy, high-income nation where citizens depend on the national government's social security net for education, health care, pensions and social services. However, recent changes to France's social system have resulted in widespread civil protest including several national strikes. In fact, a 2024 Human Rights Watch brief cited the "excessive use of force by law enforcement against protesters and detainees persisted in 2023, a year marked by demonstrations and strikes [while] actions taken to curb civil society activities raised concerns about the erosion of the rule of law". (Sources: Chambéry Congregation website, Human Rights Watch, International Centre website, Lyon Congregation, Worldometer, Wikipedia, World Bank)



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