



September 4, 2019

Dear Family of the Sacred Heart,

Each year at this time, we reach out to all who have been a part of our mission, sharing stories of new things that have come to life as a result of your generous support. In the face of so much suffering and injustice happening around the globe, our hearts are full of gratitude and hope, because your partnership allows us to find new ways of discovering and revealing the love of the Heart of God in the very heart of the world.

As we hope you already know, we recently marked 200 years since the arrival of Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne in the new world. Your generosity helped the history and the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart to be celebrated in an extraordinary series of events in 2017 and 2018.

The Spirituality Conference and the Frontiers Conference brought together RSCJ, Associates, alumnae/i, faculty and students from around the world to deepen their understanding of Sacred Heart spirituality and the legacy of Philippine Duchesne.

A Global Service Day united us in practical acts of love and healing.

Members of the Potawatomi Nation welcomed members of the Sacred Heart family to join them in commemorating the “Trail of Death,” which brought them to Sugar Creek, Kansas, where Philippine became a part of their story.

In November, the extraordinary Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, which brought the bicentennial celebration to a close, featured original music commissioned by Father Michael Joncas and was broadcast live around the world.

Perhaps one of the most moving events of this bicentennial year occurred in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, where descendants of enslaved persons (who literally built the school and without whom our mission could not have taken root) returned to Grand Coteau for the dedication of a memorial listing the names of their ancestors who had previously been buried in unmarked graves.

Over the last several years, our Slavery, Accountability and Reconciliation Committee researched the participation of the Society of the Sacred Heart in the institution of slavery in our early years in this new world. This has led to a commitment on the part of the United States – Canada (USC) Province to acknowledge the ways in which our institutions (and we personally) still enjoy privileges and benefits that derived from our participation in slavery. More information and videos are posted on our website at rscj.org/history-slaveholding. I extend much appreciation to our committee: Maureen Chicoine, RSCJ; Irma Dillard, RSCJ; Marilyn McMorrow, RSCJ; Catherine Mooney; Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ (chair); and Emory Webre.

None of these events celebrating our history could have happened without our generous donors.

But donors also helped us create programs that address the hunger for spiritual depth so desperately needed, both in Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat's time and in our own. Our spiritual ministry centers in San Diego, New Orleans and Halifax, Nova Scotia, were able to continue offering traditional retreats and spiritual direction. At the same time, Sophie's Well, the online resource center for Sacred Heart spirituality, and the RSCJ and trained colleagues who make up the itinerant Sophie's Well team have been able to offer Busy Person's Retreats for faculty, staff and administration in almost of all our Network of Sacred Heart Schools and at the provincial office.

The needs of the young have been very much at the heart of our mission and ministry over the past year, as well. Through international leadership programs at the Stuart Center in Washington, D.C., young adults from Haiti, Puerto Rico, and Central and South America came together to learn skills that will help them to become agents of positive change. At our five Welcoming Communities across the province, young men and women found a place where they could gather for prayer, a good meal and deep conversation. Across the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, students came together for Dialogue Training (provided by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change) to help them find ways to create common ground in a polarized world. These initiatives, too, were supported by donors like you.

About the time you receive this letter, the USC Province will welcome our Superior General, Barbara Dawson, and the Central Team for a month-long visit to the province. Accompanying Barb are Marie-Jeanne Elonga from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Monica Esquivel from Mexico, Isabelle Lagneau from France and Daphne Sequeira from India. They will bring news of the world-wide Society and the dreams we foster for the ongoing mission of the Society. The Central Team is grateful for your support, which has helped young RSCJ from around the globe come to the United States for advanced degrees as part of their formation for ministry back in their home countries.

In closing, let me mention a few special initiatives that might be of interest to you as you consider your gift to this annual appeal:

- develop historical museums in St. Charles and Grand Coteau so that the Society's history is more easily accessible for education of students and the broader community

- grow the Duchesne Fund for Ministry so that we may increase the support given to a number of nonprofits through which our members and colleagues bring our educational mission to underserved or marginalized populations in the U.S.
- enhance the Network of Sacred Heart Schools' capacity to provide a variety of programs that address issues of diversity and racial injustice
- enable the programs and translation at the International Heads of Sacred Heart Schools meeting in April 2020, to be held at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart, Miami, Florida
- expand our outreach to young adults who are interested in community, spirituality and justice
- continue to adapt the facilities at Oakwood in Atherton, California, and at Abba House, Avila and Teresian House in Albany, New York, to better care for our elderly and infirm sisters and finding creative ways for our older (but still active) sisters to age in place in housing that better serves their physical and emotional needs.

Saint Madeleine Sophie and Saint Philippine understood the mission of “this little society” would not be constrained by geography or time, and we would, by necessity, rely on the help of many others to find ways to continue expressing God’s love in ways appropriate for each generation. We need your partnership with us so we can build that future. Please consider a gift to this year’s annual appeal.

Know that across the province, the Religious of the Sacred Heart pray for you by name every Tuesday and our older sisters in Albany and Atherton hold you in their hearts each day. Please keep us in your prayers as well.

With gratitude,



Sheila Hammond, RSCJ
Provincial
United States-Canada Province