Founding of the Society of the Sacred Heart
Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Prayer Reflection Guide 2021

When Joachim and Anne brought their daughter, Mary to the temple, it was a complete giving over of her life to God. And no doubt that is why this feast day was chosen for Sophie and her three companions to consecrate themselves wholly to God in 1800.

At the time of pronouncing their vows they were affiliated to the Diletti di Gesu (The beloved of Jesus) though later Sophie regretted that she had let herself be persuaded to agree to this. None the less the four knew that they wanted "to make known the love of the Heart of Jesus" and to respond generously to the needs of the world around them especially the poor and of the women, in the wake and upheaval of the French Revolution.

France and most of Europe had been turned 'upside down' by the French Revolution and in response the Counter Revolution was allowing religious practices again and giving rise to new congregations, eager to respond to the crises of the day. Europe was beginning to look very different.

Our Lady of the Society

If we consider our situation today as slowly, we begin to emerge from COVID 19 with all the hardship that has caused, especially to the poor, and as we begin to understand the devastating effects of climate change, again affecting most severely the poor of our world we can see a similarity.

Just as in 1800 Sophie and her companions were setting out to discover what God was asking of them so we, in the middle of a Special Chapter, are discerning what God is asking of us at this particular time…

Let us look at, reflect on and bring before God, OUR WORLD

The world that Sophie knew in 1800

Post The French revolution and the aftermath of war, with religious practices free to re start but within a French church still in the grips of Jansenism (which saw God as a severe task master), and with extremes of poverty/ powerlessness and wealth/ power.

The world we know today (2021)

Striving to be post Covid 19 but with most people in the poorest countries unvaccinated. Huge rise in no. of refugees. Influence of Laudato Si,(2015) demonstrating the world as our Common Home. Effects of climate change due to global warming caused by use of fossil fuels, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, resulting in ice melting and flooding, forest fires, soil erosion etc. COP26 taking place in Nov. & trying to combat climate change. Interest in religious practices falling but in spirituality rising.

Being 221 years apart Sophie's world and our world are very different but the underlying desire of Religious of the Sacred Heart is the same: to make known the love of the Heart of Jesus. Sophie: "*This Little Society is entirely consecrated to the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to spreading His worship*."

ENW Special Chapter (2021)Preparation:

"Therefore, whatever we decide, it must be centred on and compelled by mission. The Society of the Sacred Heart shares in this mission by making known the revelation of God's love, whose source and symbol is for us the Heart of Christ."

How has reflecting on our different worlds but having the same desire for mission spoken to you today?

M Sophie Barat in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. Photo: A. McCarthy

Sophie asked the Holy Spirit to show her little group how to respond to the needs of her day. Today, our special Chapter is doing the same, but in a different world.

"The Holy Spirit when left free, works wonders and we should be wrong not to give Him full scope….." S.M.S.

"Great hearts, generous hearts, are required in the family of God's heart, because the difficulties in the way of doing good increase day by day." M.S.

"Listen to the Lord, when, how and where? Listen indicates the present, therefore hear him everywhere, in everything and at all times." M.S.

"The created things of this world are not free of ownership: "For they are yours, O Lord, who love the living" (Wis.11.26). This is the basis of our conviction that, as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect." LS 89

"Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society." LS 91 …… 'Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and underprivileged." LS 93

"Enable us to listen and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. May the present sufferings be the birth pangs of a more sustainable world."

From the Global Prayer for Laudato Si Week on 5th Anniversary, 24th May, 2020

Reflecting on our world and its needs today what do you feel called to do/and or to pray for?

Closing Litany

For all that God can do within us;
For all that God can do without us.
Thanks be to God.

For all in whom Christ lived before us;
For all in whom Christ lived beside us.
Thanks be to God.

For all the Spirit wants to bring us;
For where the Spirit wants to send us.
Thanks be to God.
(Source unknown)

Closing Song: Wake Up the World

Anne McCarthy
ENW Province

JPIC Learning Hub
2021