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Extending the Incarnation through the Ages
A Systematic Study of the History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word

A Pastoral Project
Presented to the Pastoral Institute,
University of the Incarnate Word,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies

By

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A mi madre y mi abuela por ser dos mujeres extraordinarias

Theology of Church and Ministry

On October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII called all cardinals and bishops of the Catholic Church to begin the Second Vatican Council, which transformed the Catholic Church forever. This Council had as a goal to bring the Church into the modern world and to promote the unity of Christians. The days when the Church could be seen only as a juridical and hierarchical institution were now gone. Instead, the cardinals and bishops set out to reflect on the nature of the Church, her structures and her mission. In other words, Vatican II transformed the ecclesiology of the Catholic Church.

Vatican II offered a departure from the traditional understanding of Church. After the council the Catholics from around the world came to know the church through different models such as mystery, or sacrament, and not primarily as an institution or organization. The Church was no longer considered to be composed of only the clergy. Instead, both clergy and laity were recognized as the people of God and, as such, everybody participated in the mission of Christ. Authority in the Catholic Church was determined to be for service, not for domination. The meaning of the mission was also expanded to include service, witness, and proclamation of the Word of God, in addition to the celebration and reception of the sacraments. Perhaps most importantly, the Church was presented as a communion of Churches, meaning the local church was as much the Church as St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Catholics began to recognize the ecclesial nature of Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Oriental and Eastern Catholic churches, even if some of these churches have a different degree of communion with the Church of Rome. As Peter Phan notes, "Lesser degrees of communion

are then described...which speaks of non-Catholic Christians, who enjoy a genuine but imperfect communion based upon an impressive set of elements found among them: the Scriptures, faith in God and Christ, union with Christ through baptism, other sacraments, the Episcopate, Eucharist, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, communion in prayer and spiritual blessings, a true union in the Holy Spirit, and martyrdom.”¹ Vatican II clearly established that salvation was no longer perceived as limited to the Catholic Church.

The new understanding did not mean that the Church was not to be what it had been, namely hierarchical in nature, but if Vatican II taught us something it is that there are different models of Church because the Church is as vast as Christ. As such, every model of Church presents analogies by which we can understand the complex reality of the Church. Avery Dulles argues that the Church, like many other theological realities, is a mystery: “Mysteries are realities of which we cannot speak directly. If we wish to talk about them at all we must draw on analogies afforded by our experience of the world.”²

There are different analogies or models of Church by which the mystery of the Church is made more approachable. The Church can be seen as an institution, as mystical communion, as sacrament, as servant, or as Vatican II taught us, a community of disciples. In order to reach a balanced understanding of the Church, however, one must “find a way to incorporate the major affirmations of each basic ecclesiological type” (Dulles, 9). The different models of Church present different realities which may be beneficial in “helping people to get beyond the limitations of their own particular outlook, and to enter into fruitful conversation with others having a fundamentally different reality” (Dulles, 12).

¹ Peter Phan, *The Gift of the Church: a Textbook on Ecclesiology in Honor of Patrick Granfield, OSB*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000. p. 78.

² Avery Robert Cardinal Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974. p. 9.

In 1962, Vatican II helped to open the doors for fruitful conversation among people having significantly different approaches. Conversation with others is necessary in order to bring the Church into the modern world, which was the goal of Vatican II. Pope John XXIII intended to open the windows of the Church, to enter into conversation with people of other denominations because despite the different models of ecclesiology there is one model which Jesus showed to us. Jesus' model of Church was incarnational, which went beyond the undeniable truth that Jesus is God enfleshed. Jesus went to where the people were, and he served them by becoming one of them. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14), NIV) is a theological truth and a call for ministers to penetrate every nook and cranny of society to bring the Gospel of Life. In studying the Johannine writings, I find the incarnational ecclesiology which was made evident in Vatican II.

Although the word Church is used only once in the Fourth Gospel, there is a distinctive ecclesiology of unity throughout John. John makes a clear distinction between love and unity. Love in the Gospel of John, according to Gerard Rosse, is a command of Jesus and an obligation. Unity, on the other hand, is a divine gift.³ According to Rosse, for John true unity exists only in the Trinity because unity is a characteristic of God. So, when Jesus prays for unity in John 17:20-23 he is not referring to an ecumenical problem. Rather, "In essence the evangelist is showing the Church its own identity....The unity of believers constitutes the true identity of the Christian community and can therefore show the world in a trustworthy manner what God is in his inmost being, consequently, it can also show humanity where the fullness of its being is to be found" (Rosse, 82).

³ Rosse, Gerard. *The Spirituality of Communion. A New Approach to the Johannine Writings*, Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1998, pp. 79, 82.

In “Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God,” the International Theological Commission sees the Triune God as the source of the mission of the Church: “At the heart of the divine act of creation is the divine desire to make room for created persons in the communion of the uncreated Persons of the Blessed Trinity through adoptive participation in Christ.”⁴

God then turns his love outward in the act of creation, reaching out and drawing us into divine life. In Jesus Christ, God the Father reveals his love in a personal and definitive way. It is this Good News that the Church proclaims.

The *Decree on Ecumenism* of Vatican II acknowledged that the Holy Spirit was active in non-Catholic Christian communities and that all those who are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are members of the Body of Christ and are our brothers and sisters.⁵ As such, the new ecclesiology urged all Christians to set aside their differences in order to show non-Christians that the Christian community is based on the life of the Trinity.

In the Gospel of John there is another ecclesiological shift such as the one that occurred after Vatican II. In the Johannine community there was no room for special Church offices. Biblical scholar James Plastaras states: “The elder who writes to the Church in 1 John claims no authority deriving from Church office. It is only the word itself which he speaks that possesses authority.”⁶ In the community everybody is a disciple and not “The Twelve” as in Mark. In fact, on Easter Sunday evening, it is not to some special group that Jesus appears

⁴ International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*. Vatican City, 2004, p. 65. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc-20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html.

⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*, no. 22, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. NY: Costello Publishing, 1996, p. 22.

⁶ James Plastaras, *The Witness of John: A Study of Johannine Theology*, New York, NY: Bruce Publishing Co., 1972, p. 45.

in order to give apostolic mission. Jesus simply appears to “the disciples” (John 20:19) and sends them as the Father sent him. The lack of special Church offices in John’s ecclesiology again brings the ideas of Vatican II of the People of God to mind. The mission does not belong only to the clergy. Jesus sends all his disciples.

The Document of Aparecida, where the Conference of Latin American Bishops met in 2007, speaks of the need of the church to acknowledge the historical context in which its members live: “These social and cultural transformations naturally represent new challenges to the Church in its mission of building the Kingdom of God. Hence the need, in fidelity to the Holy Spirit who leads it, for an ecclesial renewal that entrails spiritual, pastoral, and also institutional reforms.”⁷ As a Hispanic woman, I know that unless the Church knows its members and recognizes the need of its members for a community in which to grow, the Latino/a members will not feel at home. Hispanics need a place like the one Jesus described in Mt. 18:29, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

How do you define or identify “church”?

My understanding of Church dates back to my Baptist grandmother who told me, “Everyone is the Church; everyone is our brother and sister.” Coming from the Hispanic perception of the barrio, I perceive the Church as an extended family, as our neighbors. Growing up everyone had keys to everyone else’s house, although most of the time the doors were not locked. Everybody pitched in when someone was sick, and everyone took care of everybody’s children. I was spanked by my parents and by my neighbors when I misbehaved. In the barrio, I learned that I am a part of something bigger than myself, that just my last name

⁷ V Conferencia General del Episcopado de América Latina y el Caribe. *Discípulos y misioneros de Jesucristo, para que nuestros pueblos en Él tengan vida*, Aparecida, Brazil: CELAM, 2007, p 87.

evokes generations of people before me, and “don’t you dare trample on your family’s name.” I also learned to be proud of the place where I came from, “so that others know that we are good people around here.” And most importantly, in the barrio I learned about faith. It didn’t matter whether I was Catholic, Baptist or Pentecostal, God was to be first in my life in the same way that God was the first in the lives of all those great men and women who helped to raise me. I am a good woman thanks to the guidance my parents and I received within the community.

The local parish church, for me, is an extension of the barrio, of deep family bonds. My parish is a place where we know the families. The liturgical seasons with their feasts provide opportunities for celebration, funerals, rosaries, and opportunities for mourning as a community. When our parish priest in Brownsville committed suicide in 2010, we were all deeply affected. Although the wound is still there, it is easier to bear as a community. The barrio and my local parish church taught me that we never have to carry the cross by ourselves.

What is the meaning and purpose of ministry?

The United States Bishops’ document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* refers to ministry as “service (*diakonos*)” and as the “means for accomplishing a mission in the communion of the church. It is a participation in and expression of Christ’s ministry.”⁸ For me, ministry is not what we do, but how we live deeply the communal life of the Trinity in a way that we “pitch our tent to dwell” among our brothers and sisters. Ministry is a generous response, a willingness to be led deeper into the very life of God in which service is not work

⁸ USCCB, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. Washington, DC. USCCB, 2005, no. 21.

but a call to “the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity, and this holiness is conducive to a more human way of living even in society here on earth.”⁹

What does it mean to be a minister?

Along the same lines, to be a minister means to be so God-centered that one pitches one’s tent truly among others, realizing that the service one provides does not come from oneself but from God, “no one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven” (John 3:27). To be a true minister means to “decrease so that others may increase,” but to decrease in a joyful manner as CELAM points out: “The disciple’s joy is not a feeling of selfish well-being, but a certainty that springs from faith, that soothes the heart and provides the ability to proclaim the good news of God’s love. Knowing Jesus is the best gift that any person can receive; that we have encountered Him is the best thing that has happened in our lives, and making him known by our word and deeds is our joy.”¹⁰ True ministers know that in order to serve, they must have a strong faith and the humility to be disciples.

In reality, everyone is called to be a minister. All of us are called to serve and by virtue of our Baptism in Christ are called to be missionary disciples. Clothed in new life, we are called to proclaim with boldness, to shout from the rooftops with the joy of having encountered Christ, that the Church “is communion in love.”¹¹ Communion in love is the essence and the sign by which a Christian is called to be recognized as a follower of Christ and as a servant of humankind. Anything else is unacceptable.

⁹ Second Vatican Council *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* [LG], no. 40, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996,

¹⁰ CELAM, *Discípulos*, 2007, p. 9.

¹¹ CELAM, *Discípulos*, 2007, p. 40.

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PROJECT PROPOSAL POINTS

1. **Describe the pastoral setting in which this project will be implemented (location, socio-economic characteristics, church realities). What makes this community/group particularly appropriate for this project? How will you use the strengths of this situation to enhance your project? What are the obstacles you anticipate you will face? How do you intend to minimize or overcome these obstacles?**

Extending the Incarnation through the Ages is a program that aims to help formation directors in the diverse houses of formation of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament by offering a systematic study of the history of the Order of the Incarnate Word.

The Sisters in formation throughout the world come from many socio-economic different backgrounds and also belong to different generations. The Sisters in Central America and Africa are much younger than the Sisters in Mexico, who are much younger than the Sisters in formation in the United States. I believe the sisters in formation are the ideal group for this project, or rather, the project is ideal for the Sisters in formation. The program is designed to be used at the discretion of the formation director. The different backgrounds of the Sisters, especially their varied academic experiences, dictate the need for flexibility in the program. The program can be used as a series of weekend workshops or as a formal course of study. The formation director will determine the timeline and the depth and breadth of the study.

The need for flexibility in the program and the varied academic and socio-economic backgrounds call for a program designed to meet Sisters in formation at their different levels. While these varied needs can be seen as obstacles, I see them as opportunities to build creativity into the program. Also, the variety in life experiences and backgrounds will help the Sisters and formation directors to come to a deeper understanding of the breadth of the Order and the deep needs in the Church.

I believe I will face obstacles, especially when I encounter questions that do not apply or are irrelevant in cultures, such as the African or the Argentinian. Thankfully, I have included Sisters in my Focus Group who will help me to make sure I am being inclusive. The Sisters in formation who are part of my Focus Group will also let me know if what I am writing about is irrelevant, offensive, or hard to understand.

2. **Briefly describe the activity that you propose for your project and indicate how you arrived at the idea that such an activity is needed and appropriate in your setting.**

Playing trivia on our congregational history one day, I found out that new members tend to memorize quick facts such as dates, names, and events, but when questioned deeply they really did not know nor understand the history of the congregation. Chatting with them during one of the Formation Symposiums, I found that the Sisters did not see a connection between congregational events of the past and the congregational situations in the present.

I do realize that teaching the history of the congregation to new members is something hard to do because one can easily be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of what has been written by Jeanne Chezard and about Jeanne Chezard.

So, based on that perceived need, I seek to put together a manual for the systematic study of the history of the Sisters of the incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament that can engage Sisters in learning our history by utilizing a variety of learning methods such as media, hands-on projects, art, journaling, drama, music. I want to create a manual that will provide for various ways or approaches to present the material according to the learning styles of the people in formation, with the goal that Sisters will be able to take the events in history not as things of the past but as a prodding for real-life application. I intend that the manual will offer the opportunity to share faith and to create an environment for prayerful reflection. In the same manner, I intend to provide the opportunity to engage the hearts of the new members of the congregation as they explore the lives of the women who preceded them, and thus be able to integrate the call they have received with the deep needs in today's world.

3. Describe the make-up of your Focus Group and how you determined the membership.

Due to the broad nature of the project which tells the story of the different IW groups, I sought the help of Sisters in the different groups. I am still awaiting confirmation from a Sister in the Victoria, TX group.

In order to determine the membership I wanted in my Focus Group, I first had to determine what I was looking for in a Sister. So, I came up with a balance of Sisters with knowledge of the history of the congregation, Sisters with experience in formation direction, Sisters with experience in teaching, Sisters with knowledge of technology and Sisters who are currently being formed.

Because I was not going to be able to find all of those qualities in only a few people, I found the following Sisters:

Sr. Rosemary Lichnovsky- Formation Director of IWBS Corpus Christi, TX
Sr. Mary Rose Kocab-Superior General of SIW, Cleveland, Ohio
Sr. Rose Miriam Gansle-IWBS Corpus Christi, TX
Hna. Mary Carmen Aceituno, CVI Madrid, Spain
Sr. Pilar Corona-Lyon, France
Formation Sisters in Mexico, Corpus Christi, Victoria, TX

I believe these Sisters have the experience (and the willingness) to help make the project a possibility and a success.

4. **Describe the needs assessment process you used to verify your hypothesis. Attach any surveys or other instruments used, if applicable.**

I did not use any formal needs assessment process. For the most part I chatted with people via Facebook, Skype and email. I found there was discontentment with the way Sisters in formation are taught. History is perceived as being someone else's "territory" belonging to people such as archivists or charism offices.

I also found out that while the Mexican Sisters could easily give dates and names, they lacked formal understanding. The Sisters in the United States, being older and having more formal education, had a better understanding but lacked consistency and a reasonable knowledge of the sequence of events.

I asked several of them what they would like to see in a class, and many of the ideas in the manual come from late night conversations with different Sisters in formation and some formation directors.

5. **In what way did you interact with your Focus Group during the planning stage of the project process?**

I was able to meet face to face with the Sisters who live in Corpus Christi. The communication with the Sisters in Cleveland; Mexico Cit.; Lyon, France; and Madrid, Spain was through e-mail and drop box.

6. **What are the goals of the project? Include timelines for the completion of each goal. How will you evaluate the accomplishment of the goals? Who will be involved in the evaluation?**

EXPECTED COURSE OUTCOMES

The Sisters who complete this course will be able to:

Personal Dimension: Internalize the development of the History of the Order of the Incarnate Word as a way to clarify their vocational choice.

Communitarian Dimension: Take personal responsibility for developing a spirit of service and the skills necessary for community living.

Socio-Pastoral-Ecclesial Dimension: Demonstrate the ability to examine contemporary issues in the Church and the world in light of the Incarnational Charism.

Academic Dimension: Develop a well written project reflecting the understanding gained from learning the Order's tradition, heritage and identity.

One of the ways I will evaluate the accomplishment of the goals informally is through the questions at the end of each section. There are three types of questions to probe the

interiorization of the material studied; there are questions for comprehension, reflection and connection. Some of these questions can be used for quiet reflection, journal writing, prayer, or for assignments.

There is also a section for faith sharing. This section is an invitation to connect personal experiences in everyday life with the historical, spiritual, and personal experiences of the Sisters of the past in order to probe and challenge the Sisters' experiences of how God can enter into their personal and communitarian history.

These sections will aid the formator in assessing the progress of the Sisters in formation.

In addition to this, I am also creating a formal evaluation that will be completed at the end of the program. Both the formators and the Sisters in formation will be involved in the evaluation. This evaluation will evaluate the program and the delivery. There is an evaluation for Sisters in formation and another one for formation directors.

7. List objectives and timelines for each objective. Indicate your role in the accomplishment of each objective. evaluate the accomplishment of the objectives?

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Objective 1: The Sisters will articulate the historical and spiritual development of the order.

Objective 2: The Sisters will identify the relationship of Jeanne Chézard de Matel with the Person of the Incarnate Word as the force that impelled the expansion of the Order.

Objective 3: The Sisters will reflect on the service of Sisters of the Incarnate Word to the Church throughout their history.

Objective 4: The Sisters will apply acquired knowledge of the history of the Order of the Incarnate Word as a means of conversion and as a way to challenge personal attitudes in regard to contemporary issues in the Church and the world.

The objectives are set to be accomplished throughout the duration of the program. The program does not have a set timeline because it was designed to be used at the discretion of the formation director. The different backgrounds of the Sisters, especially their varied academic experiences, dictate the need for flexibility in the program.

The program can be used as a series of weekend workshops or as a formal course of study. The formation director will determine the timeline and the depth and breadth of the study.

- 8. What knowledge is needed to accomplish this project? Of that knowledge, what do you presently feel you already have and how did you obtain it? What knowledge do you need to get and how do you propose to obtain it? Please be specific.**

One of the things needed in order to accomplish this project is knowledge and a deep love of the history of the Order. Most people know the main events and outlines of the Order's history but do not study the history in depth, at least not enough to teach it.

I have a deep love and a reasonable knowledge of the history of the Order. I have spent a considerable amount of time in our archives connecting the points, researching and learning. I sought to examine the roots of the Order, to understand what in those roots shaped who the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament are, and the role that they have in the life of the Church.

There are so many books and documents that in order not to get overwhelmed with the history I taught myself through creative activities such as drawings, paintings, and illustrated outlines. I learned what the mission, the charism and the aim of the Congregation are when I was a postulant. However, it was not until I studied the history that I understood them.

I need to continue studying the history. I do not know the history of the latest foundations in Mexico and other parts of the world. As of yet, I do not have access to the annals of those later foundations. However, I am in contact with some Sisters who are working on digitalizing that information in order to help with this project.

- 9. What skills do you need to accomplish this project? What skills do you already have and how did you develop them? What skills do you still need and how will you gain those skills?**

A skill needed in order to accomplish this project is a love for teaching and learning. Even though the program is designed to help formation directors in teaching the history of the Order to Sisters in formation, certain pedagogy is needed. The program will include a section that teaches the formation director how to use the manual; however, the formation director needs to be willing to learn also. In creating this program, I do not assume that the formation director knows everything. The formation director can learn as much as the Sisters in formation.

I have been a teacher for many years, and I have taught almost every level. In teaching, I have learned that, regardless of the age of the student, certain creativity is needed in order to make the learning pleasant. The students will always know when the teacher knows the subject and also when the teacher does not. It was through making mistakes that I learned it was necessary to be willing to learn from the students and to be willing to make changes when necessary in order to make my teaching worthwhile.

I still need to learn to manage time while teaching. I believe planning and creating a program of this magnitude will teach me better time management.

- 10. What attitudes do you need to accomplish this project? What attitudes do you already have and how did you develop them? What attitudes do you need and how will you develop those attitudes? Be specific.**

An attitude that is absolutely needed in order to accomplish this project is a deep love for people in formation and a desire to form the Sisters in a way that is transformative and long-lasting. Obviously a love for teaching is necessary too and a belief that people can learn and that what they learn can make a difference in their lives.

I have a great attitude since I love learning. I believe because of my personal experience that what one learns can mark one's life deeply. I do not have experience with formation, at least not from the point of view of a formation director. However, I have been in formation rather recently, and I have struggled with learning the history. It is my hope that through working closely with formation directors I might learn what the role of a formation director is and the influence their ministry can have in the life of the Sisters in formation.

- 11. How will you involve other staff to insure that leadership is being developed to continue this process? Is it your hope to make this an on-going activity in the pastoral setting dependent or independent of you? Explain your comment.**

Since I am not a formation director, it is my goal to make this program an on-going activity independent of me or of any other person. Since formation directors rotate frequently, I seek to create a program that can be used by anyone. I hope that people who have used the program can take leadership in helping those who are new to the program.

- 12. What are your personal learning goals as a result of this project? What are your professional goals as a result of this project?**

It is my hope that working on this program will challenge me to grow in my love of God and the Order and that through reflecting on the struggles, the hard work and the choices made by the early Sisters I can deepen my identity as a Sister of the Incarnate Word.

I also hope that my academic writing improves and that the experience I gain in creating a program will help me in the future. I am sure the need will arise to create other programs either for formation symposiums, Incarnate Word reunions or in my ministry.

- 13. What expertise do you want your resource person for this project to share with you?**

I need expertise from different people. I would like the experience in formation such as the formation directors have because I have never been a formation director myself. I would like experience in leadership because I believe leadership is a skill that, although innate, people can be trained for leadership. I hope to include questions for reflection that will help to develop leadership skills.

I also need the expertise of the Sisters who have experience living in different communities and who have a broad knowledge of different cultures.

I also need the expertise of the Sisters who are currently in formation because the program is being created with them in mind. They will be my best guide in creating the program.

I could also benefit from Sisters who have good language skills.

MAIN OBJECTIVE:

Extending the Incarnation through the Ages is a program that aims to help formation directors in the diverse houses of formation of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament by offering a systematic study of the history of the Order of the Incarnate Word. This program intends to help women in formation to articulate the historical and spiritual development of the Order. Through an in-depth study of the historical journey of the Order, women are offered a process to help them to reflect on the relationship of Jeanne Chézard de Matel with the Person of the Incarnate Word as the force that impelled the expansion of the Order. It is the hope of the program that, through reflecting on the history, the struggles and graces received, and the service the sisters have given, sisters in formation will be able to commit to the building of the Reign of God by becoming women of the Incarnation in our current reality.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Objective 1: The Sisters will articulate the historical and spiritual development of the order.

Objective 2: The Sisters will identify the relationship of Jeann e Chézard de Matel with the Person of the Incarnate Word as the force that impelled the expansion of the order.

Objective 3: The Sisters will reflect on the service of Sisters of the Incarnate Word to the Church throughout their history.

Objective 4: The Sisters will apply acquired knowledge of the history of the Order of the Incarnate Word as a means of conversion and as a way to challenge personal attitudes in regard to contemporary issues in the Church and the world.

EXPECTED COURSE OUTCOMES

The Sisters who complete this course will be able to:

Personal Dimension: Internalize the development of the History of the Order of the Incarnate Word as a way to clarify their vocational choice.

Communitarian Dimension: Take personal responsibility for developing a spirit of service and the skills necessary for community living.

Socio-Pastoral-Ecclesial Dimension: Demonstrate the ability to examine contemporary issues in the Church and the world in light of the Incarnational Charism.

Academic Dimension: Develop a well written project reflecting the understanding gained from learning the Order's tradition, heritage and identity.

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Bibliography

Introduction

Fifty years ago, Pope John XXIII opened the windows of the Church to let in fresh air, and started a revolution in the Church that persists even until today. The *Second Vatican Council* opened on October 11, 1962 with the goal of bringing the Church into the modern world. There were many changes. Catholics could celebrate Mass in their local language, and the priests faced the congregation. Laypeople took roles of leadership in the church. The church also began interfaith conversations. The Pope invited all religious to go back to the sources of their charisms. Religious were challenged to look at the history of their congregations to find the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the changed conditions of the time. In *Perfectae Caritatis: The Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life*, the Pope told the Women Religious of the World, "It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders' spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions - all of which make up the patrimony of each institute - be faithfully held in honor." (Pope Paul VI, October 28, 1965)

Each congregation, then, set out to return to the sources which made up their patrimony: the writings of their founders, their archives, and their history, in order to recover the particular charism and spirit of their institutes so that they could respond to the contemporary needs of the Church and the world. However, they were to always keep in mind that the adaptation of religious life, in order to respond to the needs of their brothers and sisters, was to be animated by a spiritual renewal. The Sisters were called to always have before them the sacred Scriptures, Liturgy, and the Eucharist, in order to be able to be of service and to have greater freedom in living the consecrated life. (Pope Paul VI, October 28, 1965)

Fifty years after the opening of the Second Vatican Council, I find that going back to the sources of our founder's spirit is still essential to the work we do. As a religious woman who just completed her initial formation with the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, I was required to study the history of our Congregation. Our history begins in a tiny place in France called Roanne, in 1625 with a French woman, Jeanne Chézarde de Matel, who became the foundress of an Order of women religious that, by 2012, would be numerous enough to be present in eleven countries and on four continents.

Three hundred and eighty seven years of history are not easy to study. Yet, I find that it is essential to discover the heart of our spirit and charism as Sisters of the Incarnate Word. We are very blessed in that we possess the journals of our foundress, hundreds of her letters, the accounts of many sisters of her time, and the stories of our congregation through history. And in all of them we find a persistent theme that makes us Sisters of the Incarnate Word and not Benedictines, or Dominicans, or Carmelites, but like Jeanne Chézarde de Matel, faithful women of the Incarnation.

Because we have so many years of history to learn, which are necessary to our formation, a team of sisters has worked through the years to put together the *Opus Gloriae* or *The Work of Glory*, a CD of the *Complete Works of Jeanne Chézarde de Matel* which can be

downloaded to one's computer to have quick access to Jeanne's writing in English, French or Spanish. However, the fact remains that teaching the history to new members is still something hard to do because one can easily be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of what has been written by her and about her.

Playing trivia on our congregational history one day, I found out that new members tend to memorize quick facts such as dates, names, and events, but when questioned deeply, they really did not know nor understand the events further. Even more so, I found that there was no connection between congregational events of the past to the congregational situations in the present.

Based on a perceived need, I seek to put together a manual for the systematic study of the history of the Sisters of the incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament that can engage sisters in learning our history by utilizing a variety of learning methods such as media, hands-on projects, art, journaling, drama, music, etc. I want to create a manual that will provide for various ways or approaches to present the material according to the learning styles of the people in formation, with the goal that sisters will be able to take the events in history, not as a thing of the past, but as a prodding for real-life application. I intend that the manual will offer the opportunity to share faith, to create an environment for prayerful reflection, and to provide the opportunity to engage their hearts as they explore the lives of the women who preceded us, and thus be able to integrate the call we have received with the deep needs in today's world.

Manuals Reviewed

In order to put together a manual which intends to teach history in a creative way, I reviewed several manuals that teach Church history and / or catechesis, as well as the website of a traveling exhibit of the history of women religious in America. Seeking to find a balance between creativity and an effective, systematic study of history, I found mostly manuals intended for high school. In these I found that the use of creative approaches increases student engagement. The following manuals were the most helpful in my research.

Church Women: Probing History with Girls

I was very lucky to come across *Church Women: Probing History with Girls*. This teaching manual by St. Mary's Press explores the lives of women who have made tremendous contributions to the life of the Church and the world. The course is designed to help young women embrace the true meaning of the phrase "created in the image of God," (Gn 1:27) a profound statement about who they are and who they are becoming.

Church Women: Probing History with Girls was the response to the dream of a national team of female educators, youth ministers, parents, and mentors who have a special concern for the spirituality of girls. Through listening sessions with girls from around the country, the team was able to understand the need that young women have in our day to be mentored by prepared, understanding adults who can walk with them in their journey

to adulthood. The journey young women face today is plagued by media telling them that beauty and body are more important than mind and spirit. Young women need guidance to “challenge a culture that contradicts their sacredness; they need adults who will listen to them, relate with them, and walk with them, reminding them of their destiny, reminding them, ‘You are made in the image of God.’” (Delgatto, 12)

The manual is divided in two parts. In part A the manual focuses on saints and mystics such as Julian of Norwich and Hildegard de Bingen. Part B focuses on women who have made recent contributions and have influenced the Church in the modern world, such as Sister Helen Prejean and the Women Martyrs in El Salvador. The manual utilizes different approaches to learning such as art, faith sharing and music. It also provides the opportunity for quiet reflection, making it a retreat-like environment. And finally, the reflection questions are magnificent, since they provide the opportunity to apply the lesson learned to their present life.

Through exploring the lives of women who have made contributions to the life of the Church, young women are empowered and encouraged to find their own paths toward a deeper relationship with God, with themselves, and with others.

Biblical Women: Exploring Their Stories with Girls

The next manual I found was *Biblical Women: Exploring their Stories with Girls* by Janet Claussen. Like *Church Women: Probing History with Girls*, this manual was published by St. Mary's Press. Although not a Church History Manual, I found it a great resource. This manual intends to help young women to become familiar with the women in the scriptures and to recognize their contributions in communities of faith and in the beginning of Judaism and Christianity.

The strategies in *Biblical Women: Exploring Their Stories with Girls* are designed to help young women see the scriptures through the lens of women's experiences, and thus, to forge a new understanding of God's word. “Nothing in the Gospels indicates that Jesus supported anything less than the full participation of women in the Reign of God. In fact, the bible begins with the story of males and females being created together in God's image, and ends with the Book of Revelation proclaiming that all believers will reign together with Christ.” (Claussen, 12)

The manual utilizes different approaches to learning such as art, faith sharing and music. It also provides the opportunity for quiet reflection, making it a retreat-like environment. The manual also includes journal reflection activities which allow young women to think about, write about or discuss their feelings and thoughts about the topic. The manual is divided in seven thematic sections: hearing the voices of biblical women, voices of wisdom, voices of courage, voices of friendship, voices that challenge, voices of leadership and a voice for women today. The voices of these women are shared in first-person narrative, making it quite personal and approachable.

The stories of these women are shared in such a way that women of today can find an echo in the voices of the past because there are certain themes such as courage, challenge and friendship that will never be outdated. It is the intent of this manual that the voices of the women of the past will help young women today find their own voice and the empowerment to become women of God.

Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America

Another resource that I was really happy to find was the website for Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America. *Women & Spirit* is a traveling exhibit prepared by the *Leadership Conference of Women Religious* (LCWR). The exhibit allows museums the opportunity to display artifacts, letters, and photographs that reveal the history of Catholic Sisters in America, and their role in the development of health care, education, science, and social justice in the new frontiers.

The history of Catholic Sisters in the United States begins with the arrival of the Ursuline Sisters in 1727, long before the *Declaration of Independence* in 1776. Many Sisters came to the United States and established schools, hospitals, and colleges. They provided social services that helped and continue to minister to countless people. "Through their enduring legacy and persistent vision, the nation's promise of equality and opportunity continues to be extended to all Americans, regardless of faith, color, nationality, or economic status." (*Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America*) The work of the Sisters has been, and continues to be, heroic to the highest degree and has often been uncompensated, a work for which they did not expect gratitude but which has significantly shaped American culture and society.

The exhibit has been touring the United States for three years, and education materials for the exhibit are available. There are also public programming opportunities which include the training of volunteer docents, film and speaker series. There are also media components, such as an introductory video projection experience, oral history listening stations, interactive and smaller videos which showcase archival footage.

The exhibit showcases journals of immigration experience, a handwritten letter from President Thomas Jefferson, pioneering healthcare devices such as an incubator ingeniously made by Sister Pulcheria Wuellner, and other countless items that speak of women religious' desire to follow in the footsteps of Christ to heal, to teach, to speak for, to inspire and to be companions to people they never knew, and in lands of which many times they hadn't even heard.

Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America speaks of women's courage, determination, unbounded love and faithfulness to the call they received from Christ. The unknown stories of their courage during the Civil War, the Gold Rush, the San Francisco Earthquake, the Texas Revolution, the Influenza Epidemic, the Civil Rights Movement, and most recently, Hurricane Katrina, is now documented and allows us to have a better understanding of American History as seen through the eyes of God's heroes.

The Church through History

The Church through History, by Msgr. Maurice O'Connell and Joseph Stoutzenberger, presents the history of the Church in the last twenty centuries. It is the goal of this manual to present the history of the Church as the continued development of the presence of Christ in the world. One could say that this manual presents the history of the Church as the continued development of salvation history. It introduces briefly the beginning of salvation history offered to Adam and Eve, then to Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets and then to Jesus. However, after this brief introduction, the manual focuses in depth on God's plan of salvation since the coming of Christ.

The manual begins with an opening chapter which lays out a strong foundation of the history of God's old covenant through Abraham and Moses, and then explains the new covenant through Jesus. Throughout the twelve chapters, the manual describes how the Church has dealt with the historical and cultural circumstances of the times.

There are different features of the text, such as prayer and music suggestions for each chapter, personal surveys to initiate student reflection, a different image of the Church for each chapter, and faith activities. The manual includes maps, images, charts, timelines, and biographical sketches of people important to the development of Church history. The manual also includes questions for group sharing. At the end of each chapter there are review questions to help students evaluate their knowledge of the material.

The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth

In 2008 the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (USCCB) presented the *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. The USCCB intended the framework to provide guidance in creating catechetical texts and materials to present the teaching of the Church for young people of high school age. The bishops also intended to help young people develop the necessary skills to answer and address the real questions in life and in their Catholic faith.

The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth by Patrick Tiernan was developed to use the framework presented by the USCCB as a semester course. *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth* is divided into seven units which incorporate the six curriculum divisions in the framework, plus an extra unit which explores Christian prayer.

The manual deals with beliefs, sacraments, morality and prayer, among other things. Basically, the author has taken the framework presented by USCCB and turned it into a readable, accessible and attractive manual for teens, and even young adults. While the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* contains the truths of our faith and it is written beautifully, it is not accessible to the average person who has not studied Catholicism's beliefs and practices. There was a book written for adults in the United States titled *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* which was written beautifully and was adapted to the needs and the circumstances of our reality as American Catholics. Yet,

there was a need for a book addressed to teens, so that they too could have a resource which is doctrinally correct, yet helpful in answering the questions that are hard to answer such as questions of morality, life after death, faith, etc.

The materials are structured in such a way that they can be presented independently or in several different sequences. The manual "serves as a command center for the course," (Tiernan et al., 5) providing key concepts to be taught, as well as allowing for the incorporation of other available resources.

One interesting viewpoint in this manual is the approach to the comprehension of the material presented. The author presents six different learning experiences to develop a mature understanding. At the end of each unit, each student should be able to explain, interpret, apply, perceive, empathize and reflect on the material learned.

In addition, there are handouts and tests and quizzes at the end of each chapter. The manual also provides creative projects to demonstrate understanding of the unit. These projects have a corresponding rubric that allows both teachers and students to evaluate their work. Overall, I found this manual very accessible and attractive both for the teacher and the student.

Supplement to Rooted in the Covenant

When I visited the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, better known as the Salesian Sisters, Sister Theresa Sironi, the Director of Scholastics showed me a new formation program that has not been approved yet but which seemed very much in line with what I was looking for. The manual is meant to be a supplement to *Rooted in the Covenant*, a formation program that they have had for several years. She shared that, as the years go by, circumstances change. The new members of her congregation come from more diverse backgrounds, and often with more education and life experiences. And so, her congregation found it necessary to create a supplement to *Rooted in the Covenant*, which enhances their program with other needed types of materials.

The *Supplement to Rooted in the Covenant* includes, for example, a profile of a good Salesian candidate. It gives very clear requirements for each formation stage. It includes application, cessation, and dismissal forms, course descriptions for each formation stage, and a table of recommended readings for each of the phases of initial formation, among other things.

These last two sections of the *Supplement to Rooted in the Covenant* include course descriptions for sisters in formation which are similar to college course descriptions. The Sisters begin to take these courses as aspirants. During aspirancy, postulancy, novitiate and temporary vows the sisters in formation take such courses as History of the Church, History of the Congregation, Italian, Salesianity, Theology, etc.

The manual explains where each Sister needs to be in each stage of formation and, like *Rooted in the Covenant*, it gives guidelines for the director, the formee, the small community in which the sister lives, and the congregation at large, for the formation of

each woman. It is different from *Rooted in the Covenant* in that the *Supplement* provides more direction, discusses specific instances, offers forms and applications, lists and a timeline.

Overall, I believe that the *Supplement to Rooted in the Covenant* was a needed companion to their original formation manual. It looks to me like a much needed resource for each formation director. Having this supplement saves them time in figuring out forms or having to create a timeline in the formation of the women they accompany in their formation. As an outsider, I was able to understand much of their formation process because it was outlined very clearly.

Key Points and Recurring Themes

There are several recurring themes in each of the manuals reviewed. First of all, every manual is **written specifically for young people**. The authors seem to have some kind of experience in working with young people, whether as teachers, youth ministers or clergy. They know young people and understand what is necessary to attract them to the study of history. The designs, the pictures, etc., that are included in the manuals are all very **appealing**. They are written to facilitate the study of history and make it thought-provoking. I found, too, that the manuals are **accessible** for both the student and the teacher.

There is another recurring theme throughout the manuals reviewed: they all include **creative approaches** to teaching history. I like the use of different activities to assess the comprehension of the material, such as the hands-on activities. For example, in *Church Women: Probing History with Girls*, there is an activity to teach Julian of Norwich's great imagination. This activity calls for the creation of stained glass windows that capture what the images are about. The activity is followed by a discussion of how Julian's images of Maker, Protector and Lover are different from and / or similar to the traditional images of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Another common thread is that all of the manuals include **questions for reflection** that provide the time and space for engaging young people in thinking, feeling and sharing. In most manuals, these reflection questions are presented in the form of **prayer activities** which allow young people to not only think, feel and share, but also to place the events of history within the community of faith, and allowing them to ask questions and to also engage the heart.

Most of the manuals include some form of **technology** as well, such as Power Points, videos, music, or additional websites for both the teacher and the student.

How These Findings Will Inform the Development of My Program

The results of this research demonstrate a need to incorporate creative activities into the systematic study of our Order's history. Without a creative approach, the history will be

unappealing and overwhelming to many. It is my intent to take the history and make it accessible.

The future implications for the creation of a systematic study of our Order's history are to continue to work on two things. First of all, I need to review the history in order to have a better grasp of it. Secondly, I need to continue talking to the newer members to learn where the teaching of our history has failed. I also want to talk to the older members to ask why the teaching of the history has not been appealing enough through the years, to see if I can learn why many of them are either not interested or why they have not studied the history in a more profound way. That will give me an advantage when I begin my work.

In reflecting on the design of this research project, I would make a few changes to my original project. First of all, I really like the fact that, in some of the books, the units can be taught independently of each other. When it comes to history, chronology is important, but I believe that I can manage the project as a series of workshops instead of a college course-like study.

I was pleased to see that other people have walked the road I am trying to walk. Their research and their work give me a platform from which to start. I really enjoyed reviewing their pedagogical approaches to the study of history. I was able to corroborate that the teaching of history does not have to be tortuous to those who are not inclined towards social studies. I was also able to observe that, when using creative approaches, the possibilities of engaging the student increases, which could lead to an increase in student comprehension.

Summary and Conclusions

One challenge that I encountered in this review of literature was the scarce use of technology. As I mentioned, most of the manuals included some form of technology such as Power Points, videos, music, or additional websites for both the teacher and the student. However, young people today hardly use e-mail anymore. Technology seems to evolve every day, and if I am going to work with newer members of the Order, I need to learn more about technology. One brief thought that crossed my mind was the creation of a Facebook page for Jeanne Chézard de Matel, our foundress. Perhaps it could be created as part of the class or workshop.

Another gap I encountered is in relation to the reflection questions. Although they are rich in meaning, and have the ability to engage hearts, minds and souls, I fail to see a connection between the events in history and an application to real life events. There is an exception for two Manuals, *Church Women: Probing History with Girls*, and *Biblical Women: Exploring their Stories with Girls*, which do a good job of connecting historical events with the present day. The rest of the manuals are lacking severely in their application to real life. For example, when discussing the first centuries of the second period in Church history, when the popes were not good role models, the reflection questions have more to do with comprehension than with application. I would like to see, for example, a connection to the recent events in the sexual abuse scandal, followed by a

brief reflection question on how we can come, as Church, to a place of hope and optimism for the future of the Church.

I hope that when I create my systematic study, it will help newer members to articulate with ease the events in our history. I hope to challenge them to deepen their relationship with Jeanne Chézard de Matel, our foundress. I hope that, by an in-depth study of the development of the Incarnate Word charism and spirituality, and through a reflection on our place in history, those in formation in our Order will be able to examine contemporary issues in the Church and the world. In so doing, I hope that this study, above all, will help us to discover a renewed understanding of our service to the Church.

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Manual Overview

The manual is organized in the following manner:

The strategies in *Extending the Incarnation through the Ages* are designed to help Sisters of the Incarnate Word in formation to come to a deeper understanding of the history of the Order. The manual is divided into six units. Each unit is organized in the following manner.

Short overview-Historical context: This, as the name implies, presents, in condensed form, the main points of each section within the unit. It also places each event within its political, social, cultural and ecclesial setting in order to gain a wider understanding of historical events.

Preparation/Presentation: The presenter needs to be familiar enough with the information in order to present it as if telling a story. The background information will help the presenter guide the Sisters in their faith sharing and exploration of the topic.

This section will also have suggestions for preparing the physical environment in order to allow for the faith sharing, options for creating spaces for ritual, prayer, instructions for materials needed for the activities, technology resources when appropriate, etc.

Where to find the readings: This gives the bibliography of the different books and documents where the events are found so that the sister researches the events within the units at a deeper level.

Example: *Complete Works* pp. 87-92, *100 Letters* pp. 23-40, *De Bely* pp. 56-75

Faith Sharing: This section is an invitation to connect personal experiences in everyday life with the historical, spiritual, and personal experiences of the Sisters of the past in order to probe and challenge the Sisters' experiences of how God can enter into their personal and communitarian history.

Questions: There are three types of questions to probe the interiorization of the material studied. Some of these questions can be used for quiet reflection, journal writing, prayer, or for assignments.

- a. Comprehension
- b. Reflection
- c. Connection

Profile: This section highlights the life of a Sister from each time period.

Creative Activity: This section provides different creative activities to support the learning process. There will be different approaches such as music, art, scripture, drama, etc. These activities provide the opportunity to assimilate the material, and in some units they provide the opportunity for multigenerational interaction, service and social action.

Part I
Introduction to Jeanne Chézard de Matel and the
First Incarnate Word Monasteries
1596-1670



Introduce the Sisters to Jeanne Chézard de Matel: her rich spiritual life and mystical experiences, her unbreakable commitment to founding an Order to extend the Incarnation, and the development of the first monasteries of the Order in America. The Sisters will be able to analyze the early history of the Order and the choices made by the early sisters in order to reflect on, express, and apply the lessons learned to today's world situations.

Infancy and Youth (1596-1617)



Jeanne Chézard de Matel was born in a small city of France named Roanne on November 6, 1596. Her father, Jean-Baptiste Chézard, and her mother, Jeanne Chaurier, had lost their first four children. With much prayer they asked God to grant them a child. Jeanne's birth, therefore, filled them with joy because she was God's gift to them. Two small children, who arrived at the house on the day of her birth to beg alms, were chosen to be the godparents of this long-awaited baby. Jeanne was baptized in St. Stephen's Church on that same day, November 6, 1596. There were eleven children born to the Chézard family but only four daughters and one son lived.

In her *Autobiography*, written between 1642 and 1660, Jeanne tells of God's loving care of her. As a young child, she asked such questions as: "What do I have to do to get to heaven?" "What do they do in heaven?" "How can I sit and be still in heaven where the blessed are seated with God on thrones of glory?"

When she was six years of age, her father taught her to read and she spent much time reading, especially the lives of the saints. Jeanne loved learning new prayers and quickly developed a special devotion to the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit and her guardian angel. As a child she felt drawn to fasting, and would often follow the example of her mother in giving alms.

When she was ten, Jeanne asked God for the grace to be able to understand Latin. On the first Monday of Lent in 1615, she received this gift. From that time on she made use of the scriptures, which were written in Latin, for spiritual nourishment and direction.

Jeanne also enjoyed listening to sermons. At the age of twelve, she heard a sermon in which it was stated that "the virgins follow the Lamb wherever He goes." She resolved at this time to remain a virgin. So deeply impressed was she by this experience that, eight years later when her father encouraged her to consider marriage, she immediately penned her first long writing on virginity. She ended the writing with a yes to God's call: "Divine Love! Word Incarnate, You call me. I am yours forever. I never want to belong to anyone but You."



As a teenager, Jeanne experienced a time of testing. Her fidelity was tested as she joined other young girls at parties and dances. She was an attractive and popular young woman and was able to converse easily with others. Soon she began to feel the tension between wishing to enter religious life and attending parties. She became irritable and confused. It was at that time that

Jeanne began to seek guidance through a regular confessor. Her struggles continued until Lent in 1615 when she felt a deep conversion and comfort. A voice inside was saying: "Confide in me. I have conquered your enemies." A new period in Jeanne's spiritual life began that day.

Further Reading:



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Faith Sharing Questions:



a. Comprehension:

How did Jeanne's early life prepare her to hear God's call?

How did Jeanne's time of testing strengthen her relationship with God?

b. Reflection:

How has God worked in your life to lead you on God's path?

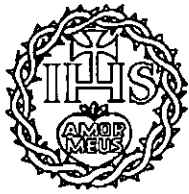
Recall a difficult time in your life that you now see has increased your intimacy with God.

c. Connection: *Jeanne grew up in an aristocratic culture. How did her early experiences affect her life as a religious? Jeanne surrendered a comfortable, safe, and enjoyable life*

in order to answer God's call. What might God be asking you to surrender in order to fully live your life in God?

Creative Activity: Think of people, places, things, attitudes that you would find hard to let go of if you knew that was a need in your life. Write them on small paper hearts and place them in a box or basket. As you begin to “let go” of them, take them out of your container and paste them on a page in your journal.

Preparing for her Mission (1617-1625)



Jeanne began to realize her vocation as foundress on Easter Sunday of 1617. She saw herself carrying a cross, followed by a group of women. Her prayer became deeper and more intense, and her writings reveal signs of ecstatic and mystical experiences.

Throughout this period, Jeanne's spirituality continued to center on the mystery of the Incarnation. Her confessors and spiritual guides encouraged her to write, which she did profusely even though she found writing difficult. Besides her many letters to her directors, she wrote the *Treatise on Three Sacred Marriages of the Word*, the *Treatise on the Four Sacred Marriages of Christ*, a reflection on the *Song of Songs* and a meditation on the Immaculate Conception.

Before 1625, Jeanne experienced a period of trials and times of depression and sadness, which brought on illness and an experience of the absence of God. Yet, God's plan continued to unfold. On June 22, 1625, Father Bartholomew Jacquinet, SJ, gave Jeanne permission to begin the Order which was to become the Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament. On this same day in prayer, she saw a crown of thorns within which was written the name of Jesus, and beneath it, a heart with three nails and the words, *Amor Meus* (My Love). This became the symbol of the Order and a sign that Jesus desires to rest on the heart of every Sister of the Incarnate Word.

Further Reading:



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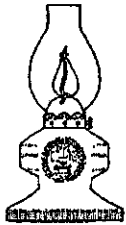
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Faith Sharing Questions:



a. Comprehension: *What were some of Jeanne's struggles when she set out to follow God's direction for her life?*

How was Jeanne able to remain faithful to her mission in times of discouragement?

b. Reflection: *What have been some of your struggles in life? What has God taught you about ways to remain faithful in dark times?*

c. Connection: *Identify some of the signs in your life that helped to lead you to want to be a Sister of the Incarnate Word. Express your gratitude to God for showing you the way.*

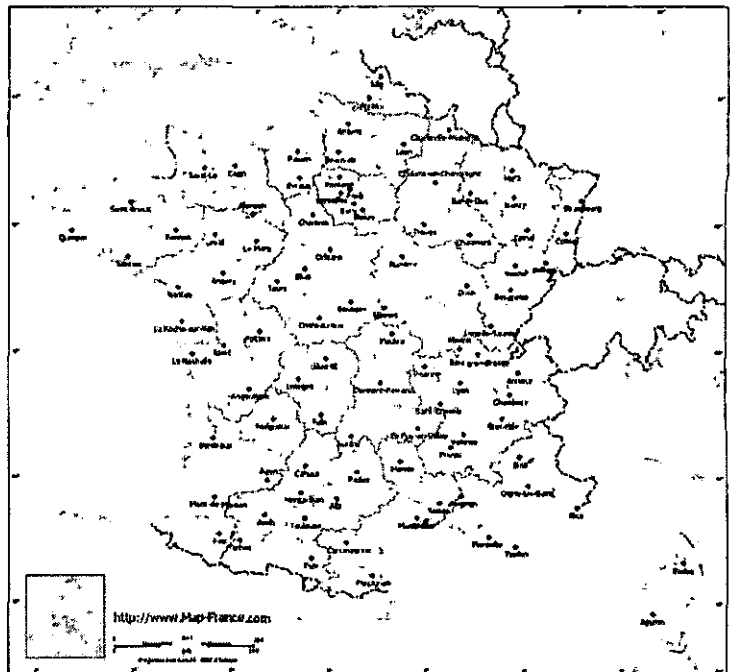
Creative Activity:

1625 was an important year for Jeanne, it marks the times before and after the founding of the Order. Create a poem reflecting on Jeanne's vision of the crown of thorns. If you have never written poetry you can follow the outline included at the end of this unit.

Foundations of the Order (1625-1655)

Jeanne was called to a special mission, to be an apostle of the Incarnate Word. Her mission was to begin an Order which would bring Jesus, the Word-Made-Flesh, into the World in a special way.

Jeanne began the Order in Roanne, which led to the establishment of monasteries throughout France – in Avignon (1639), Grenoble (1643), Paris (1644), and Lyons (1655). Though the foundation in Lyons was the first to be actively pursued, it was the last to be realized. Once the foundation in Lyons was canonically established, Jeanne turned her eyes toward her



hometown of Roanne where it all began. Jeanne desired to make five foundations in honor of the five wounds of Christ. It was Jeanne's hope and plan to enclose herself in the cloister, make her religious profession, and end her days in prayer and peace.

1625-Roanne

On July 2, 1625, the birth of the Order of the Incarnate Word became a reality when Catherine Fleurin and Marie Figent joined Jeanne in an abandoned Ursuline convent in Roanne, France, to form the first Incarnate Word community. Soon after this, Jeanne began writing the first Constitutions for her Sisters.

Within two years, the little community had grown to seven members and was able to take in boarders. On May 15, 1627, Jeanne visited Archbishop Charles Miron in Lyons who gave his approval to move the little community to Lyons. Thus it was that the Roanne house was never officially established.

1639-Avignon

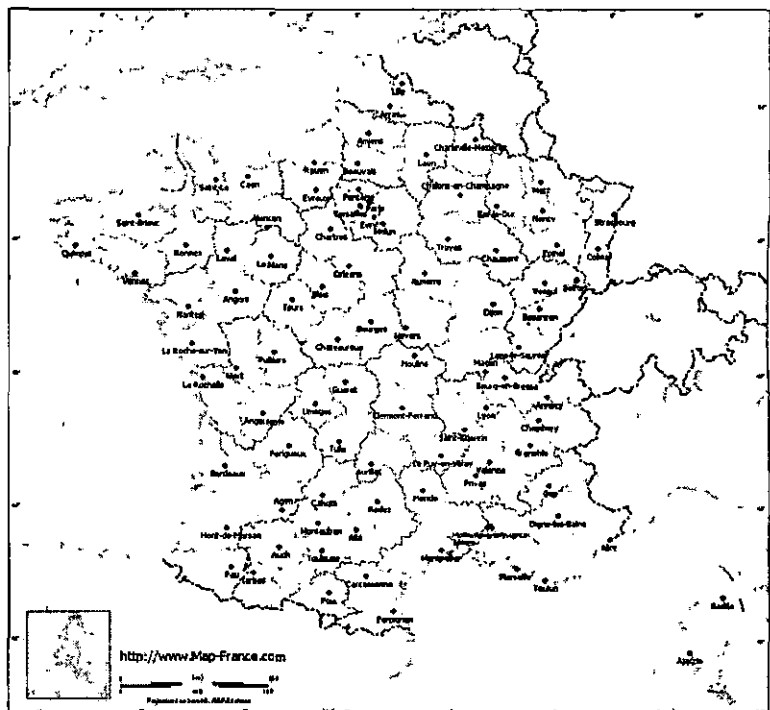


For fourteen years, Jeanne tried to establish a canonical foundation of the Order in both Lyons and in Paris, but God had destined the first canonical foundation to be in Avignon, France.

In April of 1639, Jeanne accepted an invitation to establish the Order of the Incarnate Word in Avignon, the city which had been the home of the popes for 70 years in the 14th century. Jeanne considered this event to be significant for the Order.

The Avignon city counselors and ecclesiastical authorities agreed to the foundation, and Jeanne was warmly welcomed in Avignon. On December 1, 1639, Archdiocesan authorities approved the Constitutions of the Order, and five years later (1644) Pope Innocent X confirmed them.

To organize her first canonically-founded monastery, Jeanne asked five members of the Lyons community to join her in Avignon. She secured a house in Avignon and set aside December 15, 1639, the octave of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, as



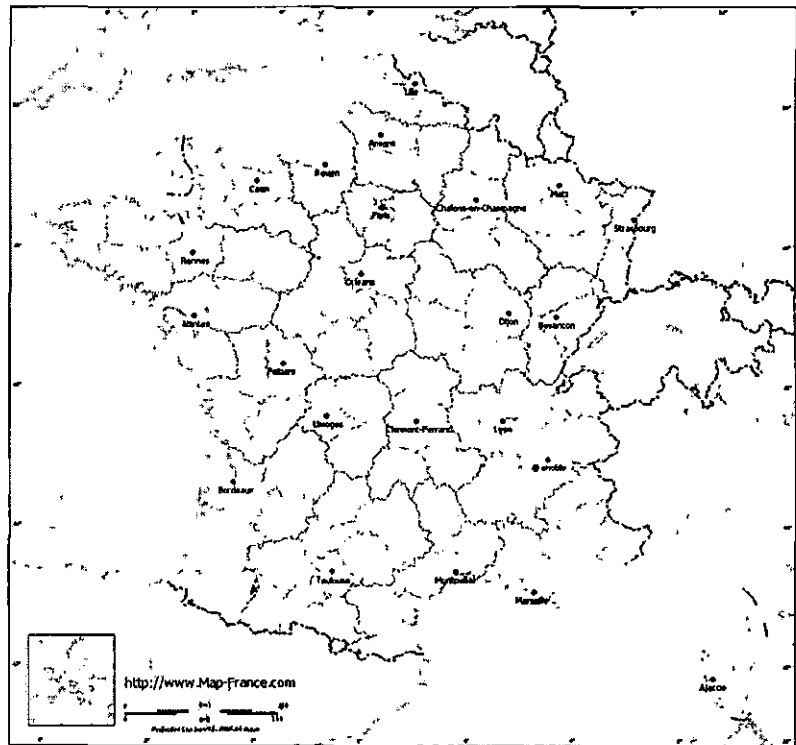
the date of the Establishment of the Order. On December 15, 1639, Jeanne assisted with the investiture of five women in the habit of the Order during the celebration of the Mass by Bishop Cohan. The five Sisters were Marguerite of Jesus Gibalin, Mary of the Holy Spirit Nallard, Therese of Jesus Gibalin, Jeanne of the Passion Fiot, and Mary of St. Joseph Malacher .

Five days later Jeanne wrote: "I find myself experiencing joy and confusion when I see what he has accomplished in Avignon. Through the leader of the Apostles, He invited me to come here to found the first convent of His Holy Order. It has been his will to do this in the second Rome, and He has chosen the least of his Daughters, from the depths of my weakness, to raise up again the throne of His glory and to show that He chooses the weak to confound the strong..." (Jeanne Chézard de Matel to the Abbe of St. Just, December 20, 1639)

1643-Grenoble

On February 12, 1643, while Jeanne was in Lyons, she was approached by two Jesuits and their friends who had come to invite her to Grenoble in order to establish her second monastery there.

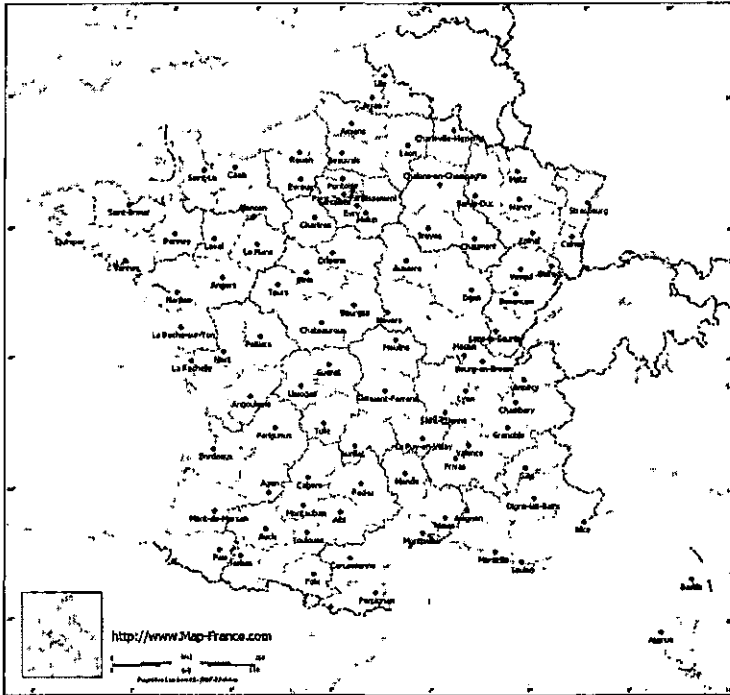
Jeanne felt pressured and was not comfortable with going to Grenoble. At this time, she was still trying to get canonical recognition for the monasteries in Lyon and Paris. Upon arriving in Grenoble, she also found that there was opposition to opening an Incarnate Word monastery in the city, since there was already an Ursuline monastery there. In spite of all these difficulties, she was able to establish this monastery in three months.



On May 20, 1643, Jeanne went to Avignon to ask three Sisters from there to become the founding community in Grenoble. This house was canonically established on June 3, 1643. The first vocations, however, were sent to Avignon for their novitiate because of the unrest in the city. Although the Sisters tried hard to strengthen the foundation, the monastery was suppressed in 1717 by the Bishop of Grenoble because of a shortage of vocations.

1628-Paris

In 1628, Jeanne left Lyons and went to visit her father in Paris, and also to pursue the possibilities of establishing a house there. Jeanne immediately received the papal approval of Urban VIII for a monastery in Paris. However, on November 29, 1628, when she petitioned the Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur de Gondy, he ignored the papal permission and tried to get Jeanne to unite her Order with the Order of the Blessed Sacrament of Port Royal. Jeanne refused to accept this proposal, and after four years, she returned to Lyons.



1644-Paris

After the new community had been established at Grenoble, Jeanne returned to Lyons, and from there traveled to Paris. She took with her four Sisters, including her faithful secretary, Sister Francis Gravier. She arrived there on August 15, 1643.

In 1628 the Duchess de Rocheguyon had helped financially to obtain the Decree of Approval from Pope Urban VIII for the Paris Monastery, but in 1643 she would not relinquish it without some demands of her own. Jeanne could not give in to her demands and had to apply to Rome for an

authenticated copy of the Decree. She also had to provide in full the temporal endowment of the Paris house as she had for all the others.

Finally, on January 1, 1644, the monastery was blessed, the cloister was established, and Mass was celebrated with joy. This became the third canonical foundation of the Order.

The monastery of Paris prospered from the outset, but Jeanne was never really happy there. Because of the political and religious turmoil in Paris at the time, it was suppressed in 1671, one year after Jeanne's death.



1627-Lyons

The first monastery of the Incarnate Word in Lyons was located on the hill of martyrs known as Gourgillon. This convent, previously owned by the Daughters of St. Claire, would be the cradle of the Order for more than a century and a half.

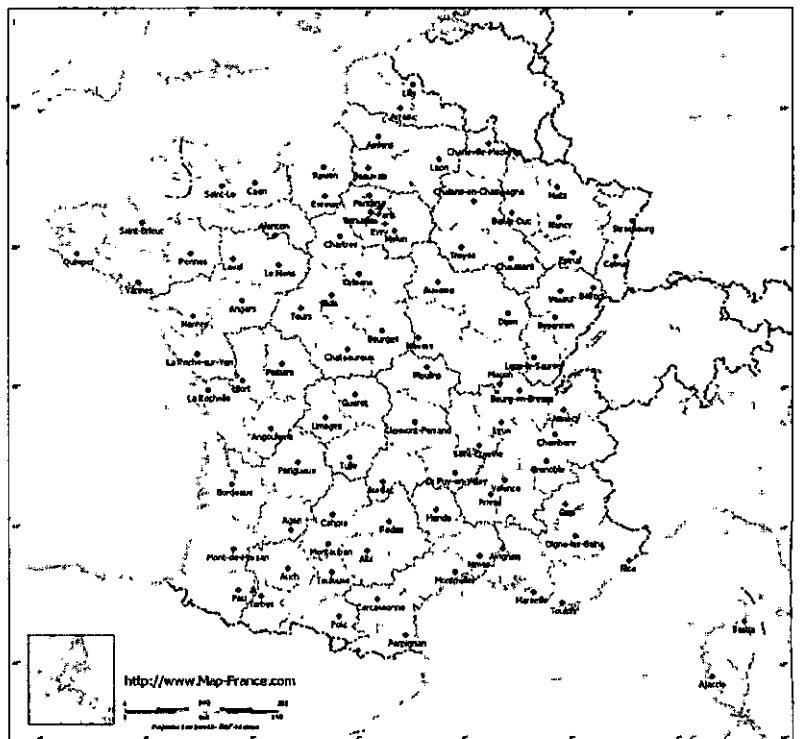
While waiting for the Bull of Approbation from Pope Urban VIII, Jeanne and her daughters lived religious life in community to the fullest extent possible. Before a monastery could be considered canonically approved in France at this time, permission had to be secured from secular, ecclesiastical and papal authorities. While waiting for these approvals, the aspiring religious could not wear the habit, pronounce public vows, or observe the cloister.



1632-Lyons

When Jeanne returned to Lyons on December 11, 1632, Cardinal-Archbishop Alphonse de Richelieu was the new Archbishop of Lyons. The little community had continued to grow and was successfully conducting a boarding school for young girls. Pope Urban VIII sent the Apostolic Decree of Establishment for this cradle monastery dated May 21, 1633, but the Cardinal refused to promulgate it. Jeanne called her community together and said: "My daughters and Sisters, you know that the Cardinal has not promised to make us religious." She then told her 30 companions that they might leave the Congregation and join other Orders; she would "...offer no opposition." Ten of them left and twenty pledged their confidence in Jeanne whom they recognized as foundress. Each member was determined even more to live religious life and be instructed in the Spirit of the Order under her guidance.

In 1642 Jeanne's spiritual director ordered her to write an account of her prayer life. She obediently began the task but, because of her steadily deteriorating eyesight, she asked Sister Frances Gravier to write for her while she dictated.

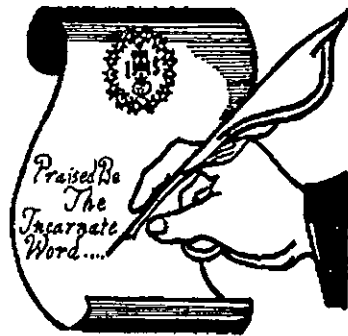


1640-Lyons

After only five months in Avignon, Jeanne returned to Lyons during the Easter season in 1640. She found coldness among some of her daughters which saddened her, but she said: "I let them go who were inclined to do so." Archbishop Richelieu had continued in his refusal to approve the Lyons foundation.

Jeanne continued to wait for Cardinal Archbishop Richelieu's approval of the Lyons foundation. One of Jeanne's directors had shared some of her writings with the great Cardinal Minister Richelieu of Paris. He, in turn, wrote to his brother, the Cardinal Archbishop Alphonse de Richelieu of Lyons, complaining that he did not tell him that such a holy person lived in his diocese.

The Cardinal Archbishop decided to check out this information, and so, on December 1, 1641 he arrived unexpectedly at the Incarnate Word Monastery and asked for Jeanne. He had doubted the authenticity of her writings and so he ordered those with him to collect all of her writings and notes. Then, in March he ordered Jeanne to write the account of her spiritual life over and to avoid communicating with her director, Father Gibalin.



She humbly protested, since all notes had been taken from her. However, with the help of her secretary, Sister Francis Gravrier, Jeanne completed the task which took from March, 1642 to June, 1642. Jeanne then forwarded the second copy to the Cardinal Archbishop. After working through the two copies and finding them almost identical, Cardinal Richelieu realized the authenticity of Jeanne's call. He asked her to continue writing her life, which she obediently did with the help of Sister Gravrier until the latter was taken from her.

1655-Lyons

Jeanne left Paris on October 17, 1653, and arrived in Lyons on All Saints' Day. Her community and the people of Lyons had begged her to return so that the monastery might be canonically established. There continued to be many frustrating delays until finally the new Archbishop of Lyons, Camille de Neuville, signed all the necessary papers, and the Lyons monastery was canonically established on November 1, 1655. Even then, financial difficulties and disciplinary problems delayed the investiture of the first Sisters there until 1661.

After so many frustrating delays, what joy there must have been for Jeanne to see six Sisters clothed in the habit of the Order in her beloved house on the hill of the martyrs in Lyons. Among these was one of Jeanne's original faithful companions, Catherine Fleurin.

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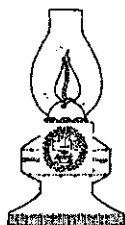
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De Rhodes, Mother Louise of the Resurrection. *General History of Our Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament of Lyons, France (1630-1706.)* Corpus Christi, TX: Private Printing. 2000. 7-53.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a. **Comprehension:** Describe some of the difficulties that Jeanne faced as she founded her five monasteries. Reflect on the patience and trust required of Jeanne as she waited on God's time.

b. **Reflection:** What are some of the issues you are struggling with today as you discern your life commitment? Where do you see the need for patience and trust, both in God and in yourself?

a) **Connection:** What are some of the challenges that religious congregations are dealing with today? How do these challenges reflect some of your own personal difficulties in your vocational discernment?

Creative Activity: Write a prayer in response to the challenges facing religious today as they seek to be faithful to God's will and the direction of Church leadership.

Write a dialogue between God and you concerning your experience of discerning God's will for you at this time in your life.

Final Years (1663-1670)

The last seven years of Jeanne's life were spent in Paris where she suffered a prolonged Calvary at the hands of one her own daughters, Mother Elizabeth Guerin, a very ambitious and self-willed woman. Later, she was at the mercy of Madame Christine Lenet, an Ursuline nun, who was forced upon the monastery as a superior and who brought much suffering to the whole community. Jeanne's health, which was never very good began to fail rapidly because of the terrible treatment.

On September 10, 1670, the beloved foundress received the last rites. She then asked for and received the habit of the Order, and made her profession of vows. A few hours later, she exclaimed: "Jesus, Mary and Joseph are here. Don't you see them? Let us go. They invite me to enjoy with them eternal repose." Then, very peacefully about 1:00 o'clock in the morning of September 11, 1670, she died saying in Latin: "Into your hands, Lord, I commend my Spirit." Then: "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus."

Jeanne Chézard died as she had lived: noble, courageous, steadfast amidst injustice and misunderstandings, meek, humble and constant in the face of opposition and persecution. Her confidence in God was unlimited, and she expected success from none but Him.

Jeanne's Death and Burial (1670)

When Jeanne died, her heart was removed, placed in a small lead casket and sent to Lyons.

Her body was buried in front of the lowest step of the altar in the Paris monastery. On August 27, 1772, her body was transferred to the Incarnate Word monastery in Avignon.

Further Reading:



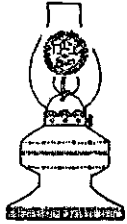
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Faith Sharing Questions:

- a. **Comprehension:** *Though Jeanne did not make profession of vows until the day she died, she lived as a professed Sister. Identify how she lived out poverty, celibate chastity and obedience during her years in community.*
- b. **Reflection :** *What is your understanding of the meaning of the vows of poverty, celibate chastity and obedience today? Which of the three vows seems to come naturally to you? Which of the three vows is most difficult for you to live?*
- c. **Connection:** *Compare Jeanne's experience as founder with one from modern history. Identify ways the understanding of the vows has changed through the centuries of religious life. What has brought about these changes?*

Creative Activity: Invite the Sisters to work together to create lines for a litany honoring Jeanne. For example, one line might be "Jeanne Chézard, crystal vase" and another one might be "Jeanne Chézard, daughter of the Church." Before the prayer for her canonization invite each sister to recite one line, followed by the group response "pray for us."

POEM OUTLINE

FIRST STANZA

I am (at this particular point in time)

I wonder (something you are actually curious about)

I hear (a sound, a voice)

I see (a sight, a scene)

I want (an actual desire)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

SECOND STANZA

I pretend (describe a secret wish)

I feel (an emotion related to the secret wish)

I touch (an imaginary touch)

I worry (something that really bothers you)

I ask (a question without a simple answer)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA

I understand (something you know is true)

I believe (something else you know is true)

I dream (something you actually dream about)

I trust (something you believe in)

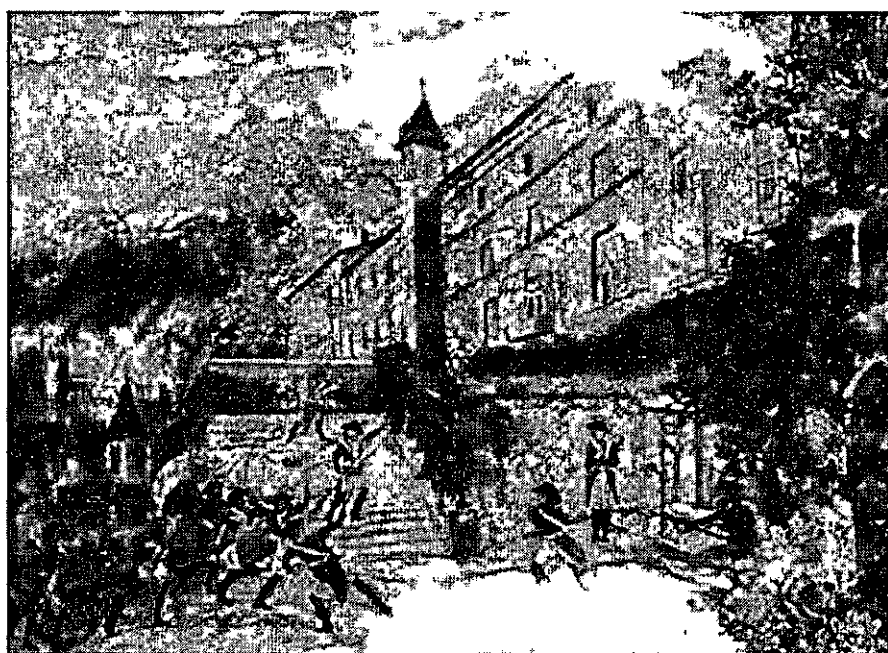
I hope (something you actually hope for)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

Part II

Growth, the French Revolution, and the Suppression of the Order

1670-1792



Introduce the Sisters to the French Revolution, its causes and consequences and how it changed the political, social and cultural norms in France. The Sisters will be able to analyze the impact of the French Revolution in the Order of the Incarnate Word. The Sisters will also be able to analyze the choices made by the early sisters in order to reflect on, express, and apply the lessons learned in history today.

Part II

Paris Monastery

1659-1672

In 1659, Mother Elizabeth Gerin from Grenoble was elected superior of the Paris Monastery. This election was held against the wishes of Jeanne de Matel, who responded, "I asked God to make his will known to me. It is negative. The Spirit tells me that if she (Mother Gerin) goes there, she will destroy this house..." In her Memoirs, Mother de Bely show clearly the sufferings brought to the monastery by this self-opinionated, stubborn Incarnate Word Sister. After her arrival in Paris, in 1663, Jeanne was subjected to the vicious scheming of Mother Gerin and suffered greatly under her.

Many other difficulties arose because there was no separation of Church and state, and no Canon Law to protect the rights of religious. Mother de Bely describes the incredible state of religious life in France in the 17th century. The Sisters at the Incarnate Word Monastery in Paris were even more helpless because their main opponent was Prior Dom Tixier, who had been appointed as their protector and spiritual father.

In the Parliamentary Act on June 18, 1670, numerous religious houses in Paris were suppressed. In July, 1670, the Archbishop of Paris decreed that nuns of various orders would be brought to the Incarnate Word Monastery. Prior Dom Tixier made every effort to have Madame Christine Lenet, an Ursuline nun, appointed as superior of the monastery.

The Archbishop tried to stop the proceedings but, on July 21, 1670, Prior Tixier, with other Archdiocesan officials, succeeded in forcing their way into the Monastery and installing Madame Lenet as superior. Thus began a reign of terror by a woman who imposed unbelievable persecution on the whole community, including Jeanne, who had predicted the fall of the Paris Monastery before her death.

In a document dated September 4, 1671, Parliament ordered the suppression of several religious houses, including the Incarnate Word Monastery of Paris. The order was given at the request of Prior Dom Tixier.

Mother Jeanne de Bely was living at the Incarnate Word Monastery at that time, and in her Memoirs she describes in detail the events leading to the terrible day on May 3, 1672, the Feast of the Finding of the True Cross, when the nine Incarnate Word Sisters were given extreme treatment as they were forced from their monastery at five o'clock in the morning. In time, the Sisters were transferred to the monasteries of Lyons, Avignon, and Grenoble. All their land and property became that of the general hospital in Paris.

Further Reading:



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Faith Sharing Questions:



a) *Comprehension:*

*How was Jeanne's spirituality revealed through her calvary in Paris?
How would you describe the response of the Incarnate Word sisters to their unfair treatment?*

b) *Reflection:*

Jeanne suffered greatly at the hands of both Mother Guerin and Madame Lenet and always responded with gentleness. How have you responded when faced with unjust treatment?

Pray for healing and a spirit of forgiveness when you recall times of unjust treatment.

c) *Connection:*

How is the style of leadership of Mother Guerin and Madame Lenet still present in our Church today? What lesson can we draw from Jeanne's response?

What current world events have influenced our values and the way we live today?

Creative Activity: Ask three Sisters in formation to role-play Madame Lenet, Mother Guerin and Jeanne coming together after 400 years to reconcile. What do they have to say to each other? What would they say to you?

Expansion of the Order (1671 – 1790)

After Jeanne's death and the suppression of the Paris Monastery, the Order felt a great loss, but it continued to grow and other monasteries were founded.

Grenoble

In 1683, the Grenoble community moved to Sarrian and then Orange. Ten years later this city was ceded to the Calvinists as a city for Calvinism, so the community moved to Roquemaure.

Lyons

The Monastery of Lyons continued to flourish. In 1697 it made a foundation in Anduze, which was infested by the Camisards, the obstinate enemies of religious orders. One of the founding sisters of Anduze was Mother Louse de Rhodes, who wrote the *General History of Lyons, 1678-1688*.

Avignon

The Incarnate Word Monastery in Avignon continued to be one of the most flourishing convents in that city.

The French Revolution (1789 – 1792)



King Louis XVI

In 1790, the four Incarnate Word Monasteries, Lyons, Avignon, Roquemaure and Anduze- were all carrying on the work begun by Jeanne.

Louis XVI succeeded his grandfather, Louis XV, and refused to follow the advice of his ministers that he make some sorely needed reforms. By 1787, the king's treasury was empty. There was severe depression, decline in production, unemployment and famine.

The population consisted of three estates. The French clergy in the hierarchy comprised the first estate; the nobility comprised the second estate. Both were generally aligned with and subservient to the king and together they comprised 5% of the population and owned 1/3 of France. Since the clergy and nobility were exempt or simply evaded paying taxes, the burden fell heavily on the peasants, who, with the bourgeois (middle class) comprised the third estate (95% of the population).

The regular clergy, on the other hand, were generally from the lower social classes, and the hierarchy tended to have little to do with them. As a result, the parish priests usually sympathized with the common people.

In 1789, the third estate declared itself the National Assembly, and with the storming and destruction of the Bastille, (the state prison in Paris), came the



revolutionary events which brought down the French monarchy.

In July, 1790, the Assembly adopted the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. It provided salaries for bishops and priests and pensions for members of religious orders. All clergy were to be elected by representatives of the laity; none were to seek papal confirmation. In addition, all religious houses in France were to be suppressed by the decree of the revolutionary government.

Further Reading:



Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*. Mexico City: Private Printing. 1998. 101-110.

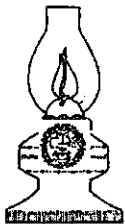
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Annals of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament of Lyon, 1st Part: From the Foundation until the Revolution 1627-1792. 97-107.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) **Comprehension:** What were the causes of the French Revolution? Why were the clergy and religious made to suffer during the Revolution?

b) **Reflection:**

What have been some chapters in your life that have ended rather abruptly and unexpectedly? How have you dealt with them? What good came from those experiences?

c) **Connection:**

What do you do when you others being treated unfairly or excluded from social groups? Who are the groups most excluded in our society today? In our Church? In our communities? In our world?

Some see religious life today as gradually dying since most communities have fewer numbers and an increase in older members. What gives you hope that religious life will continue to serve the Church and the world into the future?

Creative Activity: Write a journal entry as if you lived during the French Revolution Include a creative and historical eye witness account for one of the following events:

- The Estates System/ Louis XVI in power

- The Estates General
- Forming the National Assembly
- Tennis Court Oath
- Storming of the Bastille
- The Execution of Louis XVI
- Reign of Terror
- Rule of the Directory
- Napoleon takes Power
- Abolishment of aristocratic title
- Abolishment of monasteries, prohibition of monastic vows

Suppression of the Monasteries of the Incarnate Word (1790)

When the revolution swept through the country, all the houses of the Incarnate Word—Avignon, Lyons, Anduze and Roquemaure—were quickly suppressed by the 1790 decree, as were all other religious houses in France.

Avignon

There is evidence that some Sisters of the incarnate Word were among those who gave up their lives to prove their love for Christ during the French Revolution.

Abbe P.G. Penaud states: "The Convent of Avignon, in particular, was one of the most flourishing and most beloved in that city. The memory of the daughters of the Incarnate Word, many of whom sealed their faith with their blood, has remained fresh and green in this Catholic city." In addition, some of the Sisters waited in exile or in the homes of relatives, and a few lived to see the Order restored after the French Revolution.

Anduze

During the French Revolution Anduze was infested by the Camisards, the most obstinate enemies of religious orders. Every kind of wickedness was to be feared at their hands. Yet, according to Panaud, when the besieged Incarnate Word Convent in Anduze was left almost destitute of aid, one of the fanatics caused bread and wine to be passed over the walls to diminish the sufferings of the Sisters.

Lyons

In the Annals of Lyons there is a lengthy description of that "horrible day" when the Sisters were dragged to prison amidst the hooting, ill-treatment, and fearful cries of the maddened crowd

The Camisards were any of the Protestant militants of the Bas-Languedoc and Cévennes regions of southern France who, in the early 18th century, organized an armed insurrection in opposition to Louis XIV's persecution of Protestantism. Camisards were so called probably because of the white shirts (Languedocian camisa, French chemise) that they wore to recognize one another in night fighting.



which demanded their death. "They were tormented in every way and urged to pronounce the oath which their conscience forbade them to take, but they remained invincible." They were brought back to their convent where everything was confiscated. On September 29, 1792, they were expelled from their monastery. They did not know where to go and feared to seek refuge with friends or family because "that act of charity was punishable by death."

It is not probable that any of the religious of Lyons died on the scaffolds, but two of them were imprisoned for some time. They owed their release from prison to the passing of a mouse through their cell. Their peace of conscience joined to their abandonment in the hands of God kept them joyful so that when they saw the little animal running near them, they burst into laughter. The jailor was surprised at their joy to which he was unaccustomed among the other prisoners. He concluded that young women who were so joyful could not have done much evil. So he took it upon himself to release them.

The religious of the Incarnate Word did not wait until the last moment to remove from their house whatever could be saved. They were successful in saving furniture and pictures, a large safe containing the documents of the Monastery, some beds, a picture of our Lady of Loreto, two pictures of St. Joseph holding in his hand the Monastery of Avignon, and two beautiful pictures which Mother Jeanne Marie of St. Louis Imbert had embroidered.

They also saved, a portrait of Jeanne and one of Catherine Flurin, as also nearly all of Jeanne's autographic writings and many objects that had belonged to her. When the Monastery of Lyons was reestablished, it joyfully welcomed back all its treasures. Thanks to these courageous Sisters the Order enjoys the writings of Jeanne centuries later.

Further Reading:



Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*. Mexico City: Private Printing. 1998. 101-110.

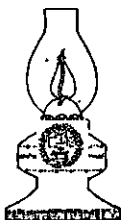
Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing.

1971. 47-51.

Mother St. Pierre of Jesus, *Life of the Reverend Mother Jeanne Chezard de Matel*. San Antonio, Tx: Woodward & Tiernan Printing Co. 1922. 602-623.

Annals of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament of Lyon, 1st Part: From the Foundation until the Revolution 1627-1792. 97-107.

Faith Sharing Questions:



- a) **Comprehension:** How was the faith of the Sisters in the different monasteries revealed during the events of the French Revolution? How was their hope revealed?

b) Reflection:

What do the scriptures say about suffering? What do they say about religious persecution? Reflect on any, person, desire, weakness, or anger that may be holding you imprisoned. Pray for freedom and guidance.

c) Connection:

What has been the response of the Church to religious persecution in the Middle East, Africa and other countries?

Creative Activity: Write an imaginary journal entry by a Sister of the Incarnate Word the day after you are expelled from the monastery. Include details. What are you feeling? How do you react? How do you choose to respond to the violence? What in your life makes you respond in such a way?

Part III

Restoration of the Order in Azerables

1790-1821



Introduce the Sisters to the aftermath of the French Revolution and the efforts of Rev. Stephen Denis, Sister Marie Anne Chinard and others in re-founding the Order of the Incarnate Word in Azerables. The Sisters will analyze the commitment and hard work of the Sisters in order to continue the mission begun by Jeanne Chézard de Matel. The Sisters will be able to analyze the choices made by the early sisters in order to reflect on, express, and apply the lessons learned in our current historical context.

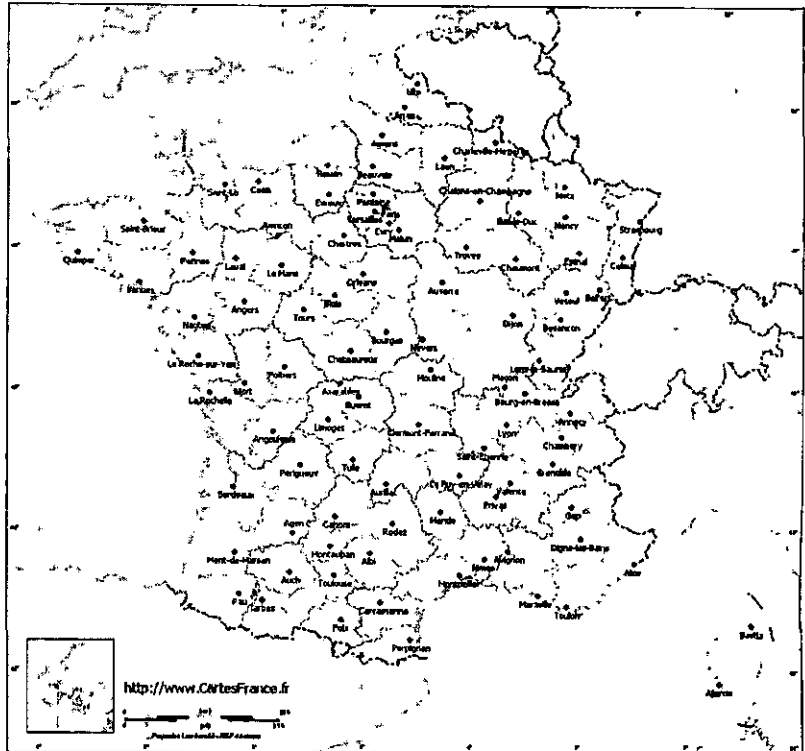
Part III

Exiles in Italy (1792)

At the time of the French Revolution, Sister Marie Anne of the Holy Spirit Chinard left the Incarnate Word Monastery in Lyons and went into exile in Ravenna, Italy. While she was there, Abbe Stephen Denis, also in exile, became her confessor. Through her, Father Denis became familiar with the Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament.

Return to France (1801)

On October 9, 1801, Sister Marie Anne of the Holy Spirit returned to Lyons with Father Denis and other companions. Father Denis was assigned to Azerables in France, and correspondence between the two became less frequent and finally ceased.



The Beginning of the Azerables Foundation (1806)

By nature, Father Denis was a very devout humble man and he faithfully practiced mortification. He found time for contemplation in the midst of a very busy life; he was often in ecstasy and rapture. Because of his deep faith and love of God, Father Denis attracted the attention of many people, including three very special women: Margaret Joinin, Louise Gayand and Mary Mollat. All belonged to the parishes in the Diocese of Limoges.

When these three women heard that Father Denis had returned to Azerables, they, too, went there. When they arrived, they asked him to allow them to share in his apostolic work. Thus in 1806, in a humble house, he formed them into a religious community, and with the approval of ecclesiastical authorities, drew up for them simple rules of life. Then, with the permission of Monseigneur Dubourg, those first Sisters took the habit, and on the 5th of July, 1807, they pronounced their vows.

Father Denis still had no intention of re-establishing the Order of the Incarnate Word. However, during the Mass of investiture, he distinctly heard these words: "Begin again, in these virgins,

whom you offer me today, the Order of the Incarnate Word; that is the name I wish you to give, and no other." There could no longer be any doubt in the mind of Father Denis as to what to do.

These three young women, under the guidance of Father Denis opened a boarding school, gave catechetical instruction and visited the sick.

Further Reading:



Annals of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament of Azerables. The Story of the Restoration of the Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament after the French Revolution: Vol. I 1801-1827. 1-42

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, (Private Printing, 1998), 1-15. 111-125.

Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 51-55

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

What were the struggles of Father Denis and Sr. Anne Chinard during their exile? What were the struggles of their first three Sisters with whom Father Denis began the new group in Azerables? How did God bring good from the unjust treatment of religious in the early 18th century? What circumstances led to the re-establishment of the Order of the Incarnate Word?

b) Reflection:

Re-establishing the Order of the Incarnate Word in Azerables reaffirmed the purpose of the Order which is to make the Incarnate Word present in the world. In what ways do you make the Incarnate Word present in the world today? What circumstances have led you to a desire to live as a religious?

c) Connection:

What qualities of mind and heart do leaders in the Church need today? How can "being the presence of the Incarnate Word" in your part of the world help to continue Jeanne's mission?

Creative Activity: Create a poster with the following words: "You will give to these women...the name of *Sisters of the Incarnate Word*." Include artwork that reflects the themes of hope, faithfulness and courage. Create a collage of current world situations in which the presence of the Incarnate Word is greatly needed. Use newspapers, magazines or the internet for photos and reports. Write a prayer for the people involved in those situations.

A Link to Lyons (1816)

Nine years after establishing the Order of the Incarnate Word, Father Denis sent a letter to Sister Marie Anne Chinard in Lyons, inviting her to Azerables. She was overjoyed when she learned what Father Denis had accomplished. After much difficulty, she arrived in Azerables on October 28, 1816, bringing with her the habit, Rules, Constitutions, directories, office books, custom books, a manuscript copy of the life of Jeanne Chézard de Matel by Father Boisieu, SJ, and other writings of the Order.

Sister Marie Anne found that this new foundation bore little resemblance in spirit or practice to the Order that Jeanne had established. It seemed to have been inspired by the need for rigidity and extraordinary self-denial to balance off the evil caused by the French Revolution. With humility, discretion, love and intelligence, Sister Marie Anne introduced the Azerables community to the spirit of the Order founded by Jeanne, a gentle spirit of joy, charity and faithfulness. Abbe Denis and the entire community formally accepted all she offered them. Within a month she was named novice director, and on November 20, 1817, she was elected superior. The Azerables community enjoyed three years of direction from Sister Marie Anne. She was described as "active and peaceful, firm and gentle, with the tenderness and charity of a mother." She died on September 8, 1819. She was 66 years old and she had spent only three years in Azerables. The community mourned her deeply.

Further Reading:



Annals of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament of Azerables. The Story of the Restoration of the Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament after the French Revolution: Vol. I 1801-1827. 42-49.

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, (Private Printing, 1998), 1-15. 126-127.

Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 55-59.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

How did Sr. Marie Anne succeed in restoring the community to the practices of the Order before the French Revolution?

Reflection:

Father Denis was a blessing in Sr. Marie Ann Chinard's life and she in turn was a blessing in the life of the young community of Azerables. Who has been a person in your life who has blessed you with her/his love and gift of presence? Who has influenced you in your growing intimacy with the Incarnate Word?

b) Connection:

How do people belonging to different generations respond to change in your community? How do you respond to change as you get older?

Creative Activity: Compare the story of Sr. Marie Anne Chinard and the young Sisters of Azerables with that of Ruth and Naomi in the Book of Ruth 1-4. Naomi, like Sr. Marie Anne Chinard was a mentor and a place of safety for Ruth. What did Ruth and the young Sisters in Azerables bring to the relationship?

How do the story of Ruth and Naomi and the story of Sr. Marie Anne Chinard and the Sisters in Azerables reveal a deeper story of trust, openness and transformation?

Create a conversation in which Sr. Marie Anne Chinard introduces the sisters in Azerables to the true spirit, the gentle spirit, of the Incarnate Word Order.

A Link to Avignon (1818)

Sister Mary Victoria Angelique du Quinquarant arrived in Azerables on November 20, 1818. All during the French Revolution, she had one dream, to see the Order re-established and to die in it. She patiently waited until the Revolution was over. When she heard of the efforts of the reestablishment of the Order in Azerables she hurried there.

She took with her, from Avignon, the precious remains of Jeanne, which her family had lovingly guarded the years of the dispersion of the Order. With her arrival the Azerables community also acquired some of Jeanne's writings and a great number of old documents referring to the history of the Order. Her presence in Azerables, though brief, was a blessing for the little community. She died on March 6, 1819, just five months after arriving. Five years later, when her remains were transferred from the cemetery of the parish to the one in the Monastery, her body was found incorrupt.

A Second link to Lyons (1818)

Sister Agnes de St. Paul Duchamp was invited to come to Azerables by Mother Marie Anne. After being expelled from her beloved Lyons Monastery, she at first went back to her family. Her parents, at first, insisted that she take the oath to save herself from the persecution. However, she remained firm in her faith and became a nurse to care for the sick. She later went to live with her sister and teach her children. Then, for 18 years she lived in solitude and consecrated her life to teaching the poor in the country.

Sister Agnes' greatest sorrow was the idea of dying outside the Order. She had tried to restore the Monastery of Lyon but had been unsuccessful. She arrived in Azerables in 1818 at the age of 70, and was soon given the office of director of novices. When Mother Marie Anne died, Sister Agnes de St. Paul was elected superior. The memoirs describe her as gentle, alert, refined, patient, a lover of silence, poverty and charity.

At her death on July 30, 1825, she became the last of the three Sisters which the Incarnate Word had chosen to ensure that future generations of Incarnate Word Sisters would know the gentle spirit of Jeanne.

Further Reading:

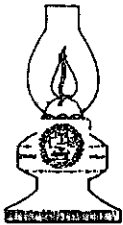


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Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, (Private Printing, 1998), 1-15. 127-134.

Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 55-59.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

How did the arrival of Sr. Angelique and Sr. St. Paul contribute to the life of the community in Azerables?

b) Reflection:

Reflect on your own abilities to be patient and accepting. What do you need to work on in order to contribute to the life of the community)? What is your dream for the Order?

c) Connection:

How does our society in general deal with those who are different? How do we deal with delays? What would you want to be remembered for in future generations?

Creative Activity: The section focuses on the unlikely friendship and respect of Sisters who were from different backgrounds and had very different religious formation.

Create a prayer board with the heading "Daughters of God." Pin pictures and names of women who are marginalized in society because of their religion, socio-economic status or beliefs. Encourage others to pray for them.

Write a prayer to the sisters who made it possible for us to continue Jeanne's mission today in eleven countries. Ask them for a share of their spirit of commitment.

The Fire that Resurges (1821)

From the Azerables foundation came the rebirth of the Order of the Incarnate Word. These three surviving religious of the Monasteries of the Incarnate Word before the French Revolution were the links that united the past with the present. They were chosen by God, despite their age and infirmity to restore the Order. The fire in the hearts of these three courageous women enkindled a resurging fire which restored the spirit of the Order in the little community in Azerables. The Monastery of Azerables eventually restored the Monastery of Lyons. From this resurging fire in Lyons many more foundations were established.

Eventually, when the Azerables Monastery closed, the last four Sisters joined the in Sisters in Lyons.

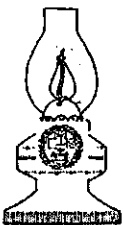
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Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, (Private Printing, 1998), 1-15. 134.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

What were the events that contributed to the eventual closing of the Monastery in Azerables?

b) Reflection:

To what degree does your hope for the expansion of the Order determine the way you live and the daily choices that you make? How can you add "fire" to your relationship with the Incarnate Word and your desire to serve?

c) Connection:

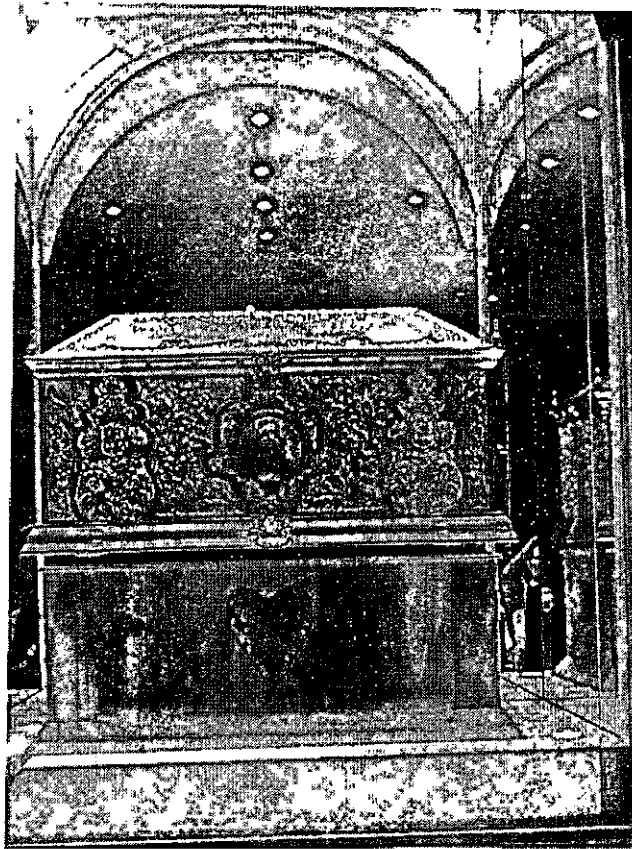
What challenges does our Church currently experience in her relationship with people of other faiths? Has our Church been gentle in her efforts to evangelize others? How can we evangelize without words?

Creative Activity: research the life of Hildegard of Bingen and her efforts to transform the society of her time through her writing, preaching and musical talent.

Play a recording of one of her songs and discuss the meaning it holds for you. Bring a recording of a song that has touched your life and share with the group the significance of the song for you.

Part IV Lyon Re-established

1821-1852



Introduce the Sisters to Rev. Anthony Galtier and Sister Angelique Hiver and their efforts in re-establishing the monastery of Lyon from which many more foundations were established, including those in America. The Sisters will analyze the efforts and hard work of the Sisters in order to continue the work begun by Jeanne Chezard de Matel. The Sisters will also be able to analyze the choices made by the early sisters in order to reflect on, express, and apply the lessons learned in history today.

Part IV

Lyon Re-established (1821-1852)

The re-establishment of the Order of the Incarnate Word in Azerables became the fire that enkindled the rebirth of the Order. The humble Monastery of Azerables founded five monasteries: St. Benoit (1821), Evaux-les Bains (1827), Lyon (1832), St. Junien (1834) and St. Iriex (1836).

The re-establishment of the Monastery of Lyon had been a dream that the community never forgot. Mother Marie Anne Chinard had tried to re-establish it but was never able to. Once in Azerables, the community made many plans to re-establish the monastery of Lyon. However, the community of Azerables, having founded other Monasteries, did not have the personnel or the economic means to go back to Lyon. Evidently, God wanted the Order of the Incarnate Word to return to the Monastery of Lyon, the one which Jeanne loved. God fulfilled the dream of the community through Father Anthony Galtier and Rosalie Hiver.

Father Anthony Galtier (1821)

Father Galtier, a priest of the city of Lyon, wanted to use his family inheritance to establish a religious order. It seemed providential that Father Denis, the restorer of the Order, had been trying to re-establish the monastery of Lyon. The paths of both priests met through the intervention of the Monsignor Gaston de Pins, the new Bishop of Lyon and a former Bishop of Limoges. Bishop de Pins convinced Father Galtier to help the daughters of Jeanne to return to Lyon.

Rosalie Hiver (1825)

In 1825, Rosalie Hiver, a 23 year old woman from Belmont, Loire, France, became a postulant with the Hospital Sisters of Lyon. After she was already professed and had served in the hospital of the Antiquaille of Lyon for seven years, she went to Father Galtier for spiritual direction. She had made rapid progress in prayer and in the spiritual life but felt that God was calling her to another form of life. Father Galtier became convinced that she was called to a more contemplative life rather than that of a hospital sister.

Father Galtier had heard about the re-establishment of the Incarnate Word Order at Azerables, and after much prayer and consultation with Church authorities, he proposed that Rosalie Hiver be admitted to this community.

Further Reading:

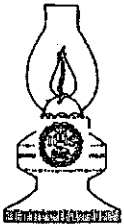


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Biography of Father Antoine Galtier. Honorary Canon of the Primate, Restorer, Founder and Chaplain of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word in Lyon, France. Born June 12, 1798-Died May 15, 1888. Victoria, TX: Private Printing. 1997. 1-8

Faith Sharing Questions:



- a) **Comprehension:** What would be the qualities of an ideal restorer? In other words, what should Father Galtier have been looking for when he searched for someone to help him restore the Monastery of Lyon?

How do you see God's Hand in the restoration of the Order of the Incarnate Word?

Reflection: What qualities do you hope to find in the Sisters you live with? List the five most important qualities. What qualities do you think the Sisters would hope to find in you? How can you cultivate these qualities in yourself? List some practical strategies for being the person you want to be.

- b) **Connection:** How does your congregation cultivate leadership qualities in the new members?

Creative Activity: Interview an older Sister. You might compose your own list of questions for her, or ask some of the following:

1. What are the three events in your life that you remember most vividly?
2. Can you describe one of these events?
3. What things have you done that you are most proud of?
4. What did you find most difficult in your life?
5. What did the Church teach you about the role of women in the Church when you were young?
6. Have your views about women in the Church changed? If so, how?
7. What would be, in your opinion, the most important thing that a new member in this Congregation should learn?

A Link to Azerables (1832)

In June of 1832, Rosalie Hiver became a postulant at Azerables and began the studies of religious life in the Order. Here, as at the Antiquaille, her solid piety, complete obedience, utter devotion to duty, and pleasant and gracious disposition earned her the love and good will of all. It was soon evident that she was a person with many natural gifts for leadership. Father Denis soon realized what a beautiful soul she was.

Rosalie was indeed a beautiful person. The community loved her and her superiors saw in her a privileged soul. However, at the beginning she had doubts about her ability for leadership and her true call. Was this the life to which she was really called? How could she help people now that she was cloistered? She missed her life in the Antiquaille and doubted that God could have chosen her to restore the Monastery of Lyon. In her moments of darkness she prayed and realized that even if she had chosen wrongly she still wanted to offer herself to God. She still wanted to know God's will, wanted only what pleased God. The answer came soon. God accepted her prayer by restoring her peace.

Further Reading:

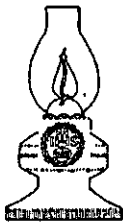


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Biography of Father Antoine Galtier. Honorary Canon of the Primate, Restorer, Founder and Chaplain of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word in Lyon, France. Born June 12, 1798-Died May 15, 1888. Victoria, TX: Private Printing. 1997. 9-10

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) **Comprehension:**

How was God's timeless promise present to Rosalie in the midst of her doubts? Describe and evaluate Rosalie's process of discernment.

Reflection: *Leaving her life in the hospital to become a cloistered Sister took an enormous trust on Sister Rosalie Hiver's part. Think of an instance in your own life when you have needed great courage and trust. Describe it and then answer the following questions:*

What helped you in the situation? Whom did you rely on? What did the situation teach you about your relationship with God? Where was God in that experience?

- b) **Connection:** Despite her doubts Sister Mary Angelique became a leader in the restoration of the Monastery of Lyon. How is her style of leadership different from the one promoted for world leaders today by the media?*

Creative Activity: Look through the scriptures and find three different models of leadership. Cite some specific examples of biblical leaders that you admire, and explain why you have chosen these.

An example could be Miriam leading the women in song and dance after the crossing of the sea.

Sister Mary Angelique Hiver (1832)

On October 2, 1832, Rosalie Hiver received the habit of the Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament and was given the name Sister Mary Angelique Hiver of the Incarnation. Shortly after this she returned to Lyons with a postulant, Marie Eugenie Gravier, and Mother Colombe, the former superior of Azerables, the later designated for the same office in the new monastery.

Lyons Canonically Restored (1833)

Father Galtier purchased a beautiful property and building on the hill of the Fourviere for the Sisters. However, it took the renters five months to vacate the building. During those five months the small community received the hospitality of Ms. Pauline Jaricot, future founder of the Word for the Propagation of the Faith, which would be later constituted in Rome as the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

Five months later, on Pentecost Monday, May 27, 1833, the chapel of the new monastery, located on the hill of Fourviere, was blessed and the enclosure imposed. The cradle of the Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament was for the second time canonically established in Lyon. Soon a former member of the Lyon Monastery, hearing heard with joy of the restoration, joined the little community. Sr. Marie of the Blessed Sacrament Savy had in her possession the precious heart of Jeanne Chéizard de Matel, as well as many of her writings, her rosary, her chemise, several Constitutions and other objects and furniture from the former Monastery of Lyon. All these things she had guarded with zeal during the

years of the dispersion, together with Sr. Scholastica Piongand with whom she lived for 43 years after the dispersion of the Monasteries during the French Revolution.

On October 15, 1833, Sister Angelique made her solemn profession. The community was growing. Several postulants had received the habit, among them Catherine, sister to Father Galtier, who took the name Marie Therese of the Sacred Hearts.

Although the community was growing and it seemed things were going well, the religious of the restored Monastery of Lyon were not exempt from suffering. Soon a disagreement arose between Mother Columbe, the superior and niece of Father Denis, and Sr. Marie Angelique, her assistant, and Sister Marie of the Blessed Sacrament. Mother Columbe had been formed in the Monastery of Azerables, and wanted to bring those practices and customs into the restored Monastery of Lyon. Sr. Marie Angelique and Father Galtier were very aware of how important it was to form the new Sisters according to the original Constitutions and practices of the Order.

Mother Columbe decided to ask the Archbishop to send Sr. Marie Angelique to a different monastery, but the Archbishop, knowing that Sr. Marie Angelique was an exemplar religious, refused. The Archbishop met with his council and it was decided that at the end of Mother's Columbe's term as superior, she would go to Azerables. In this way the Monastery of Lyon returned to its former practices and was able to continue to grow.

Further Reading:

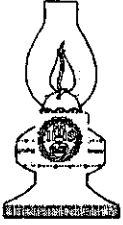


Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, Mexico: Private Printing. 1998. 139-142.

Annals of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament of Azerables. The Story of the Restoration of the Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament after the French Revolution: Vol. I 1801-1827. 85-88.

Biography of Father Antoine Galtier. Honorary Canon of the Primate, Restorer, Founder and Chaplain of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word in Lyon, France. Born June 12, 1798-Died May 15, 1888. Victoria, TX: Private Printing. 1997. 11-15

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

How was the restoration of the Lyons Monastery possible? Who were the different people that contributed to make it possible?

b) Reflection:

Leaving to go to a different monastery was often painful for the Sisters because it meant they would never see their companions again. How do you deal with community and ministry changes?

c) Connection:

Are there still Rosalie's and Father Galtier's in our community today? How is the story of the restoration of the Monastery of Lyon relevant to modern life, especially your own?

Since Vatican II, many changes have taken place in the ways that religious live today. What are some of these changes? Do you think they have had a positive impact on religious life? Why or why not?

Creative Activity: Read the story of Miriam in the book of Genesis. Ex 2:1-10; Ex 15:20-21; Num 12; Num 20:1-2.

Miriam led her people in their search for a new land. She epitomizes the quest of every migrant for a better life in a country far from the home they have always known. Interview someone who has recently migrated to your own country.

- Why did they come? What did they hope to find?
- What have been their experiences?
- What difficulties did they encounter?
- What were some experiences of welcome they received?
- What do they hope to achieve in their new life?

Belmont Monastery (1842)

The Order prospered under the guidance of Mother Marie Angelique and Father Galtier. In 1842, a daughter monastery was established in Belmont, Loire, France, the native place of Mother Mary Angelique.

Mother Mary Angelique had wanted to establish a religious house in Belmont but patiently waited for the right time. When that time arrived, she begged Father Galtier to go scout the place. Father Galtier went with another priest, friend of his and he bought a piece of property in the name of the Monastery of Lyon. When he returned, he and Mother Angelique contracted an architect to build, in the most economical manner possible, a modest building. However, he did not comply with their wishes and began to build a majestic building. He had slipped clauses into the contract that made it impossible for the founders to intervene or obstruct the work of the building.

When Mother Mary Angelique realized that the architect was building a very expensive building, she and Father Galtier knew the Monastery of Lyon could not afford the construction and would be ruined. However, neither Father Galtier nor Sr. Mary Angelique despaired. Both sued the architect and miraculously won. The house of Lyon recovered the building and soon, a few Sisters moved in and the Belmont Monastery was established

It was in the Belmont monastery that Sister St. Claire Valentine made her religious profession in 1848. She was destined to become one of the foundresses of the Order in America in Brownsville in 1853.

Further Reading:



Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, Mexico: Private Printing. 1998.

Biography of Father Antoine Galtier. Honorary Canon of the Primate, Restorer, Founder and Chaplain of the Monastery of the Incarnate Word in Lyon, France. Born June 12, 1798-Died May 15, 1888. Victoria, TX: Private Printing. 1997. 15-23.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) **Comprehension:** How does the story of the foundation of the Monastery of Belmont reveal the need for prayerful and astute leadership? What does it reveal about new foundation even when there are not enough resources or personnel?

b) **Reflection:** As we consider the story of the restoration of the Monastery of Lyon and the founding of the Monastery of Belmont as seen throughout the history of the Order we learn that Extending the Incarnation is not the work of only one individual but that God uses different people, and different situations to bring about his plans.

What should this mean for your life? What does this say about the impact that one person can have? What does this say about the impact a small congregation can have?

d) **Connection:** In Gen 12:10-19 we read that Abraham and Sarah lie and humiliate themselves to try to survive in a foreign nation they have not received permission to enter. It must have been difficult. Yet their story is the same story of many strangers in strange lands, without protection, without connections. It's the story of many illegal immigrants.

Are things different for the illegal, undocumented immigrants in your country today?

Creative Activity: Abraham, like Sr. Mary Angelique left everything behind to follow the call of God to go to new, strange lands to do his work. Like Sr. Mary Angelique, Abraham doubted. Have you doubted your own call?

Use the following questions to help you reflect in your journal.

What do you think Abram left behind to follow God and God's word? Why was it important for him to leave these things behind? What have you left behind? Did you need to leave those things behind?

When Abram ruthlessly abandons the past, how does it lead to a great adventure? How is the Christian faith like an adventure? Has religious life been an adventure for you? How so?

Abram's faith had required him to overcome his fear of the unknown, fear of people that were different than him, and the fear of being powerless in a new place. Do you have to overcome any of these fears when God calls you to follow him to new places where you can bless others and share your faith?

Where would you like to see a new community of Incarnate Word Sisters established? What would be their ministry in that place? Would you be willing to serve there? Why or why not?

Part V

Foundations in Texas

1853-1898



Introduce the Sisters to the founding of the Order of the Incarnate Word in America and the monasteries of Brownsville, Victoria, Corpus Christi and Houston. The Sisters will learn about the trials and difficulties the early Sisters encountered in establishing Monasteries in Texas. The Sisters will also be able to analyze the early history of the Order and the choices made by the early sisters in order to reflect on, express, and apply the lessons learned in history today.

From France to America

In prayer Jeanne had heard: "...You shall carry my name throughout the earth. I am not yet declaring to you how this will occur, for the hour has not yet come..." (1642)

Two centuries later, in 1852, the time had come for the name of the Incarnate Word to be carried to the New World; and from there, to four continents. The Extension of the Incarnation would go beyond the boundaries of France. It would reach throughout the earth.

Bishop Odin's Request (1852)

Early in 1852 Bishop Jeanne Marie Odin, CM, the first Bishop of Texas, knocked on the door of the Incarnate Word Monastery in Lyon. Mother Angelique Hiver, the superior, was very surprised when he asked her for sisters for the mission in Texas. The Sisters were few in numbers, and Mother Angelique hesitated. She did not want to send Sisters to such a faraway place in a strange land. Since the Bishop had to go to Rome, she decided she would give him his answer when he returned. As a favor she requested the Bishop to ask the Pope for the indulgence of the Portincula (an Indulgence of Pardon thought to have been given to Saint Francis of Assisi in a vision in 1216) for their monastery chapel. When the Bishop presented her petition to the Pope, the Pope replied that he would grant the request on the condition that Mother Angelique send Sisters to work in Texas.

Further Reading:



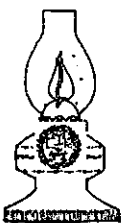
Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 63-66.

Annals of the First Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in America. Brownsville, TX, 1853. 1.

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, Mexico: Private Printing. 1998. 145-147.

Faith Sharing Questions:

- a) **Comprehension:** How did the message that Jeanne received from Jesus in 1642 to carry the name of the Incarnate Word throughout the earth influence Mother



Angelique's decision to send Sisters to America? Why did Mother Angelique hesitate to respond to Bishop Odin's request?

b) Reflection:

Bishop Odin was an instrument in helping to make Jeanne's dream of Extending the Incarnation to the ends of the earth a reality. In what ways have you remained faithful to Jeanne's vision? How will you respond if called to an unfamiliar place for ministry?

c) Connection:

In what ways has the government of your country remained faithful to the values of independence, freedom, justice and equality? What meanings do these values have in religious life?

Creative Activity: Research the lives of courageous women in your Congregation, in the Church and in society who have helped to make the world a better place. What do they have in common?

Write a poem about one and share it with others. If poetry does not come easily to you, use the outline included in the resource section of this manual.

Texas Bound (1852)

Four Sisters were chosen to be the pioneers of the Order in America: Sister St. Claire Valentine from the Belmont monastery, Sister St. Ange Barre, Sister St. Ephrem Satin, and Sister St. Dominic Ravier, all from Lyons.

The youngest of them was Sister St. Claire Valentine who was made superior of the small group at the age of 23.

On March 23, 1852 the four pioneer Sisters left France on the ship "LaBelle Assise." Along with them were seven Oblates of Mary Immaculate, four Brothers of Mary, four Ursuline Sisters and eighteen seminarians.

When they arrived in New Orleans on May 11, 1852, the four Incarnate Word Sisters were taken to a Carmelite Convent where they rested for a month until Bishop Odin's return from Europe. Then they traveled by ship to Galveston, Texas, with Bishop Odin and arrived on June 29, 1852. The Bishop then asked the Ursuline Sisters to teach the Incarnate Word Sisters English and Spanish.

The First Foundation in Texas: Brownsville (1853)

After seven months of hard study the four Sisters and a postulant left Galveston on the ship "The Lone Star". They arrived on Point Isabel in January 1853 and traveled to

Brownsville, Texas arriving there on February 26, 1853. Brownsville became the cradle of the Order of the Incarnate Word in America.

Further Reading:

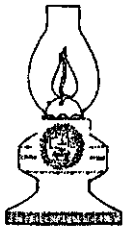


Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 66-74.

Annals of the First Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in America. Brownsville, TX, 1853. 1-5

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, Mexico: Private Printing. 1998. 147-151.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

The experience of Monastic life in 1853 was different from the current experience of religious life in the order. Remembering that the sisters were being asked to go to a strange frontier country with a language and culture unknown to them, how can we explain their extraordinary faith response to the Bishop's request?

b) Reflection:

The Sisters had to learn to speak both English and Spanish in order to be able to extend the Incarnation in America. How willing are you to learn from others? How diligent are you in your formation / academic studies? Do you continually try to learn new things in order to be more prepared to serve?

c) Connection:

How has learning changed with the development of technology and the internet. Has technology helped or detracted learning? How can we make use of technology responsibly? How can technology contribute to our life with God and our service of others?

Creative Activity: Read about the lives of Mary and Martha in:

Luke 10:38-42

John 11: 1-44

John 12: 1-8

Reflect on the following questions: *What were the challenges and affirmation each woman received from Jesus? Did Jesus show preference for either woman?*

After reflecting on the questions, use the scripture passages or a quote to make a collage or a scrapbook to illustrate the faith of each woman. Remember, although Martha is mostly known for the kitchen story, she also made a prophetic statement about Jesus. Which woman do you identify most with?

Compare the faith response of the first Incarnate Word sisters in the New World with that of Mary or Martha. Write your response or share it with your formation group.

Imagine that you are called to minister in a foreign country in which none of our sisters have served before. You are asked, along with other sisters, to establish an Incarnate Word community and serve the needs of the people there. What will you have to let go of in order to respond to that call?

Trials in Brownsville (1853- 1863)

The Sisters experienced extreme poverty, sorrows, trials and sufferings. In 1858 the Sisters suffered the yellow fever epidemic and the Civil War.

Sister St. Ephrem tells us in the *Annals of the Monastery of Brownsville*:

"There came a sad day, overwhelmingly so, whose memory will never be blotted out from our memories. Many boarders had already left, and we were occupying a dormitory. Sister Josephine, the sickest, was in a little room near the entrance and directly in front of the classroom. The rasping breathing of this poor agonizing Sister could be heard even on the outside. The coffin awaited her remains...Sister Josephine's agony lasted a long time. The sick Sisters on the second floor could hear her and were extremely frightened." Pg. 19

In addition to the yellow fever, the Sisters also experienced extreme poverty which, together with the excessive amount of work, the Indian raids, and the extreme heat in Brownsville, caused a lot of suffering in the small community in Brownsville.

In 1863 the Civil War wreaked havoc in the small city of Brownsville. During this time the Sisters could not communicate with the Monastery in Lyons. In addition to this, it seemed like most people crossed the river to find refuge in Matamoros, leaving only the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and the Oblate Priests. The Sisters showed kindness to the wives and daughters of soldiers on both sides by giving them shelter in their monastery. In exchange, the people fighting on both sides granted protection to the Sisters and even brought them provisions which the Sisters would then share with other people.

However, none of the trials changed the joyful determination of the Sisters to continue to extend the Incarnation in the New World. Little did the Sisters know that an even greater trial awaited them.

Bishop Dubuis' Request (1865)

Bishop Claude Marie Dubuis was consecrated Bishop of Galveston in 1862 and replaced Bishop Odin who had been called to become Archbishop of New Orleans, Louisiana.

In 1865 Bishop Dubuis visited the convent in Brownsville and asked for Sisters to open a school in Victoria. Mother St. Ange, who had replaced Mother St. Claire as superior, did not think they could do it. However, it was decided that if Mother St. Claire found volunteers in Europe, they could possibly make another foundation.

New Trials in Brownsville (1866)

Mother St. Claire set out alone for Europe to seek volunteers for Brownsville and Victoria. She succeeded in finding twelve courageous women: eight French sisters (three from Belmont and five from Lyons) and four Irish Sisters. After being commissioned from the Chapel of Our Lady of Fourviere, they left Lyons on January 31, 1866, accompanied by Father John Neyraz. They were given free tickets on a ship that went first to Algeria, and Martinique and which stopped at Veracruz and Tampico in Mexico where three French Sisters and one Irish Sister died of yellow fever. Mother St. Claire was the only sister who did not contract the fever. The grief and pain were beyond description.

Sister St. Ephrem narrates in the *Annals of Brownsville*:

"Now our suffering began: yellow fever broke out in our midst. The first one to fall victim was Sister St. Joseph, then another, then another. As soon as someone got it, she was taken away and we never saw her again."

It had been a traumatic experience for everyone since only nine of the thirteen Sisters made it to Brownsville. They arrived in Brownsville on June 17, 1866.

In a community meeting on August 22, 1866, Mother St. Ange and the Brownsville community gave their consent to Bishop Dubuis for the foundation of a monastery in Victoria. Five Sisters were chosen from Brownsville: Mother St. Claire Valentine, superior; Sister Paul Goux, assistant; Sister Mary Louise Murray and her sister, Sister Mary of the Cross Murray; and Sister Justine Fonvielle. Sister Regis Chavassieux, a novice, would come directly from France with Bishop Dubuis.

Further Reading:



Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 74-98.

Annals of the First Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in America.
Brownsville, TX, 1853. 5-24.

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*,
Mexico: Private Printing. 1998. 151-163.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

How did the extreme trials the Sisters experienced in the early days in Brownsville speak about the ordinariness of these faithful women? How does it show their extraordinariness? How do their trials reveal God amid human weakness?

b) Reflection: *List the three most difficult trials you have experienced in your past. What did you learn? How have those trials defined who you are? What good has God brought from those situations? Where do you see God in those experiences? How can you use those experiences to comfort others?*

c) Connection:

How did most of the world's great philosophical and religious traditions attempt to deal with the reality of suffering and the many questions it raises? What causes suffering? How can we make sense of it? What does Christianity teach about suffering? How does the life of Christ teach us about living with grace in the midst of it? How can you in your present situation help to alleviate suffering?

Creative Activity: *Entitle a page in your journal, "My Personal Trials." Make a list of the most difficult circumstances you have ever experienced. (For example: loss of loved one, a natural disaster, physical illness, rejection, abuse, injustice, etc.) Write out a prayer expressing your feelings to God and your need for strength.*

Find a scripture quote that speaks to you about the meaning of suffering. Use a Concordance to choose your quote. Write the quote in your journal on your "My Personal Trials" page.

The Greatest trial in Brownsville (1867)

In 1867 it seemed as if the trials that had tested the faith of the Sisters were giving way to peace and progress. The Sisters had been able to add new, spacious rooms to their buildings. They had new patios and galleries with playground equipment for the students. However, this peace was not meant to last because the Sisters again faced their greatest trial in the great hurricane of 1867.

Sister St. Ange narrates in the *Annals of Brownsville*: "toward 7 o'clock, balls of fire could be seen in the air in different directions. Lightning flashed, tearing at the firmament in all directions, and fear reigned everywhere."

The Sisters protected their students by gathering them together in a dormitory. They also tried to save their building by covering their windows with boards and mattresses, but everything was useless. The fierce wind blew everything away. The water came into the building in torrents.

Both the Sisters and the students found refuge in the chapel around the Tabernacle where they prayed for two and a half hours. They could hear the windows shattering and horrible noises of walls collapsing.

When the Sisters opened the door of the chapel they saw that everything had been destroyed from top to bottom. Sister St. Agne tells us: "Nothing remained of our convent except the memory of what had been there, not even the ruins left could offer us any shelter." The Sisters had not even finished paying for the building at that time.

However, with the help of the Oblate Fathers and the kindness of various families and Bishop Odin the Sisters were able to construct a new building.

Further Reading:



Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 87-95

Annals of the First Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in America. Brownsville, TX, 1853. 25-31.

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, Mexico: Private Printing. 1998. 157-159.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

In addition to the trials of illness, poverty and natural disasters, what were some of the other trials the Sisters experienced? How did their response to the hurricane) reveal their perseverance in carrying on the mission for which they were called by God?

b) Reflection:

What role does perseverance play in our relationship with God and our community? What role does it play in how you perceive yourself?

c) Connection:

How can developing perseverance equip people as world citizens who contribute to the common good? Recall a recent world event in which people recovered from a disaster. What contributed to their recovery?

Creative Activity: *Reflect on the question "What is Perseverance?" Use the ideas from your reflection to put together a collage without using any words that reflects your insights. You may draw, cut and paste pictures from a magazine, etc.*

Use the internet to learn more about the hurricane of 1867. How did the local people respond to the crisis? How did they need perseverance to recover from it?

The Second Foundation in Texas: Victoria (1866)

On December 21, 1866, Mother St. Claire and her four companions from Brownsville, Sister Paul Goux, assistant; Sister Mary Louise Murray and her sister, Sister Mary of the Cross Murray; and Sister Justine Fonvielle arrived in Victoria and were joined by Sister St. Regis Chavassieux who had arrived earlier. On the same day, they also received their first postulant, nineteen-year old Catherine Pauly, from New Braunfels, who had been waiting for the Sisters to arrive. They were warmly received by the people of Victoria and by their Pastor, Father Augustine Gardet who offered them his two-story house, which consisted of four rooms.

In June of 1867 Mother St. Claire arranged with a contractor to begin the construction of a new building for the school.

The first school was opened on January 7, 1867, with an enrollment of 55 pupils. It was known as "The Convent School" while the official name was "Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament of Victoria, Texas." The prospects for a new school in 1867 looked promising. Five new vocations were coming from France and Ireland in November, but in October the dreaded yellow fever reached Victoria. Sr. Mary Claudius Pauly, the community's new novice and Aloysia Porche, a new postulant, died of the fever. Sister Regis also contracted the fever but she recovered.

The number of day-students and boarders increased to the point of needing additional buildings. The buildings were added and within a few years the school was renamed as "Academy of Nazareth." The school continued to grow and the number of Sisters continued to increase as more and more women responded to the call of the Incarnate Word in Victoria, Texas.

With such an increase in numbers of students, the Sisters from Victoria sent Sisters to make foundations in Corpus Christi (1871), Houston (1873), Hallettsville (1882) which later moved to San Antonio, and Shiner (1897). In 1939 the three remaining communities, Victoria, Shiner and San Antonio became one generalate.

Further Reading:



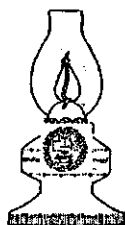
Novosad, Sister M. Alberta, IWBS. *Texas Footprints in the Sands of Time: Historical Account of the Three Incarnate Word Foundations in Texas and their Union of 1939 and its Aftermath (San Antonio, Shiner, Victoria)*. Victoria, TX: Baxter Press. 2012. 59-201.

Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 74-98.

Annals of the First Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in America. Brownsville, TX, 1853. 18-25.

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, Mexico: Private Printing. 1998. 163-170.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

The sisters in the first Monastery of the Incarnate Word in Victoria, Texas, were from varied places and cultures. How could this make community life both richer and challenging?

b) Reflection:

What are some of the challenges you find in living in community? What are some of the blessings?

c) Connection:

How could our witness of living in community be a gift to those who see us?

Creative Activity: Imagine a future in which all people live in unity and peace. What can you do as an individual to make such a world a reality?

The Third Foundation in Texas: Corpus Christi (1871)

In 1871, Bishop Dubuis petitioned Mother St. Claire for a foundation in Corpus Christi. Once again she responded with the same generosity and missionary spirit which had become so characteristic of her. From Victoria she sent Sister St. Paul Goux, who had

been her assistant for five years, Sister Mary of the Cross Murray and Sister Stanislaus Dedieu. Sr. Mary Ignatius McKeon of the Brownsville community was sent as superior.

The Monastery of Corpus Christi was founded on March 2, 1871. Mother Angelique Valentine replaced Mother Ignatius McKeon in 1874 and served in that capacity for a total of 40 years. The community grew slowly and steadily as did the school. The demands of keeping a school created the need for a permanent dispensation from the cloister which was received in 1915.

The Great Depression in America in 1929 had negative effects on the Sisters. The Sisters in Brownsville and Corpus Christi requested permission from Bishop Emmanuel Ledvina to amalgamate the two communities. The Brownsville community supported the idea of amalgamation as early as June of 1930. The Corpus Christi community approved the amalgamation on March 31, 1931. Throughout the economic difficulties of the union, the Sisters placed their faith in God and became one in mind and heart. The execution of the Decree from the Sacred Congregation of Religious by Bishop Ledvina of Corpus Christi for the amalgamation of the two communities is dated January 5, 1932. The first elections for the amalgamated community were held on January 16, 1932.

Further Reading:

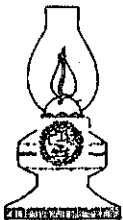


Gunning, Mother M. Patricia. *To Texas with Love: A History of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament*. Corpus Christi, Tx: Private Printing. 1971. 125-198.

Annals of the First Monastery of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in America. Brownsville, TX, 1853. 5-24.

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, Mexico: Private Printing. 1998. 151-163.

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) *Comprehension:*

Some of the early sisters in Texas were asked to move from their places of ministry several times in order to serve the needs of the people. Name those sisters and the places where they lived and served.

b) *Reflection:*

Recall times in your life when you moved to different places. What was that like for you?

c) Connection:

Our world today is getting smaller and smaller so that it is more possible to travel and communicate. Where do you see a need for Sisters of the Incarnate Word to minister, both locally and internationally?

Creative Activity: Have a conversation with three sisters of our community who entered in the last 50 or 60 years. What was their experience of moving from place to place for ministry? Share what you learn with the other sisters in formation.

The Fourth Foundation in Texas: Houston (1873)

In March of 1873, Bishop Dubuis, at the request of Father Querat, once again knocked on the door at the Academy of Nazareth in Victoria and asked Mother St. Claire for a few Sisters to found a house of the Order in Houston, Texas. On April 24, 1873 she granted his request and sent Mother M. Gabriel Dillon as superior together with Sister Marie Therese and Sister M. Lawrence to make this fourth foundation.

The first founding Sisters made their temporary home in an old Franciscan Monastery which was located near St. Vincent's Church. The official date of foundation was May 5th, 1873.

The Sisters moved their convent in November of the same year, although the new building was not yet completed. Incarnate Word Academy for girls began classes in January of 1874. The Academy became the first Catholic school in the City of Houston and for a long time it was the only high school in the city.

In 1875 Mother Gabriel and Sister Marie Therese went to Ireland to find vocations for the Houston community. They took five young women from Ireland to the novitiate in Lyons and from there to Houston. The community began to grow and soon became independent of Victoria.

Incarnate Word Academy served as the Motherhouse and Novitiate for many years. In June of 1932, the Novitiate was transferred to a new four-story brick building which the Sisters purchased in the 1920's. This new building also became a grade school for boarding and day students. Marian High School was the first co-ed Catholic High School in the city of Houston. It was built on the convent property in 1955.

Further Reading:

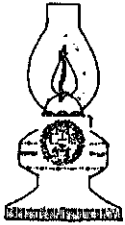


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Union of 1939 and its Aftermath (San Antonio, Shiner, Victoria). Victoria, TX: Baxter Press. 2012. 67-68

Mares Bañuelos, CVI, Sylvia Estela. *La Orden del Verbo Encarnado a través de los Siglos*, Mexico: Private Printing. 1998. 177-183

Faith Sharing Questions:



a) Comprehension:

How is the story of the establishment of the foundations in Victoria and Houston similar and different from that of the first sisters' foundations who came to the New World?

b) Reflection:

What do you learn from all of the early sisters about community and ministry?

c) Connection:

Research where the sisters in Houston are now living and ministering. Their website address is <http://incarnatewordssistershouston.org/>. How do their lives and ministry reflect that of our early sisters?

Creative Activity: Create a "family tree" which shows the growth of the Order of the Incarnate Word in Texas. Include dates, places, sisters' names, and school names.

PROJECT EVALUATION

- 1. Have the participants in your Project complete a written evaluation which is based on your goals for the Project. Summarize their evaluations.**

There were six members of the formation team present for the presentation and training of the systematic study. Among those six members was a Sister from the Council who is the liason to the formation team. All of these Sisters are from the Corpus Christi group of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word.

There were several questions that I presented to them in an evaluation form. These are the findings:

Usefulness of the program:

The response of the group was positive. The Sisters think that this program would allow new members to receive a solid foundation because it provides a means for new members to learn the history in a systematic and practical way. The Sisters think that the program will be an invaluable resource for formation directors in planning and preparing presentations during the different phases of initial formation and also a great resource because it is organized, creative, appealing and user friendly.

Hands-on activities:

Regarding the hands-on activities the Sisters think that reflecting on the deeper meaning of events is a natural part of the formation process for potential and new members of the Congregation. As formation directors, all felt they had at times struggled to find ways to relate information (head knowledge) with the lived experience, and so they found the activities useful. They also liked the fact that there is a variety of activities which would appeal and challenge different learning styles.

Presenter's knowledge of the subject:

Based on the program objectives, manual overview and sample unit I provided for the Sisters, the general consensus was that it took a lot of time and research to become acquainted with all the available works. The Sisters commented on how, even previous to the creation of this program, I have spoken of Jeanne de Matel as someone I have known and loved intimately. Therefore, they were not surprised that the historical, spiritual, and personal aspects were so inclusive in the presentation of the program to them. They concluded by saying that my research is invaluable.

Questions at the end of each chapter:

The Sisters like the questions at the end of each chapter. They believe that the Sisters in formation need to be challenged and encouraged to relate the past congregational/historical

events to church, society, community, personal situations happening today. They believe the questions provide the reflection and the movement forward.

The Sisters also liked the fact that the questions are varied. They found some of the questions provocative, others reflective, designed for comprehension, others to identify patterns that are meaningful. The questions lead the participant into an experience of our history.

Pace of the presentation:

Given the fact that I presented only the introduction to the program, the program's objectives and outcomes, and an overview of the manual together with a sample unit, the pace of the presentation was hard to gauge. Based on the comments of the Sisters and the types of questions they asked, I sense the pace of the presentation was good, but the formation directors would need a little more than an introduction to determine the pace of the program. One of the suggestions was to use it first during their formation team meetings in order to test the pace of the program.

One of the comments to the pace of the presentation was: "The engaging pace was energetic enough to inspire interest and relaxed enough to emphasize the holistic design of the program."

Is the program above or below the current knowledge of the history of the congregation:

The overall consensus to this question was that, although there is a level of familiarity with the history of the Congregation, the sequence of events was not clear in the minds of those Sisters attending the presentation. The Sisters thought that perhaps the difficulty is that there is an abundance of information that has and continues to be developed, translated, shared among Incarnate Word communities, and published, making it very difficult to keep current. Another difficulty the Sisters encountered was their lack of language skills, such as Spanish and French, which limits their research to only those documents that have been translated into English.

There are gaps in the history of the Congregation because many documents are still in French manuscript only. My fluency in Spanish and ability to read French allowed me to read primary documents and thus help to make some of the reading more accessible.

Most useful about the program:

The Sisters thought that the faith sharing questions that accompany each chapter are the most useful component to the program. They found the emphasis on the application of learning to current life impressive and valuable.

Integrating the Systematic Study into the formation program:

This question seemed to be the one that elicited the most varied responses as opposed to the rest of the questions. The Sisters did not agree as to what stage of formation the program should be

integrated into. Some thought that it should be implemented during pre-postulancy or postulancy, others thought it should be integrated during the novitiate, and yet others thought that it should be used during the scholasticate. The vocation director even thought that the questions would really help the women interested in joining because of the nature of the first dimension, which is to clarify one's vocational choice.

Even if the Sisters did not agree as to what stage of formation the program should be integrated, they did agree that the program will enhance and expand the application of our present program objectives and resources.

Expectations:

Although not all the Sisters stated very clearly what their expectations were, they did say that they expected the program would enhance our present program studies. They felt the program will contribute to this goal. Sr. Rosemary Lichnovsky, whom I worked closely, stated: "I have been privileged to walk with Helga as she wrote and shared her experiences with this presentation. Some of my expectations were met; however, many other ideas and resources have been above my expectations. I look forward to more interaction in this regard."

Other comments

There were different comments stated at the end of the evaluation form and at the end of the presentation. The Sisters referred chiefly to their gratitude for my having created the program. However, there was also another comment on everyone's lips, and that was about my suggestion to them for future development of the study to include the current history of all IWBS Congregations within the Order and a Spanish/French translation. Everybody agreed with the idea that the program can be enriched by each formation director who uses it. In fact, they loved the idea of each formation director receiving a binder and a read/write CD with the program so that each formation director can add to the program.

2. List each of your original goals and indicate whether or not you accomplished the goals as outlined in your original evaluation criteria.

EXPECTED COURSE OUTCOMES

The Sisters who complete this course will be able to:

Personal Dimension: Internalize the development of the History of the Order of the Incarnate Word as a way to clarify their vocational choice.

Communitarian Dimension: Take personal responsibility for developing a spirit of service and the skills necessary for community living.

Socio-Pastoral-Ecclesial Dimension: Demonstrate the ability to examine contemporary issues in the Church and the world in light of the Incarnational Charism.

Academic Dimension: Develop a well written project reflecting the understanding gained from learning the Order's tradition, heritage and identity.

The goals for this particular project are difficult to evaluate because the program is designed to be used at different time periods according to need. Another difficulty I encounter in evaluating the course outcomes is that only the formation director will know whether or not the Sisters in formation have achieved the outcomes outlined.

However, one way that I kept track of these outcomes is through the questions that I have at the end of each chapter in each of the five units. I made sure that all four dimensions were addressed and balanced throughout the program, but it will be up to each formation director to assess the progress of the Sisters in formation.

3. Describe how your Focus Group helped or detracted from your project. Be specific.

The Focus Group helped tremendously. The idea for the program came about in conversation with Sister Rosemary Lichnovsky. As the formation directors began to share their experiences with teaching the history of the Congregation, the project began to take a more definite shape. The conversation with the formators was invaluable. They shared what they were doing and the progress they are making on the new formation program they are creating; therefore this program was designed be a complement to the main program.

The formators are grateful for the work I am doing, and I am grateful that they shared their needs and challenges. The old adage that it takes a whole village to raise a child fits well into the experience of creating this program. It takes a whole community to form a Sister. I did not find that the Focus Group held me back. On the contrary, they were always there when I needed help.

4. How was your project resource person most helpful? Least helpful?

I had several people helping, but there were three that were most helpful. First of all, Sister Rosemary Lichnovsky, formation director of Corpus Christi, helped me to clarify the structure of the program. She was an excellent resource person when it came to objectives and outcomes. Her recent experience of being a formation director helped me tremendously.

Sister Rose Miriam Gansle was another great resource person. She revised all of the questions at the end of each chapter. She also asked me questions when the wording was not clear. Her many years of experience in religious life shone through the questions that she proposed. She also did a lot of editing.

Sister Agnes Marie Tengler was extremely helpful when it came to editing. Her skills as a wordsmith were invaluable. She was very patient and methodical. She helped me to clarify my ideas.

I did not have an experience of people who were not helpful, except for a few people who wanted me to do something different, but they were not members of the Focus Group. For example, some Sisters thought I should include the spirituality and charism of the Order into the systematic study. However, my focus was on history, and I had to remind them of that fact over and over. The spirituality and charism are reflected in the questions, but the project itself is focused on the history of the Order.

5. How did you gain the knowledge you needed as described in your proposal? Was there other knowledge you needed that you did not recognize in advance? Will you need that knowledge in the future and, if so, how will you obtain it?

Things I thought were needed were knowledge and a deep love of the history of the Order. I do have both, but I did not realize the project would be so time consuming. I had to set deadlines for myself. The project proved to be longer and more work than I realized. I am happy I started on the project a whole semester before.

I did learn good time management working on this project. I think that for the future, if I am creating a program, I will use a list of things to guide me through the process.

6. How were you able to gain the skills you expected to need? Were there other skills you needed that you did not recognize in advance? Will you need these skills in the future and, if so, how will you obtain them?

I have been teaching many years, and through the journey I have picked up a few skills that help me to make the classes I teach interesting. However, working on this project I had to remind myself constantly that this project was not meant for a classroom but for religious formation purposes.

Certain knowledge of pedagogy was needed to complete this project. However, I do not think I would have been able to complete this program without the invaluable help of people who are or have been formation directors. Perhaps a skill I still need to learn is to look at things from an outside point of view. I get so involved in the project that I assume everyone else will understand it too.

My creativity was a big help because I had to think of many different ways to make the program interesting.

7. What attitudes were you able to develop that you expected to need? Were there other attitudes you needed that you did not recognize in advance? Will you need these attitudes in the future and, if so, how will you develop them?

An attitude I expected to need was a deep love for people in formation and a desire to make history come alive for them. An attitude I did not consider necessary before was patience. Now I know that it takes enormous patience to deal with people in formation. When confronted with apathy coming from some Sisters in formation I felt discouraged. The whole

program was created with them in mind. However, I must also recognize that the Sisters come from many different backgrounds, and they are in very different stages.

Once the two Sisters in formation in Corpus Christi were able to use the program with their formators for a brief faith sharing session (and for the purposes of my evaluation), they loved it. I guess they just needed to try it.

It is my hope that if I am called to prepare a program in the future I will be able to listen to the needs of people. At the same time, I also hope not to get discouraged if the program is not received well. I also hope that through working closely with formation directors I might learn to be of better help to others. I truly believe that what people learn can make a difference in their lives.

8. How were you able to minimize or overcome the obstacles you expected to encounter? What obstacles did you encounter that were not anticipated? How did you minimize or overcome them?

The greatest obstacle, as I had predicted, was addressing the varied academic and socio-economic backgrounds of the Sisters for whom this program was prepared. However, knowing that fact, I was prepared for those challenges. My contact with Sisters in different countries helped me because I was able to ask questions and get responses right away.

I also did a great deal of internet research about current issues in society and the Church, and I believe the questions reflect that work. I will not know whether or not the questions are completely relevant in every culture where the program will be used unless it is implemented fully. However, the formation director can always work around the questions. The questions are not black and white. The program was designed with the intention of its being a resource that formation directors can work with and then add or delete according to needs. I really do hope that the formation directors can add from their experience and enrich the program.

9. In what way does the Project you completed contribute to the leadership capacity of others? To the development of pastoral ministry in general?

One of the reasons that led me to work on this program was the need in the Order to prepare Sisters for ministry. The four different dimensions of the program are designed to nurture the leadership qualities in each Sister. Ideally, these dimensions progress from the inside out. That is, they begin with the personal dimension, where each Sister takes responsibility for clarifying her own vocational choice and how she fits into this particular community. The

second dimension follows with a communitarian emphasis where each Sister develops a spirit of service and the leadership necessary to serve the community. In the third dimension the Sisters are prepared to examine the socio-pastoral-ecclesial issues which affect our Church and to emerge as prepared leaders in light of the Incarnational charism which they are internalizing.

10. List each of your personal learning goals and your professional goals as outlined in the project proposal. Indicate for each goal how well you accomplished that learning or professional goal.

My personal goal was to deepen my identity as a Sister of the Incarnate Word through the extensive research and the close communication with the formation directors in order to complete the program. I have learned much more than I expected. The learning that has taken place in my life is more than academic knowledge. Through the extensive research done, I have come to understand the charism and spirituality of the Order in ways that are both intimate and enriching.

My professional goals were to improve my academic writing and to gain the experience to be able to create programs in the future. Both of these goals were accomplished. I had not realized how much work this program was going to take. In the end, I am pleased with the results. I am sure the experience gained will help me in the near future.

11. Personal essay. Respond to the following questions which analyze if/how your project deviated from the theology of church you originally articulated.

The idea for this program came in conversation with a formation director. I was hopeful I could put together a program to help the Sisters in formation. I love history and have a passion for research, but I am also well aware that not everyone does. As the formation directors began to share their challenges in teaching the history of the Congregation to the Sisters in formation, the project began to take a more definite shape.

I was aware, as I began the program, that I could approach the program only through the lens of my own experience of initial formation and personal theology of church and ministry; therefore, I enlisted the help of several people.

As the conversation continued and the project became more defined, my understanding of church and ministry also began to grow. I do not mean to say that I was confronted with a totally different theology, but the perspective changed. I was able to share heart to heart with Sisters from very different age groups, cultures, and educational and socio-economic backgrounds. Although our common understanding of theology was similar, each person's life with God tended to be manifested in different practices. This difference enriched the questions and activities that are found at the end of each chapter. Also, the formation directors were happy to be able to discuss faith sharing questions with a person in the same age level as the current Sisters in formation. I would not say that my personal theology of Church and ministry has deviated. I could say it has been challenged in a positive way and thus been enriched.

My personal essay of my theology of Church and Ministry helped me to delineate the objectives and goals of this program. The expected outcomes of this program address four

dimensions which I believe are essential for any type of minister: personal, communitarian, socio-pastoral-ecclesial and academic. In other words, writing the essay first allowed me to stay on track and go where I wanted to go with the program. I think I was successful at addressing those four dimensions throughout the program.

Overall, I am satisfied with the program. There are many more components that I would like to add later. For example, I would like to add a biblical component to each chapter, to have biblical references which Jeanne Chezard, our foundress, always did in her own writings. I also would like to translate the program into Spanish to make it more available to the wider group. Most of all, I would like to see this program grow independently of me. I created the program with the goal in mind of laying the groundwork for something bigger. I hope that each formation director and each person who use the program will be able to add to it. I intended for the program to be a companion to other programs, a resource that can grow and change according to the needs and challenges of the time.

I have been both challenged and enriched through the experience of writing this program. I dearly hope that those for whom this program was written get to experience even a few of the blessings I received through this program. Most of all, I hope that the program contributes to the formation of capable leaders who will continue to extend the Incarnation.