

Dear Sisters and Associates -- Today, on this St. Joseph the Worker Day and sixteenth week (May 1) of our 2023 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the 782 Sisters, 44 Associates and 25 Charisma Passers serving in **France** as well as all the people in that nation.

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



work, care of the elderly and disabled, education of youth, catechesis, and service in non-governmental organizations and associations. At the same time, many work on important social justice issues confronting



France – with one such example being this February 2023 Chambéry Congregation’s [World Day of Prayer and Reflection](#) against Human Trafficking (see photo). In addition to the six congregations, France is also home to the CSJ International Centre – which was first conceived of during the 350th celebration of the founding of the

Sisters of St. Joseph. Today, the International Centre in Le Puy offers a variety of onsite [programs](#) for Sisters and laypeople.

Country Background: Historically, this region was part of the Celtic territory called ‘Gaul’ and named Francia around 486 AD. Victorious in the Hundred Year’s War (1337-1453), France emerged as a major power, and by the Renaissance period had become a global colonial empire.

During the late 18th century the French revolution overthrew the absolute monarchy and established one of modern history's earliest republics guided by the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen'. Today, more than 80 percent of France's 66.6million (2023) population live in urban centres and its economy is the third-largest in Europe. In fact, the World Bank classifies France as a wealthy, high-income nation where citizens depend on the national government's social security net (for education, health care, pensions and social services). However, recent changes to France's social system have resulted in continuing and widespread civil protest including several national strikes. In addition to this recent unrest, a 2022 Human Rights Watch brief cited several additional concerns – noting, for example, that the “general elections in 2022 saw historic gains for the far-right who promote an anti-rights agenda.... The impact of inflation on the most vulnerable, in particular their ability to realize basic economic and social human rights is a concern... [and] while people fleeing Ukraine receive significant help, migrants and asylum seekers from other crisis and conflicts face inhumane living conditions and police abuse....”. (Sources: Chambéry Congregation website, Human Rights Watch 2022 Country page, International Centre website, Worldometer, Wikipedia, World Bank)



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 7850 Sisters, 5700 Associates, 34 Agrégées in 43 countries, listening to the heart of the world.