

Dear Sisters and Associates -- Today, on this nineteenth week (May 22) of our 2023 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the 21 Sisters who serve in **Haiti** as well as all the people of that Caribbean nation.

The Sisters belong to the Saint-Vallier (Quebec) Congregation whose history dates back to 1688 when the Count of Saint-Vallier asked the Bishop of Vienne to take responsibility for the small hospital which had been in the charge of the Sisters since 1683. The Sisters were given leadership of the hospice and soon also opened a school for young girls, and in 1829 were recognized by the Church as teachers and hospital workers. However, the Combes laws (of 1901 and 1904) forced the closure of France's congregational schools, so Sr. Thérèse of Jesus (who was born in Quebec) suggested to the Superior General that they go to Canada. Thus, in 1903, twelve Sisters arrived at Saint-Jean-Port-Joli (Quebec) where they administered the village school as well as taught in other primary and secondary schools until 1948 (after which they served primarily in the care of the infirm). In addition to their ministries in Quebec, the Saint-Vallier Sisters are today also present in Limonade, Haiti (see photo) -- a commune in the Cap-Haïtien Arrondissement in the Nord department



of Haiti where they serve in education, healthcare, pastoral ministry and poverty relief. With a population just under 70,000, Limonade was founded in 1676 and became an official commune in 1864. There are approximately 45 communities (primarily focused on trade and agriculture) within the commune of which the largest is Limonade.

In addition to the Saint-Vallier Sisters, today we also remember other Canadian Sisters who have served in Haiti. Between 1986-2015, the CSJ-Toronto Congregation operated a mission with the presence of several Sisters: Sr. Rosemary Fry (1987 – 2013) in health and pastoral care; Sr. Mary Alban Bouchard (1989-2013) in pastoral work; Sr. Cecelia Tallack (1991–2001) in education; Sr. Lorraine Malo (1989-1991, 2001 – 2008, and 2010) in health and pastoral care; Sr. Mary Alban Bouchard who was in Haiti during the 2010 earthquake; and, Sr. Ann Delaney (2018) at the Mission Haiti project.



Country Background: Haiti is located on the western side of the island of Hispaniola and, with a population of 15.7million (2023), it is the most densely inhabited nation in the Caribbean. The region was originally inhabited by the Indigenous Taino people but, in 1492, Christopher Columbus' flagship *Santa Maria* ran aground north of what is now Limonade after which Spain ruled the island until the early 17th century. However, competing

claims and settlements by the French led the western portion to be ceded to France, who renamed it Saint-Domingue. In the midst of the French Revolution (1789 – 1799), slaves and free people of colour revolted during the Haitian Revolution (1791 – 1804) which culminated in the abolition of slavery. In fact, Haiti is the only nation in the world established as the direct result of a successful slave revolt. As an island prone to violent earthquakes and hurricanes, Haiti has counted thousands of deaths or internally displaced over the past decade. In addition to these catastrophic climatic events, recent civil unrest and gang violence have resulted in what the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights warns is a “human rights emergency” as noted in [this Al Jazeera article](#). In fact, Human Rights Watch noted in its 2022 report that “Haiti has continuously struggled to meet the basic needs of its people and resolve long-standing human rights problems”; while the UN World Food program reported that 4.9 million people are in acute hunger and 1.8 million face emergency levels of hunger. (Sources: Al Jazeera news, International Centre website, Laval University/Quebec, UN High Commission for Human Rights, UN World Food Program, Wikipedia, Worldometer. Photo of Limonade by Yoni Rubin)



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