

Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this twenty-fifth week (July 1) of our 2024 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited to *listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the Sisters and Associates serving in the **Ivory Coast/Côte d'Ivoire** as well as all the people in that West African nation.

The Sisters in Côte d'Ivoire belong to the Lyon Congregation, the Aosta Congregation (part of the Italian Federation), and the Institut des Souers de Saint Joseph – and serve in education and adult literacy, community/social centres and lunch programs, care for the disabled, parish and pastoral care as well as with prisoners, youth and school-leavers. The Lyon Congregation website recounts that in 1959, the Rodez Sisters arrived in Tiassalé in the Diocese of Yopougon, and two years later established a second mission in Williamsville followed by a mission in Bouake a few years later. Today, the Lyon Sisters serve in Dimbokro (a town in south-central Ivory Coast). The



Aosta Congregation website shares that five Sisters first arrived in Abidjan in 1991 and also began a mission in the Parish of Williamsville, dedicating “themselves to catechesis, literacy, sewing, [and] visiting prisoners, the poor and the

sick”. In 1994, the Congregation opening a new community in the Parish of Riviera 3. This [article](#) by Sr. Zoëline Ravelonjanahary (see photo left) recounts the annual ‘Caravan of Consecrated Life’ to forest villages and small Atlantic Ocean islands - organized by the Superiors of the ‘Grand Bassan’ Diocese. The Institut des Souers de Saint Joseph has two missions the Ivory Coast: in Tiassalé (the town in southern part of the country where the Lyon Sisters first arrived) and Tabou (a town in the far southwest). In 1999, the Lyon Congregation established its West African Region which currently includes their ministries the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso.



Country Background: Ivory Coast, also known as Côte d'Ivoire, is a French-speaking West African nation. Prior to its colonization by Europeans, it was home to the Gyaaman, the Kong Empire, and Baoulé. The Ivory Coast became a

protectorate of France in 1843–1844 and a colony in 1893 - amid the European scramble to colonize Africa. The country achieved independence in 1960, led by Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Since the end of his rule in 1993, Côte d'Ivoire has experienced a coup d'état (in 1999) and two religion-based civil wars (2002-2007 and 2010–2011). While French remains the country's official language, there are approximately 78 other languages spoken. With a population of 29.5million (2024) -- of which 70percent are under the age of 30 -- Ivory Coast is considered stable with a large agriculture sector (coffee, cotton, cashew nuts, palm oil, and cacao) in which almost three quarters of the working populace are engaged. Yet, despite its relative economic stability, the Borgen Project (a progressvie publisher) notes that almost half of the population still live below the poverty line due to three main reasons: gender inequity, limited access to healthcare, and fluxuating export prices. Addressing these challenges, the government has developed a 2021-2025 National Development Plan through which it aims to eliminate extreme poverty by the year 2030. This [UNHRC report](#) explains the reasons behind recent large population movements in West Africa, specifically noting that “in Côte d'Ivoire, estimates that over 54,000 individuals arrived from Burkina Faso and Mali between April 2021 and March 2024, the majority of whom are women and children The most vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by this displacement, with reports indicating a large proportion of women-headed households and separated/unaccompanied children.” (Sources: Aosta Congregation website, Borgen Project report, Institut des Souers de Saint Joseph website, International Cente website, Lyon Congregation website, United Nations Development Program, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/UNHCR, Wikipedia, Worldometer)



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 7850 Sisters, 5700 Associates, 34 Agrégées in 45 countries, listening to the heart of the world