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30 September 2017

# *Newsletter of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Randwick NSW Australia*



Introducing the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Randwick, Sydney, Australia.

## *Our Mission:*

To publicise the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart [OLSH] at Randwick.

To introduce the Novena to OLSH to others outside the Parish.

To heighten awareness of the Spirituality of the Heart, and the place of the devotion to Mary under the title of OLSH as a natural aspect of the Spirituality of the Heart.

To inform people about the Mission and Ministries of the MSC and OLSH and other Congregations.

*Located at: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish,  
193 Avoca St, PO Box 309, Randwick NSW, 2031.*

[www.sacredheart.org.au](http://www.sacredheart.org.au)

We return in this issue to the ongoing story of the formation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart by Fr Chevalier, in Issoudun in 1874.

As we saw, the first Sisters to come to Fr Chevalier came from an already established community of the Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus, an enclosed community of nuns in Paris. They had separated, with the approval of the Archbishop, from their main congregation, the Dames de Jesus Christ, which had been infected with Jansenism.

However, only some of the sisters could be accommodated in Issoudun, and some remained in Paris. Over time, as we saw, because of internal difficulties, and fears about



**Mother Marie-Louise  
Hartzler First Superior-  
General of the Daughters of  
Our Lady of the Sacred  
Heart, Issoudun, 1882.**

**A widow with two sons in  
the MSC when she entered  
the community, she brought  
stability to the newly  
founded O.L.S.H. Sisters.**

Calendar for September: 1855 Blessing first chapel, installation of first two MSC in Issoudun; 1876, Sept 8 Fr Chevalier meets Marie-Louise Hartzler first time; 1881 Sept 1: First MSC leave Barcelona for Melanesia (PNG, Marshalls, Kiribati); 1882 Sept 29 first 4 MSC arrive in Rabaul; 1884 Five OLSH Sisters make first Profession; 1889 Sept 1: First 8 MSC Sisters received into Postulancy at Hilstrup, Germany; 1882 First MSC House in England, an Apostolic School; 1908 First OLSH to Switzerland; 1920, First MSC arrive in Manado, Celebes; 1925 First MSC from Belgium to Congo (Zaire); 1927 MSC to Java. 1936 7 MSC murdered in Spanish Civil War; with another 4 soon after; 1945 release of Missionaries from Ramale Valley, PNG; 1958 Irish OLSH Sisters take charge of a miners' hospital, Zimbabwe; 1967 MSC to Venezuela; 1985 MSC to Curacao; 1987 First MSC to El Salvador.

the orthodoxy of the devotion around Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the Paris nuns resumed their name as Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus.

Under the former Countess de Pirinoli, known as St Felicité in the Convent (known as a choir nun), and nominated by Fr Chevalier as superior at Issoudun, the community of nine sisters was in danger of collapse. It was three heroic Sisters who saved the congregation. It is their story that we recount here: Claire Dessailly (known as a lay sister), and Sisters Madeleine Masselin, Emélie Sassin (known as extern sisters) and living apart from the convent community. This threefold grouping of women in the one community also reflected something of the broader 18th Century society: educated women generally became choir nuns, the lay sisters did manual work within the convent and the externs ventured outside to get supplies.

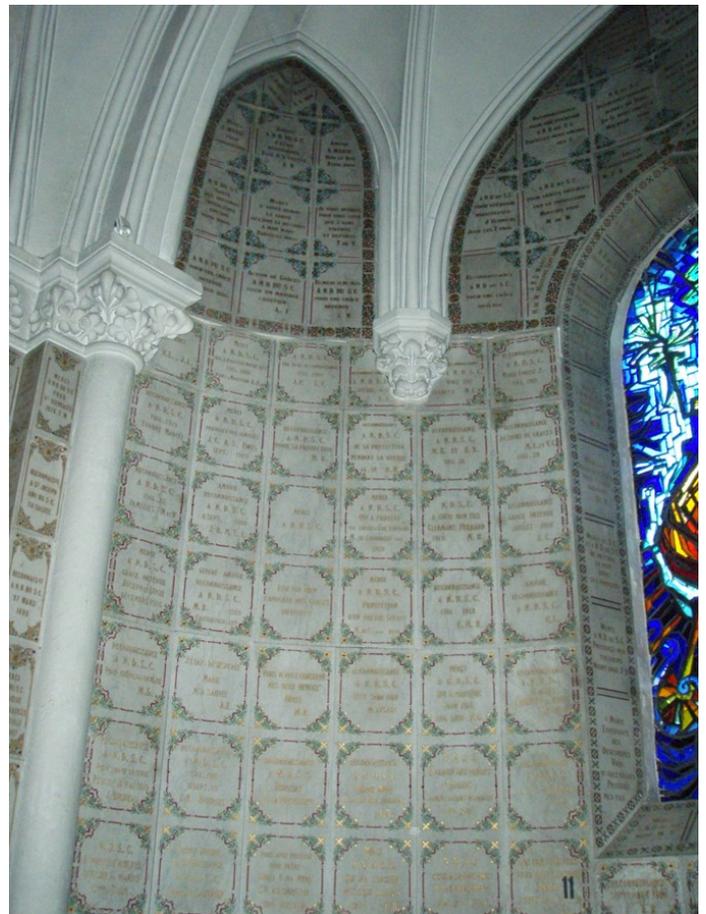
It was the Archbishop of Bourges who demanded that the extern sisters, who took private vows, be admitted to the convent as lay sisters, thus ending that distinction.

In September 1876 the first two choir nuns made their profession of vows and in October the lay sisters professed their vows. The fourth vow for the choir nuns was for the education of girls. While some well-educated young women entered, the superior, however, oriented the community toward the enclosed, contemplative life—directly opposed to what Fr Chevalier had desired. This caused great unrest and division.

The Lay Sisters were excluded, it seems



Fr Jules Chevalier MSC



Walls of the Basilica in Issoudun are covered with “Thank you” plaques to O.L.S.H. for prayers answered.

from any say in the direction of the community and its apostolate. From then on a succession of new sisters came and left to enter other communities—and none of them persevered, according to Sr Madeleine’s memoirs. Some had been directed to leave by Mother Felicité, superior at Issoudun. **She felt that “it was clear at this time that Mother Felicité was gradually getting rid of the community in order to have her house back.”** (*As It Was in the Beginning* FDNSC—memoirs of early sisters. p.23) Those who were on the point of leaving also urged the others to leave. **“But we refused. We kept our confidence in Fr Chevalier who told us that eventually a turn would come for the better.”** (*As It Was...*p.23)

**Near disaster struck with the expulsion in 1880 of the MSC from their monastery in Issoudun and their other houses, together with most male religious orders in France—designated as “unauthorized religious Congregations” according to anti-clerical government laws of the time.**

This plunged the convent, also, into great poverty as pilgrims no longer came to the Basilica, it being closed. (We will return to the dispersal of the MSC in a later *Newsletter*.) At that time the Sisters were renewing their vows annually. However, Fr Chevalier could not give them a priest for their annual retreat—and Mother Felicité suggested that the remaining Sisters could renew their vows before herself. **With great insight, and courage, the three Sisters refused to make the vow of obedience to Mother Felicité because “things were not clearly defined and regulated in accordance with the intentions**

**of the Founder. And so, to all appearances we remained without vows.** In reality, however, Fr Joseph Baltzer MSC, our confessor, had allowed us to make the other two vows privately until things took a better turn.” (Sr Madeleine Masselin, *As It was...*p.24)

On top of this, the superior introduced practices from contemplative convents: a holy hour prior to midnight, daily confession of faults with extreme penances, and kissing the feet of the sisters to ask pardon. **“When Fr Chevalier heard about all this (he was residing with a few MSC in the local presbytery under the fiction of becoming a diocesan or parish priest, as diocesan priests were not, at that time, subject to the expulsion orders), he smartly put a stop to it.”**(p.24)

Help did arrive in the person of Marie-Louise Hartzler, a young widow from Strasbourg who had two sons in the MSC. She had come to Issoudun on pilgrimage and was known to Fr Chevalier. She also made no secret of the fact that she was **only waiting for her youngest son to make his profession as an MSC in order for her to join the Sisters’ community.**

Marie-Louise quickly realized the dire straits the community was in, and she remained on as boarder, as Fr Chevalier asked of her. **By this time there were only the three lay sisters with Mother Felicité in the convent. Felicité held Marie-Louise in high esteem, and she was at ease with the other sisters. Fr Chevalier hoped she would enter and be the new superior.** She flatly refused until Felicité moved on of

her own volition. Fr Chevalier became seriously ill at this time, and the boys from the Apsotolic School, closed and confiscated by the Government, relied on the Sisters for their meals, and on local people to board.

With the continuing turmoil and uncertainty in the convent, two of the lay sisters visited the Archbishop of Bourges to apprise him of the unstable situation at Issoudun, with the imminent collapse of the congregation if no action was taken with regard to its leadership and mission. The Archbishop listened kindly to Sr Madeleine, and gave her a message for Fr Chevalier—to clear up the mess within three months! Sr Madeline, not so sure that things would become better, also called on the local Carmelites to see if she could enter there if all else failed!

On the evening of August 14, Fr Chevalier visited the community with Marie Louise Hartzler and Camille Sabourin in tow and announced that Mother Felicité had withdrawn from the community and was living in the hostel section for a month before departing totally. Camille would be the new superior. When the Novitiate began, she was replaced by Marie-Louise who implored Fr Chevalier not to give her such an appointment. He reminded her that she was under obedience on entering the community. And so, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart found solid ground on which to begin their remarkable expansion—with most of the first group of Professed going directly to the Melanesian Mission on the day following their First Profession! (To be continued)

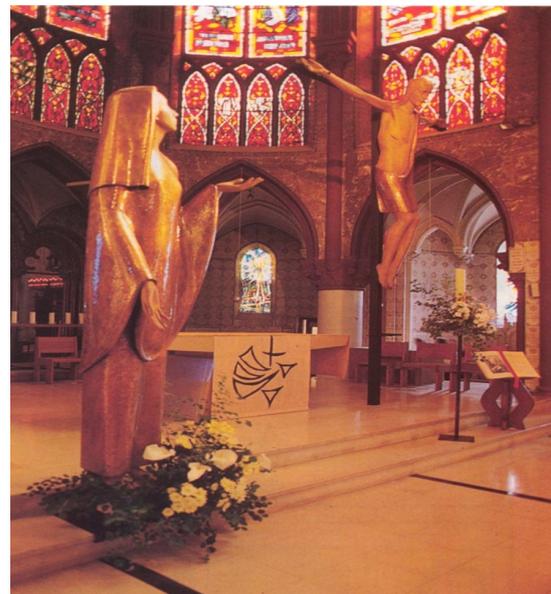
## *The Novena Prayer*

**Remember, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the great things the Lord has done for you. He chose you for his mother; He wanted you close to his cross. He gives you a share in his glory. He listens to your prayer. Offer him our prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Present our petitions to Him.**

**(Recall your petitions...)**

**Let us live like you in the love of your Son so that his Kingdom may come. Lead all people to the source of living water that flows from his heart, spreading over the world hope and salvation, justice and peace.**

**See our trust in you; answer our prayer. Show yourself always our Mother. Amen.**



Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Issoudun.

The Novena: [www.sacredheart.org.au](http://www.sacredheart.org.au)  
Post petitions to Novena, PO Box 309,  
Randwick, 2031 Or email:  
[prayersplease@olshaustralia.org.au](mailto:prayersplease@olshaustralia.org.au)  
The Novena is held each Thursday  
11.30-midday in the Shrine, Randwick.