

FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH OF CANADA
RESOURCES FOR
THE GLOBAL COORDINATING GROUP CALENDAR

During the **THIRD** week of **AUGUST**, we *listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayer the Sisters of St. Joseph and the people of **LEBANON**.



LEBANON is a sovereign state in Western Asia. It is bordered by Syria to the north and east and Israel to the south, while Cyprus is west across the Mediterranean Sea. Lebanon's location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Basin and the Arabian hinterland facilitated its rich history and shaped a cultural identity of religious and ethnic diversity. At just 10,452 km (4,036 sq. mi.), it is the smallest recognized country on the entire mainland Asian continent.



The earliest evidence of civilization in Lebanon dates back more than seven thousand years, predating recorded history. Lebanon was the home of the Canaanites/Phoenicians and their kingdoms, a maritime culture that flourished for over a thousand years (c. 1550–539 BC). In 64 BC, the region came under the rule of the Roman Empire, and eventually became one of the Empire's leading centers of Christianity. In the Mount Lebanon range a monastic tradition known as the Maronite Church was established. As the Arab Muslims conquered the region, the Maronites held on to their religion and identity. However, a new religious group, the Druze, established themselves in Mount Lebanon as

well, generating a religious divide that has lasted for centuries. During the Crusades, the Maronites re-established contact with the Roman Catholic Church and asserted their communion with Rome. The ties they established with the Latins have influenced the region into the modern era.

The region eventually was ruled by the Ottoman Empire from 1516 to 1918. Following the collapse of the empire after World War I, the five provinces that constitute modern Lebanon came under the French Mandate of Lebanon. The French expanded the borders of the Mount Lebanon Governorate, which was mostly populated by Maronites and Druze, to include more Muslims. Lebanon gained independence in 1943, establishing confessionalism, a unique, Consociationalism-type of political system with a power-sharing mechanism based on religious communities. Bechara El Khoury, President of Lebanon during the independence, Riad El-Solh, first Lebanese prime minister and Emir Majid Arslan II, first Lebanese minister of defence, are considered the founders of the modern Republic of Lebanon and are national heroes for having led the country's independence. Foreign troops withdrew completely from Lebanon on 31 December 1946. Lebanon has been a member of the United Nations since its founding in 1945 as well as of the Arab League (1945), the Non-Aligned Movement(1961), Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation (1969) and the Organisation internationale de la francophonie (1973).

Despite its small size, the country has developed a well-known culture and has been highly influential in the Arab world, powered by its large diaspora. Before the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), the country experienced a period of relative calm and renowned prosperity, driven by tourism, agriculture, commerce, and banking. Because of its financial power and diversity in its heyday, Lebanon was referred to as the "Switzerland of the East" during the 1960s, and its capital, Beirut, attracted so many tourists that it was known as "the Paris of the Middle East". At the end of the war, there were extensive efforts to revive the economy and rebuild national infrastructure. In spite of these troubles, Lebanon has the highest Human Development Index and GDP per capita in the Arab world, to the exclusion of the oil-rich economies of the Persian Gulf. (Information from Wikipedia; map from Google)

Sisters of St. Joseph in Lebanon

Nine sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon minister in Lebanon serving in school and youth ministry at the national level.



Information taken from <http://www.stjosephlyon.org/index.php/en/where-are-we/lebanon>



1923: In response to an appeal from some Jesuits, the Sisters of St Joseph of Lyon arrived in the Lebanon from Armenia to serve in the *Hotel-Dieu* in Bayreuth as well as in the French Maternity Hospital and to care for the Armenian refugees in the Lebanon.

They were 17 Sisters in all, of different nationalities: French, American, Mexican, Armenian, Italian and later on Lebanese.

Little by little the Sisters of St Joseph settled in other parts.

Présence in Dier - el - Harf

1936: Arrival of the Sisters in Dier-el-Harf to open a primary school.

1949: Opening of the Novitiate.

1983: During the Civil War, and after much suffering alongside the people, especially the persecuted Christians, the Sisters were forced to head for the exit and make for a Christian region less exposed to persecution.

1986: The Sisters returned to start a new mission of reconciliation and unity in this dissected region.

Présence at klaya:

1958: The Sisters were called to the south of Lebanon, at the frontier with Israel, to open a primary school. They ran a dispensary for the village and the region as well as a mission for the young, the old people and Our Lady's Society.

1975 – 2006: The Sisters tried hard to maintain an active and willing presence for the villagers, victims of a terrible war and the constant attacks of the Israelis in southern Lebanon.



Présences in Jounieh

(1969): A mission in the parish: The Sisters provided different services: in the sacristy, preparation of children for First Communion, youth meetings, visiting the sick and house bound, C.V.X. group, etc.

Other short-lived missions

For different reasons (the war in the Lebanon, shortage of Sisters) we were obliged to leave certain places, for example the Hotel Dieu hospital and the French maternity hospital in 1968, a non-paying primary school in Darb-elsim, another non-paying primary school at Beit-Ed Din. In the same way we relinquished the management of two government dispensaries at Rayfoun and Achkout (kesrwwan) also for lack of nursing Sisters.

Our apostolic commitments.



Education Mission (at Klayaa and Deir El Harf):

Our schools, open, mixed and for all religious faiths are a rich ground to encourage communication and hope between our pupils, and build a society of love which accepts differences as a form of richness and diversity will be a challenge for a friendly and fruitful future. Through our relations, teachers, parents and children we try to build bridges of communication and dialogue especially in our different living quarters, work places and activities with the help of human, civic and religious education, the environment and science.

Ignatian Retreats and recollections.



In a world athirst for God, we share our Ignatian spirituality and our charism with all those who desire a relation with God. It is a time of silence, a time of self-discovery, a time of sharing. In a word it is an intense time of relationship with self with the dear neighbour and with the Lord. This project is realised in conjunction with the Jesuit Priests.

Parish Mission: The Sisters are members of the Parish Committee (Deir el Harf, Klayaa and Ghadir): we try to make our presence as active as possible in the service of God's people so that together we build God's Church.



(Members of the liturgical team, the choral, youth groups, prayer groups, children, First Communions, Gospel evenings, adoration, youth, youth camps, ongoing formation for Religious, The Red Cross, Caritas, catechism,

The Justice & Peace Team: We collaborate with the laity who are working for Justice & Peace, for the care of the Earth and the Environment, Women's Rights and War on Poverty. We try to be open to the different cultures which spring up in our midst.

Ignatian Network – Lebanon: The **Ignatian Network** assembles the entire Ignatian family in the Lebanon and it comprises the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), the Sisters of the Divine Hearts, the Sisters of Nazareth, Sisters of St Joseph of Lyon, Srs of St Joseph of the Apparition, the Srs of Jesus and Mary, the Company of Notre Dame, the Chemin Neuf Community, the Christian Life Community (CVX), Youth Eucharistic Movement (MEJ), as well as many lay movements of Ignatian Spirituality. These movements and communities try to be faithful to the spirituality born of St Ignatius Loyola and his Companions. It is a spirituality which continues to dynamise these communities for "the greater glory of God" and "the good of souls".

Pastoral care in Universities: Accompanying the young university students is a very lively mission. We are committed with the young, to advance with them, to help them to be faithful to their Church commitments during their university years and be able to fight with them against all the challenges coming from today's world. This is made possible through regular meetings, weekends, formation and an annual camp divided into two parts: spiritual (an Ignatian retreat) and missionary with other activities for the formation of the young.





An environmental Club: In our school at Deir-el-Harf we have founded a Club to encourage the pupils in environmental education, in collaboration with other clubs in the region, for example: AFDC (Association for forest and development and conversation – Lebanon). Our pupils have already composed a song about the protection of the forest and a little play on the role of bees; both these projects have been adopted by AFDC and they are requested by other schools and environmental clubs.



Where ever our mission takes us, we try to be faithful to our spirituality and our charism.

Finally we beg Our Lord, Lord of the harvest, to assure, if he so wills, the growth of our Congregation, by adding new members (Const 89), for our world needs courageous women to live out the adventure of Religious Life by bidding farewell to our securities and going out to meet the dear neighbour in the joyful and unreserved gift of our whole life so as to contribute, as feeble instruments, to the construction of a new world.



United in prayer the Global Joseph Family, 11,000 sisters in 54 countries, listening to the heart of the world.

