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## History of the FCJ Society in Romania



**After the fall of the Berlin Wall**, as the ice of the Cold War melted, many religious congregations, including our own, turned towards Eastern Europe to explore possibilities for ministry.

In 1992-93, two sisters were sent to different countries of the former Communist Block to see how our congregation could meet the needs of the local Church.

In January 1994, as a result of their research, three sisters were missioned to Romania -- two to Galați and one to Bucharest.

As **FCJ Sisters**, we see our role as one of support and encouragement to the Romanian people, especially the youth. It is principally through education, both formal and informal, that we give support and encouragement.

Our community in **Galați** has always worked closely with the Franciscan priests in the Parish of St. John the Baptist, giving support to poor families and teaching catechetics. In the early days, our sisters also cared for small children in a state-run orphanage, and were involved in the University. In the lives of these sisters our charism of companionship in love, compassion and trust has come alive.



In between times, some sisters from the original group have been called to minister in other countries, while others have come to work in Romania. In **Bucharest** we had two communities. One of these offered accommodation for students interested in a programme of faith development. Early ministries included English language programmes at the Catholic Nursing School, the Catholic Institute St. Teresa and the Catholic High School.

Then in 2001, we opened a small **Spirituality Centre** in Bucharest where we meet many people asking important questions about life and its meaning. Inter-Religious



dialogue was one of the themes and members of the different churches were invited to participate.

The work of the Centre in Bucharest continues, finding different ways of sharing our **Ignatian spirituality**.

An Ignatian prayer group was formed, meeting once or twice a month in our Centre, frequented by a small number of women who were searching for new ways of praying in daily life...

We gave presentations to interested people in both Bucharest and Galați, using power point, offering people another way of meditating on Scripture and deepening prayer. Themes followed the Liturgical year, eg Epiphany, Pentecost, Vocation, Reconciliation and also the Joannine *I Am* statements of Jesus, *I am the vine, I am the light of the world, I am the door, I am the way the truth and the life...*



In 2008 after a few years when we had no Sisters resident in Galați, two FCJs were missioned there to Strada Nicolae Balcescu, not far from the Catholic church. There is a small community in Strada Monetariei, Bucharest.



Teaching catechetics in the parish, reaching out to old people and families in difficulty, teaching English, working with children from disadvantaged and sometimes abusive homes, as well as facilitating over several years the Integration of Faith and Life course offered to groups of young people by the Craighead Institute ... these are just some of the many opportunities we have to live companionship in love, compassion and trust.

Some people who resonate with our FCJ spirituality, have now come forward to be more closely associated with us, as **Companions in Mission**, sharing the charism of Marie Madeleine and choosing to live it, collaborating with us wherever possible.

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