



CIM History

In 1998, the FCJ General Superior, Sr. Paula Terroni, was writing: *We value our charism greatly and we want to share it as widely as possible... The spirituality of the Society is certainly very relevant for today. How can we, who are entrusted with the charism of Faithful Companionship with Jesus, find other ways in which it can be lived authentically?*

Charism is a word that in Christian theology means a gift given by God for the good of others. Such a gift was given to Marie Madeleine d’Hou in France in the early 1800’s, and in response she began the Society of Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus. The inspiration was the faithful women companions at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. As Marie Madeleine d’Houët wrote in her journal, “from there we go forth to serve a risen Christ”. Her vision was influenced by the Jesuits (Company of Jesus), from whom she learned about discernment, finding God in the midst of daily life, and being contemplative in action.

Consecrated women religious have existed in the Roman Catholic Church for many years. Often, lay men and women who came to know a particular religious congregation have felt drawn to its spirituality and gradually sense a strong inner desire to “come closer”. Franciscan spirituality attracted some; Dominican spirituality attracted others. Those persons who are inspired by Ignatian spirituality might feel drawn to the Faithful Companions of Jesus.

Even though lay people worked side by side with the sisters over the years and knew them quite well, by the early 1980’s some of them were expressing a sense of longing to be connected in a deeper way with the Faithful Companions of Jesus in order to grow in their relationship with God. Historically, this was also in the years after Vatican Council II, when lay Catholics were urged to recognize the significance of their Baptism and thus the importance of their role in the Church and the world.

In some of the countries where the sisters were located, Associations formed. Since the main ministry of the sisters had been education, these people were often former pupils, teachers, parents, or relatives. In 1983 the sisters held their General Chapter, an international meeting to discuss various issues, one of which was these requests from lay friends, relatives, and colleagues for deeper connections. A decision was taken to look into the matter further.

Gradually, the sisters began to realize how enriching these connections could be for them as well as for their lay associates. Two forms of FCJ Association emerged. One was characterized by prayer, mutual exchange and friendship. The other was a more formalized program for those who wanted to live a spirituality of faithful companionship more fully within their own lifestyle. These initiatives were further encouraged at another international meeting of sister-representatives in 1988. During that meeting, the need for international coordination became clearer.

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At that 1998 meeting, FCJ “Companions in Mission” was formally established. It was to be “*a public expression of relationship with the Society of the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, and a form of commitment for those who wish to be more closely associated with us in our mission.*”

During that year and the next there was a great deal of consultation and discussion among the superiors, the sisters in community, and interested lay people. Finally, the decision was taken that Sr. Bonnie Moser would be appointed as the first International Co-ordinator of Companions in Mission. She explored various resources, consulted further, and began to gather information about formation programmes, handbooks, etc.

On 2 January 2001 the *FCJ Companions in Mission* was officially launched by the General Superior, Sr. Paula Terroni. The first group began at the FCJ Generalate in Broadstairs, England.



Srs Paula Terroni and Bonnie Moser

By the time of the next official international meeting of sister delegates in 2003 several Companions in Mission had made commitment. It was obvious that this initiative was meeting an increasing need among lay men and women and thus needed further development.

Since then the following sisters have taken on the role of International Coordinator:

- Sr. Frances Kennedy (2004)
- Sr. Paula Mullen (2009)
- Sr. Joanna Walsh (2014)



In the 2008 FCJ General Chapter, once again there was a strong desire to foster the growth and development of the Companions in Mission initiative. The International Coordinator was tasked with overseeing (in collaboration with FCJ sisters and Companions in Mission) the production of a comprehensive document with information and norms to facilitate ongoing formation, organization across the world, and collaboration. Also, there was a growing need for shared programme resources and networking. For the sake of unity, there would have to be general norms and procedures, though local differences would be respected. Greater familiarity with internet technology allowed for increased international connections and mutual support.

In the summer of 2013 the first international meeting of representative sisters and Companions in Mission was held in London. Its theme was *“Faithful to the Vision”*. Seventeen Companions in Mission participated, representing the Australia, Indonesia, Italy, Canada, the USA, and Ireland. There were eleven FCJ sister participants from various countries, some representing FCJ Leadership and others involved locally with the Companions in Mission Program. This was an opportunity for everyone to hear about the development on CiM in various parts of the world. A Handbook was completed as a result of this meeting. The formation program was also revised as a result of discussions held. A special CiM prayer was later created by CiM in Canada.



The interweaving of our lives with Companions in Mission leads to fresh insights beckoning us to wider horizons.

FCJ General Chapter 2013

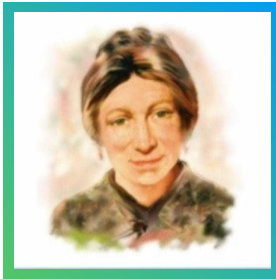
In 2014 a next step was taken. The first virtual meeting of the new International Companions in Mission Advisory Committee met via the Internet. The members were FCJ sisters and Companions in Mission located in London, Canada, Australia, and Ireland. This was an effort to collaborate with the FCJ International Coordinator in goal-setting, program development, dealing with issues that arise, and new initiatives. Each Area of the FCJ Society was represented on this Committee.

In the summer of 2018 another special meeting (*Seeing With New Eyes*) was held in London for the ongoing development of Companions in Mission. By this time there were approximately 150 Companions in 11 countries. 7 Companions in Mission represented the three Areas of the FCJ Society (the Americas, Europe, and Asia-Australia). There were 8 FCJ participants. Reports were given from each of the Areas. Some of the topics discussed were: vision for CiM, formation, leadership, communication, and suggested changes for the Handbook.

Also during that summer a special meeting (*Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*) was held in Melbourne, Australia, for representative Companions in Mission and FCJ sisters. Countries represented were Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Myanmar. Topics discussed were: the original vision of CiM; living the charism; and formation for leadership.

From the Companions in Mission Vision Statement

Moving into the future, FCJ sisters and Companions in Mission continue to “support each other as they deepen their relationship with Jesus and live their Christian commitment in their everyday lives, reaching out to all God’s people, especially those in need.”



“ Our little Society has for its end to glorify the heart of Jesus by every means in its power. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Faithful Companions of Jesus

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