

## With Hope as Our Charism Takes Root and Grows – The Closing of Hope House FCJ, Tuscaloosa, AL

Tuscaloosa, USA  
samedi, 20-Oct-18



After 25 years of FCJ life, love, service, and Faithful Companionship in the city of Tuscaloosa in the Diocese of Birmingham, Alabama a Mass of Thanksgiving and Farewell for the Sisters took place, fittingly, on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, June 3, 2018, at St. Francis University Parish.

Over the years several FCJ Sisters have ministered in various capacities and for varying lengths of time. However, for the past three years Sr. Ellen has been the lone FCJ residing at Hope House, with Sr. Ann visiting from Toronto from time to time.

In the week preceding the Mass various FCJs arrived for the celebrations and for the annual CiM retreat. Sr. Susan from Edmonton, Alberta, Srs. Ita, Madeleine and Helen from Calgary, Alberta, Sr. Bonnie, Area Leader, and Sr. Ann arrived from Toronto, Ontario.

On Wednesday May 30 the Companions in Mission annual retreat led jointly by Srs. Susan and Ita began with 10 CiMs in attendance. The theme of the retreat was focused on leadership and ministry. The days were filled with opportunities for input and prayer and times of reflection. A poignant moment in the retreat was a prayer experience when the FCJ's and CiM's had an opportunity to spend some quiet personal time visiting the various rooms and prayer spaces both inside the house and outside in the gardens, remembering and saying goodbye to their favorite places.



On the last day of the retreat Saturday June 2, Sr. Bonnie commissioned Rene, CiM – who had just returned from the international CiM meeting in Gumley, and Genevieve, CiM as the co-coordinators of the Tuscaloosa CiMs. Rene and Genevieve are both longtime members of CiM and are committed, active, generous, and faith-filled women who obviously have the trust and support of the other members of the group. There was an opportunity for sharing of feelings and blessings in light of the departure of the Sisters. As each one spoke, the trust among the members was evident in their honest and at times tearful sharing of feelings. As they shared their hopes and desires as individuals and as group, we FCJs witnessed their taking ownership and embracing the leadership for the group. There was a great sense among the FCJ's that the group was being left in capable hands. A delicious potluck meal and socializing brought the retreat to a joyful conclusion. Our great gratitude goes to Srs. Susan and Ita for sharing their wealth of knowledge and deep spirituality, and for the joy of their companionship.

The next day, Sunday, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Mass of Thanksgiving and Farewell took place at 3.00 p.m. with Fr. Rick, presiding assisted by Fr. Michael Deering the pastor of Holy Spirit Parish, Tuscaloosa. Fr. Rick is Diocesan Vocation Director and Campus Minister and is a good friend of the FCJs. At the beginning of Mass Sr. Bonnie offered words of welcome and acknowledged our privilege in serving with and among the people of Tuscaloosa these 25 years. After Holy Communion, Madeleine gave an informative and at times humorous recollection of our time and ministry in Tuscaloosa. She also drew attention to the fact that while the Sisters may indeed be leaving, the seed of our charism has been planted here. Through the ministry and relationships developed over the years at the University and at St. Francis as well as at Holy Spirit school and parish, but in a particular through our Companions in Mission we know that Marie Madeleine's legacy will live on. Our hope is that it will continue to grow and flourish.

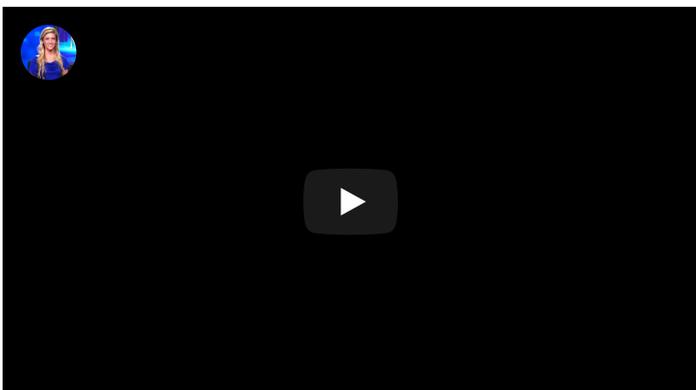


At the Mass of Thanksgiving and Farewell, FCJs, CiMs, and colleagues served in various roles as music ministers, lectors, reading the Prayers of the Faithful, presenting the gifts, and as extraordinary minister of the Eucharist. Following the Eucharist, a reception to which everyone was invited, took place in the parish hall which had been carefully and lovingly decorated with beautiful flowers from the Hope House garden and the gardens of Genevieve and Mona, CiMs. There is, as always, great sadness that there will no longer be any FCJ Sister(s) in Tuscaloosa, yet we are confident that God will do great things through the instrumentality of our CiMs.



**Thank you to everyone who supported us through your prayers and messages of support and goodwill. Please continue to hold in prayer the people of Tuscaloosa and the growth and development of our Charism in Tuscaloosa.**

Watch a TV interview in the local news programme with Sr Ellen:





“ La Société n'est pas mon œuvre, c'est l'œuvre de Dieu qui saura la soutenir si telle est sa volonté. ”

*Marie Madeleine d'Houët*

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