

Chapter Venue: 134 Years of History

Calgary, Canada

Saturday, 12-Oct-19



The venue of the [2019 General Chapter](#) of the FCJ Sisters is [FCJ Christian Life Centre](#), a retreat and conference centre in the heart of Calgary, Canada. After nearly a century of primarily providing education for children in Alberta, the ministry of the FCJ Sisters was adapted to new needs and the focus became Christian formation and retreat work.

Read here a little bit of the history of the presence of the sisters in Calgary.

In 1882 Bishop Vital Grandin, OMI, Bishop of territories in the West of Canada, wrote to Mother [Josephine Petit](#), Superior General of the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus in France, *I hope, Reverend Mother, that you will be willing to come to our aid by accepting a foundation in my poor diocese...* Mother Josephine Petit, then General Superior of the FCJ Sisters, answered that plea, and the first group of sisters came to Canada in 1883.



Bishop Vital Grandin, OMI

“ Monseigneur, you ask for the Sisters for your schools and your diocese in urgent need. The journey will be long, difficult, costly and even dangerous...Your poverty does not permit you to pay our traveling expenses. You ask for sacrifices. Well, we will do it for God.

FCJ Superior General Mother Josephine Petit in 1882

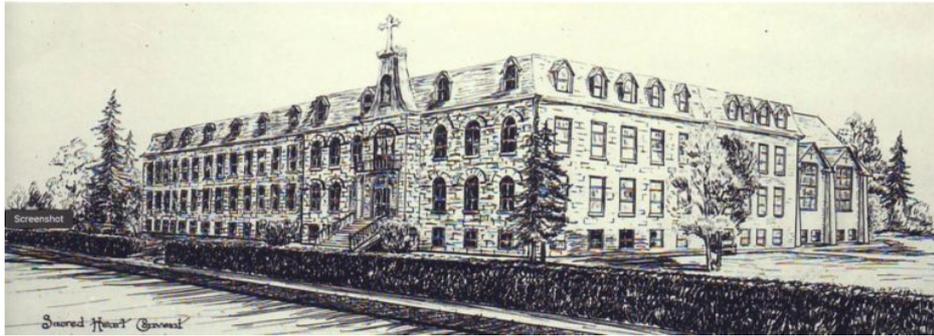
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Bishop Grandin decided it was necessary for the sisters to be called away from their original Canadian mission, St. Laurent, after they had been caught in the midst of the Riel Rebellion. Welcomed in Calgary on July 26, 1885, the Sisters were given the Oblate Fathers' home as their residence and immediately opened their doors to children for classes in September.



From the beginning, [Mother Mary Greene](#), the local leader of Sacred Heart Convent and Principal of Sacred Heart Convent and Boarding School, worked to gain government recognition. The education standards of the school were such that on December 18, 1885, what eventually came to be called the [Calgary Roman Catholic School District #1](#), came into existence.

School enrollment quickly increased and, in 1893, the Convent building was replaced on the same site, by the present building, Sacred Heart Convent. The school flourished, leading to the construction of [St. Mary's School](#) in 1909 (demolished in 2002) and to further additions to Sacred Heart Convent in 1924.



Education, both of children and adults, and retreat work were two ministries envisioned and embraced by the foundress of the FCJs. After nearly a century of primarily providing education for children, the ministry of the FCJ Sisters was adapted to new needs and the focus became Christian formation and retreat work. Extensive renovations were done to the Convent in 1979

-1980 to provide appropriate facilities for the newly inaugurated [FCJ Christian Life Centre](#). Further renovations were completed in 2000, our 20th anniversary year, adding a formal reception space, additional offices, and a refurbished food service area.

Today the [FCJ Retreat and Conference Centre](#), an ecumenical retreat and conference Centre, offers hospitality to non-profit groups and individuals looking to “discover their centre”. Within a warm, welcoming and peaceful atmosphere, the Centre hosts more than retreats, offering workshops on spirituality and personal development, outreach, spiritual direction, lay ministry training programs, quiet days or alternate conference space for groups who fall within the mandate of the FCJ Centre.

Credits for text (adapted) and photos: [FCJ Retreat and Conference Centre](#)

For more about the history of the FCJ Sisters in Calgary: article in the [Calgary Herald](#), [Glenbow Museum archives](#)

More on our General Chapter on the [Chapter News](#) page and on social media [#FCJChapter2019](#).



“ When Peace and Union reign among us, God is with us. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

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