

Pilgrimage with Marie Madeleine

Paris, France

Monday, 16-Sep-19



Six [Companions in Mission](#) participated in this year's pilgrimage on the steps of [Marie Madeleine](#), the FCJ foundress. They joined with eighteen lay collaborators of the FCJ sisters from across the world. The pilgrims prayed and journeyed through places where [Marie Madeleine lived and worked](#) in France – in Picardy, Berry and Paris.

The pilgrimage was organised and led by FCJ sisters Anouska, Cornelia, Lorenza and Mary from the Area of Europe, with the purpose of sharing Marie Madeleine's story and the rich charism she has bequeathed to the people of God. She is a woman for our times even if she was born before the French Revolution.

Here are some of the reflections of this group of Companions in Mission.

Genevieve, Myanmar

As a CIM from Myanmar, I had a privilege to travel to different parts of France which is a very rare chance for people of Myanmar. I would like to express my gratitude to sister Agnes and Narni who introduced me to Lay Pilgrimage to trace the footsteps of Marie Madeleine d'Houët. I would also like to extend my heart-felt thanks to Sr. Mary, Lorenza, Anouska and Cornelia who led this pilgrimage with confidence and joy.

I really treasure our reflection time when we expressed our joy and deep concern as well as when we brought the life of Marie Madeleine (past) into present which continues to inspire us to more love, more union and compassion in our lives. It was such a delight to meet up with like-minded people who I had friendly chats and spiritual conversations with.

As I have been teaching about the life of Marie Madeleine to girls who are interested in FCJ society while staying with the FCJ sisters in Myanmar, this journey has made a huge difference to my meeting with the girls. The materials I gathered and my first-hand experience during this spiritual journey have a profound effect on my teaching to make it more meaningful and real. My contribution to the society as a lay CIM may be trivial, but I consider myself as a bridge between the FCJ sisters and the girls across the language barrier in Myanmar.



*Venerable Marie Madeleine d'Houët (1781-1858),
foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus*

Lisa, Canada

The pilgrimage was very enriching and full of information that I am still reflecting on. There are times in my reflection that a place, or a shared moment comes back to me. What stays with me the most is that Marie Madeleine was not just a character in a book. She came to life for me. Her spirit was so alive in all the places we visited. And that spirit is still alive today through our FCJ Sisters.

Julian, Canada

I am struggling to articulate the rich experience I had during the FCJ 2019 Pilgrimage. Somehow words fall short of capturing what a meditative, moving experience it was to retrace the steps of this remarkable woman, Marie Madeleine. Like a precious prism, I can offer random reflections of moments on the pilgrimage that struck me as profound and will remain with me well into the future. In Amiens, as I ascended the staircase in rue Dupuis, I felt a deep connection with Marie Madeleine; my hand caressing the well-worn handrail. At days end, a ritual that I so enjoyed was the small group sharing facilitated by the sisters. Sr. Anouska gently guided our group through a simple exercise, allowing each of us to call forth our joys and challenges experienced that day.



Baptismal font, church of St Martial

Our meditation at St. Martial in Chateauroux, the site where Marie Madeleine was baptized, I found to be a deeply moving experience. I was struck by the staggering numbers of children who were served by these faithful women; schools were established and housing for poor children – in one building 500 and in another, 800. There was a very sombre mood while walking around the Bourges Cathedral, reflecting on Marie Madeleine's great joy on her wedding day to Joseph, only to face the devastating funeral of her beloved one short year later in the same sacred space.

I felt great solidarity with that teenage Marie Madeleine who would zig zag through Issoudun to get to Mass at St. Cyr, careful not to get spotted by her adolescent peers. I guess we all grow into our faith eventually! After celebrating Mass at the Bourges Cathedral, what a great honor it was to mingle with relatives and descendants from the de Bonnault and de Bengy families. In Parassy, a scorching day did not deter us as we enjoyed a most informative tour of the vineyards from a proud vintner. Then it was

down the hill to Le Vieux Pressoir, the house given to Marie Madeleine and Joseph as a wedding present. The current owner received us so graciously and invited us to roam the grounds and tour the house on this most exquisite estate. So to sum up, the pilgrimage was rich with history, offering us a fresh insight into the joys and travails of this holy foundress who has left a legacy spanning 200 years.

Equally memorable for me was the faith filled, spirited, humours, slightly quirky pilgrims who made this journey so amazing! With Sr. Lorenza, Sr. Cornelia, Sr. Mary and Sr. Anouska as our shepherds, I firmly believe they each deserve gold medals for keeping this animated crew in line! The pilgrimage was truly a memory maker for me!



FCJ Sisters who led the pilgrimage: Mary, Anouska, Lorenza and Cornelia.

Mary, Australia

“Walking in the Footsteps of Marie Madeleine”

In late June, 28 pilgrims from various FCJ communities from around the world met at the Gare du Nord, Paris, to begin a week-long pilgrimage to places of significance in the FCJ story. We were guided by four FCJ sisters, Mary, Anouska, Lorenza and Cornelia. Their knowledge of how Marie Madeleine and her early companions responded to the needs in their time were invaluable in helping us come to know Marie Madeleine much more deeply.

Throughout the week there were many highlights. One was our visit to Bourges Cathedral. Sitting near my husband, celebrating the Eucharist with Marie Madeleine's relatives, I was filled with a great sense of companionship. I thought of the excitement she, together with all gathered must have felt in this cathedral on her wedding day in 1804. I also reflected on Marie Madeleine's extraordinary loving courage in becoming a mother to so many despite her personal pain in losing her husband shortly after her marriage.



Bourges Cathedral – the chandeliers were a gift from Marie Madeleine's family on the occasion of her wedding.

I was deeply moved by the Prayer Ritual held in the church of St. Martial where she was baptised. We reflected on responding to God's invitation in our lives. The faith and resilience needed to do this brought many of us to tears. In this church we also had the opportunity to see the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. I was drawn directly to Our Lady's hands which looked like they belonged to a worker – rough and worn. Great metaphor I thought – Marie Madeleine responding to God's invitation required substantial work. Another highlight was our evening group reflections where we gathered in small groups. We shared honestly and respectfully highlights and challenges from the day. Our reflections were always inspired by aspects of Marie Madeleine's life and these often became interwoven with our own life story. During these group reflections I enjoyed that we felt comfortable to share, including at times, sitting in silence and quiet reflection. I was moved towards the end of the week when Mary, Anouska, Cornelia and Lorenza shared how they responded to God's invitation in their respective lives. It was inspiring to hear each of their faith journey told with such gentleness and humility. Their words, actions and choices all flowed from their deep relationship with God. I felt both humbled and joyous that the final theme explored was "The Story continues... The FCJ charism, to be contemplative while being active is what I strive for in my life... the work of a lifetime!

Sri, Indonesia

I am very grateful to be given the opportunity by the FCJ Sisters to take part in the CiM Pilgrimage. It was the most graceful and beautiful Pilgrimage of my life. Within my limited English I ventured to join and Companions in Mission from various countries. I ventured to make the pilgrimage.

I believe God would give me a way through Marie Madeleine to be able to follow the Pilgrimage properly. The guide book "In the footsteps of Marie Madeleine" provided a guide, even though we were previously guided by Sr. Irene and Sr. Agnes Samosir.

Marie Madeleine's life journey strengthens my steps to make friends with those who are thirsty and with anyone wherever God guides the steps of my life.

As I arrived in Amiens I had the hope that I could be more sensitive in listening to God's voice for myself amidst the hustle and bustle of work.



Pilgrims at St. Acheul in the city of Amiens, where Marie Madeleine sent her son to school with the Jesuits.

Marie Madeleine's life journey is like a reflection of my own life's journey, a journey to find God's will. Marie Madeleine's life journey is full of the joys and sorrows of a woman, mother, widow who struggled to faithfully seek God's will without relentless surrender, although accompanied by a spiritual guide who was not always supportive.

Marie Madeleine was tough, humble, motherly, generous, sensitive to others in need, persistent, gentle, although she came from a noble family. Marie Madeleine teaches me to live everyday life by only relying on God and surrendering fully to God. It is not a coincidence that I became a member of CiM, I believe nothing is accidental, everything has been arranged by God as well as possible.



Our Lady of Peace, Picpus

I could feel the sacredness of the places we visited, in particular when praying in the chapel in Marie Madeleine's house in Amiens. The heart becomes calm and peaceful. Likewise when visiting Picpus, where Marie Madeleine prayed for hours to hear the voice of God over her. Her loyalty and persistence seeking and finding God's will for her deeply touched me where Marie Madeleine surrendered fully to the Virgin Mary, mother of peace and eternal help. Places visited marked the character of Marie Madeleine who always cared for those who suffer.

The Church of St. Dominique also meant a lot to me. There the mortal remains of Marie Madeleine are buried with a cover in the form of a spreading flame. This indicates for me the presence of Marie Madeleine spread throughout the world through the charisma of her friendship to embrace the suffering and the "thirsty."

This pilgrimage was a graceful and beautiful journey throughout my life that cannot be expressed in words. Increasingly feel God's grace and kindness that is truly great throughout my life that He gave sincerely without reservation to me. It is this love of God that I must share with those chosen by God with the various problems they face to shape my life according to His will.

Read the [reflection by Erlina](#), CiM from Indonesia.



“ Never give way to discouragement, for it will be our ruin. Courage and confidence! Let that be your motto. (1837) ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Faithful Companions of Jesus

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