



Charism Painting

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This painting was born out of our reflection on the ways in which our charism of companionship – the special gift that we are called to offer to our world and church – could be depicted in visual form. Many ideas were shared, and as a result, in July 1996, Helen Roberts undertook to translate the fruit of the Society’s communal reflection into a painting.

The painting is on a circular canvas four feet in diameter. There is a circular movement in the painting itself, symbolising wholeness and **God’s faithful, encircling love**. Vibrant acrylic colours have been used to portray the vitality and energy of the charism of companionship.

On the left of the painting the flame, passion for the Reign of God, enfolds the Foundress, [Marie Madeleine de Bonnault d’Hoüet](#) and four companions who represent both the first FCJs and the four „spiritual companions”, **poverty, humility, obedience and gentleness**, that God had promised would always be with Marie Madeleine and the Society she founded. Marie Madeleine’s son Eugène is also there, as is a group of children playing against the skyline of Amiens, France, where the Society had its birth.

The flame has its origins at the foot of the cross. Marie Madeleine took her inspiration from the women who stood at the foot of the cross of Jesus and who remained faithful to him. Suffering people, too, are seen near the cross. They reach out to the life-giving water that forms the shadow of the cross. The cry of Jesus from the cross „**I am thirsty**„profoundly influenced Marie Madeleine, and she committed herself to respond to this cry by a life of companionship with Jesus and with his people.

From the flame the women, led by the Spirit, move into the future. The bridge links the early days in Amiens with later foundations in many different parts of the world where FCJs minister in sixteen countries, in a variety of ministries, touching the lives of countless people in a diverse and changing world.

The cross of life extends into the world, and its centre, symbolic of the **Eucharist**, radiates light which bathes all the aspects of the painting, drawing them into a harmonious unity.

From the foot of the cross God’s people move forward. Women who personify the gift of the charism given to the FCJ Society are in the midst of the throng. They are **gentle women**, reaching out in welcome and encouragement to those around them. One of them is clothed in the colours of the cross and her form echoes its shape. There is **diversity** in the group of women, who are of different ages and races. They carry the flame of the first inspiration given to Marie Madeleine and they step into the river that leads them into the **future**.

The women kneeling by the river gather water in earthen vessels, a reminder of Marie Madeleine’s call to be like an empty vessel in God’s hands **ready to receive all from God**.

Over-arching the whole painting is the **rainbow**, symbol of **God's covenant**. The circular movement within the painting links the beginnings of the Society depicted in the flame with the whole sweep of its history and with the rainbow, sign of **hope** for the future.

This painting hangs in [Gumley House Convent Generalate](#), over the staircase leading from the marble hall to the Chapel.



“ Societatea nu este lucrarea mea; este lucrarea lui Dumnezeu și El va ști cum să o susțină, iastfel încât să fie voința lui Dumnezeu. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Însoțitoarele Credincioase ale lui Isus

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