

INSTITUTE HISTORY WORKSHEET

TOPIC: Mere Monica de la Passion (1937-1950)

WWII: 1940 – 1943

Places: Everywhere in the Notre Dame world

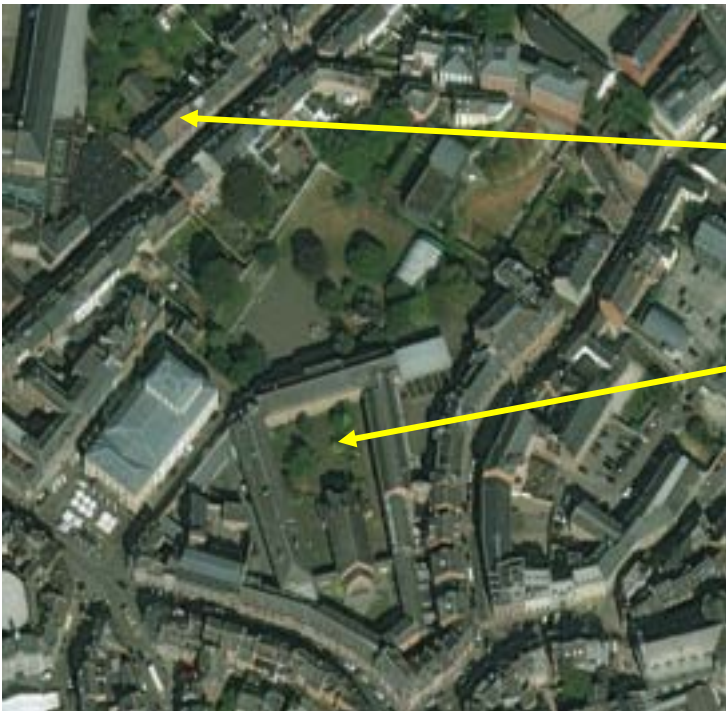
People & Relationships between them:

- Mère Monica de la Passion
- Sr. Julie de la Ste Famille (American Councilor)
- Sr. Claude du. S.C. (British; Assistant Mother General)
- Sr. Maura Lynch (General Secretary)
- Ohio Provincial: Sr. Teresa of the Passion
- Massachusetts Provincial: Sr. Augusta of the Sacred Heart
- Maryland Provincial: Sr. Rosalia of the Blessed Sacrament
- Sr. Mary Kostka (Japan)
- Sr. Constantine of the Sacred Heart (China) & Sr. Agnes Pauline P'eng (China)
- Sr. Thérèse Marguerite & Sr. Anthony (Italy)
- Dames de Ste. Julienne on rue Pepin in Namur
- Pius XII – Mussolini turns against him because of outspoken views on war
- Monsignor Noots – postulator of cause in Rome

Dates & Events:

1940: May 10 – attacks on Belgium begin, Namur community dispersed w/10 remaining to guard the Mother House; provisions made to turn cellars into refuge

1940: May 13 – Mother House abandoned due to fire – community takes shelter with Dames de Ste. Julienne on rue Pepin



Dames de Ste Julienne at property at 17 rue Pepin

Our motherhouse property

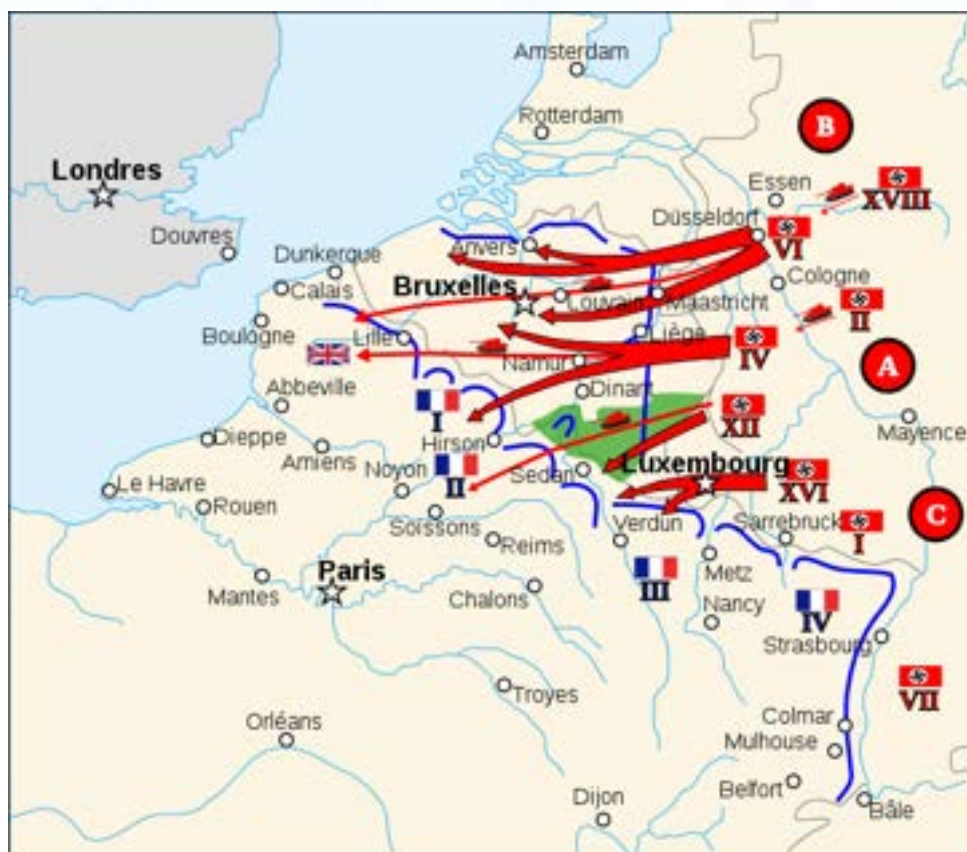


Maison mère des Soeurs de Notre-Dame
après le bombardement de la ville de Namur le 13 mai 1940

1. Noviciat
2. Chapelle publique de Mère Julie
3. Façade rue Julie Billiat

4. Cour des parloirs
5. Eglise
6. Pensionnat et ancienne demi-pension

7. "Nazareth": école gratuite
8. Demi-pension
9. Chapelle St Joseph



1940: May 17 – Namur surrenders to Germans

1940: May 22 – letter to Ohio Sisters from Teresa of the Passion

1940: July 1 – memo from Archbishop Curley of Baltimore in response to Sr. Rosalia's request for direction since communication has been lost with Namur

1940: Centenary of SNDdeN in America – Mère Monica cannot come

1940: great concern about the Sisters in both China and Japan

MAY 22, 1940 LETTER FROM SR. TERESA OF THE PASSION TO ALL HOUSES

Conditions in Europe grow daily more alarming. However we must try to keep calm and put our trust in prayer. Each Sister is, I am sure, trying to do something special in the way of prayer or sacrifice that peace may soon be restored.

A copy of the enclosed leaflet was sent to you a long time ago. At the Mountain we are saying this prayer before breakfast and before supper immediately after the usual prayer before those meals. It is said in consort. I do not even suggest that you do this. I merely call your attention to the prayer, which seems most appropriate during these critical times.

May I remind you also to be very careful of your clothing, especially of habit, apron, and veil material, also of linen. There will be a great scarcity of it as the prices are high and will steadily rise.

In the last letter received from our dear Mother, dated April 18, she again expressed her deep gratitude and that of the Sisters for the Mass that is being said daily for their welfare. Just as soon as I get word from our dear Sisters in Europe I shall share it with you.

....(She goes on to talk about retreat schedule)

P.S. We are saying each morning the "Ave Maris Stella" with the hope that some of our American Sisters are on the ocean.

POSTCARD DATED MAY 28, 1940 RECEIVED FROM SR. CLAUDE AT ASHDOWN, ENGLAND

"There is still no news whatsoever concerning our Convents in Belgium and our dear Mère. The anxiety is deepening every day. The mid-day news that the King of the Belgians has ordered his army to capitulate is well nigh the last blow to our hopes of that union in which our best strength lay! However, God can grant victory if he wills. May He support and strengthen us all. Please pray for and with us all.

With love from Sister Superior Provincial and myself."

SR. TERESA OF THE PASSION RECEIVES WORD FROM SR. JULIE DE LA STE FAMILLE THROUGH THE STATE DEPARTMENT DATED JUNE 15:

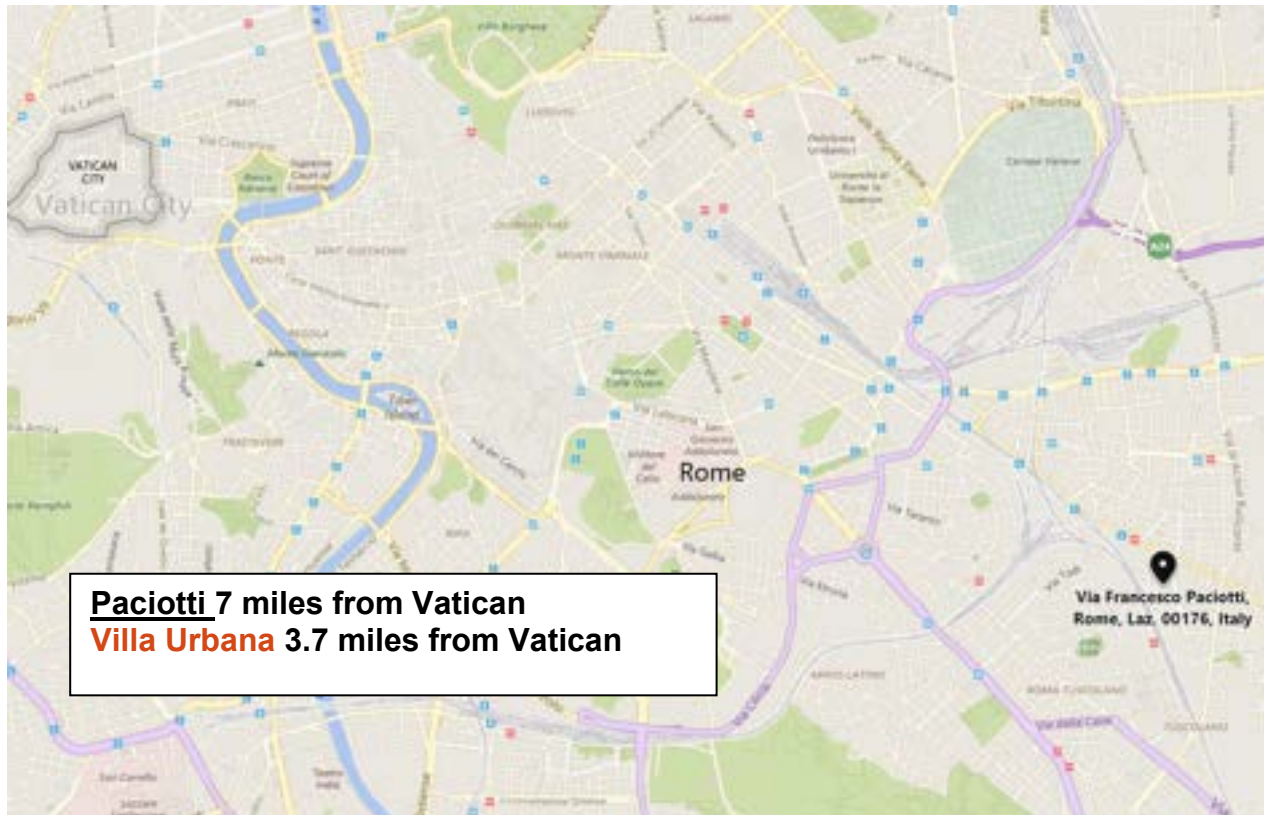
"Motherhouse Namur completely destroyed. Sisters safe. Address Mother Rue Pepin 17 Namur. Send nothing now. No urgent need. Notify five provincials. Please pay cost of telegram."

CABLE SENT FROM SR. TERESA OF THE PASSION TO CLAUDE:

Sympathy - welcome here - Maison Mere destroyed - Sisters safe.

ROME TO THE RESCUE!

- By the end of August, 1940 Sr. Thérèse Marguerite has managed to connect with Namur through the Vatican
- A system using diplomatic pouches gets messages from Namur to the Vatican Embassy in Brussels, to Rome, to Sr. Thérèse Marguerite
- She duplicates the messages, takes them back to the Vatican where they are placed in diplomatic pouches headed to England, the U.S. and elsewhere
- This system works until sometime in 1943



1940: May 20: Sr. Marie André du Sacré Cœur (38) & Sr. Paula Marie (33) from the Charleroi community are shot to death as German spies

BELGIM SETTLES INTO NEW NORMAL

Sr. Maura writes in July, 1942: "All is very calm here in Namur. We had a peaceful school year with our small classes – only about 130 in all which is a great change for us. ... We hope to have nine classrooms in Nazareth ready for September. The work of repairing goes so slowly! Our gardens are very productive – both here and at "Namur" as we say. We are kept busy picking fruit and beans! Every inch is planted and we have rabbits and chickens! We are really very well off and find the war time regime most healthful. St. Joseph takes excellent care of us – we are sure it is he, because the nicest surprises always arrive on Wednesdays! The postman must have thought we were going to open a fish market at the rate the sardines arrived! Everyone said immediately – "elles viennent de l'Amerique!" This was going to be only a short wee note – so as not to give the Censors too much to do at once, but it was so good to have a

chance to write to you that the pen just can't stop! Please give ever so much love to all the Provinces."

SEPTEMBER 1, 1942: WORD FROM CHINA

Before leaving Shanghai in June, we met Reverend Sigfrid Schneider, O.F.M. of the Wuchang Vicariate. He asked us to write to you to assure you of the safety of your Sisters. All American Sisters are restricted in their missionary activities. They may not leave their mission compounds, and since many Chinese are afraid to come to the mission, the work of the Sisters is greatly curtailed. However, under existing conditions, the Sisters hope they can remain in their homes unmolested. They had fears that they would be forced to go to Shanghai or to return to the United States. It is difficult to say what has happened in the three months since I met Reverend Father.

1940 - 1943: Sisters in China stay because the Bishop says so, dwindling students, harassment by Japanese

1941: December 7 – attack on Pearl Harbor

1941: December 8 – United States enters the war: search of convent at Okayama, Americans interrogated by military police

1941: December 9 – March 15, 1942 – Expatriate SNDdeN in Japan put under house arrest, 3 Japanese SNDdeN show great ingenuity to keep things going – no Mass, Superior holds Communion service & Japanese Sisters keep replenishing hosts

1942: March 15 – October 1942 – Miyoshi Internment camp experience (near Hiroshima)

1942: October until July 1943 – Sumire Internment Camp near Tokyo

1943: February – Sisters in China interned by Japanese at camp in Shanghai

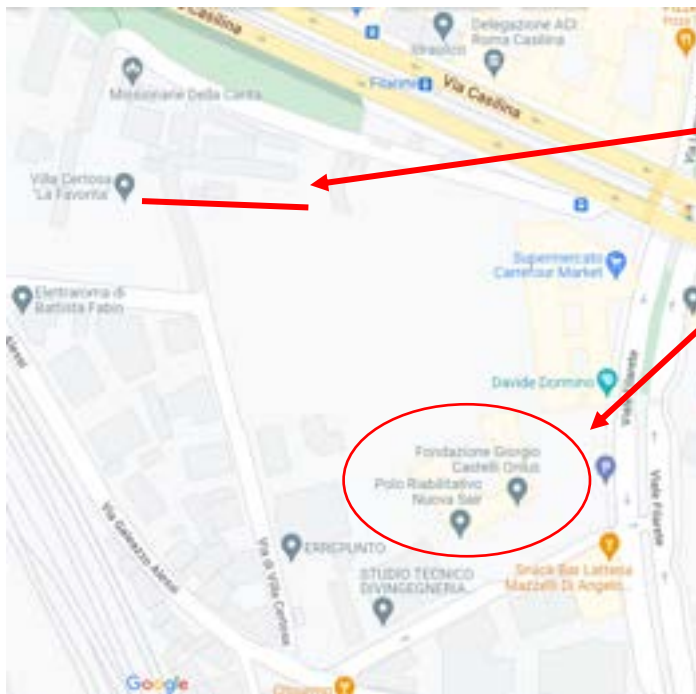
1943: July – Repatriation of Americans – Irish Sisters left in China and Japan – literal journey around the world before the *Gripsholm* gets them to New York Harbor

1943: July 19 and August 13 Allied bombing in Rome – Villa Certosa takes direct hits; heavy damage, Sisters not injured but 15 others killed

AUGUST 25, 1943 LETTER FROM SR THÉRÈSE MARGUERITE

When the sirens blew...we did not hurry downstairs, but stopped to open a few windows. Most of us were near the kitchen or on the stairs when we heard the terrific roar of airplanes, the awful experience of displacement of air and an explosion.... At last we all reached the cellar and were relieved to know that all were alive. Sr Anthony & Sr Catherine Aloyse went to the Chapel to get the Blessed Sacrament.... We knelt around our dear Lord, as close as possible to Him, and prayed with all our hearts. We prepared ourselves for death.... No words can describe the terror of it all as we waited for the different waves to pass over, not knowing which one would be the cause of our death.

...our whole property is destroyed--at least twenty bombs have fallen on it. The Villa Certosa ...is damaged from the bombs which fell near it and from machine gunning. The caretaker's little house, cow and chicken houses are destroyed as also are the well and irrigation plant. May God's Holy Will be done. We live moment by moment, abandoning ourselves completely to Him. We pray much that God may have mercy on the millions of suffering human beings and bring a speedy end this terrible war. About fifteen were killed on our property....



Villa Certosa original buildings

Pacciotti buildings

1943: August – Pacciotti not inhabitable, Sisters Anthony and Barbara stay on property (others as well) while rest of community accepts Monsignor Noots offer of shelter at via Urbana

1943: September 8 – Italians surrender to Allies; Germans begin occupation of Rome

1943: at via Urbana SNDdN begin “ministry of hospitality” - when the Nazis came to Rome in search of Jews, Pius had already "A few days earlier... personally ordered the Vatican clergy to open the sanctuaries of the Vatican City to all "non-Aryans" in need of refuge. By morning of October 16, a total of 477 Jews had been given shelter in the Vatican and its enclaves, while another 4,238 had been given sanctuary in the many monasteries and convents of in Rome. Only 1,015 of Rome's 6,730 Jews were seized that morning". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rescue_of_Jews_by_Catholics_during_the_Holocaust#Italy

1943: Christmas – gift of 200 pounds flower, oil, salted herring from Vatican and people of Spain

Impact of War/Political Unrest:

- In U.S.: constant reminders that all “alien” Sisters have to register with government
- Rationing of food everywhere (continues for a decade after the war in Britain)
- 1940: schools evacuated, transferred, Sisters scattered, work reduced in Belgium & England
- 1940-1941: British Sisters go through Blitz
- Rebuilding during the war: opened extern and primary classes, became a “family school” and understood rebuilding of motherhouse – symbolic as well as practical
- Namur: German priests say Mass daily in convent chapel
- Namur cut off from all but Italy
- Censorship every where
- All war torn areas lose buildings and equipment
- 1941 – Police start visiting Sisters in Italy regularly but they are never interned
- 1941 – Once US enters the war, Srs. Julie de la Ste Famille and Maura have to report to the “Kommandantur” in Namur every week
- Sisters shelter others, give aid to refugees (Belgium & Italy)
- 1943: \$4025 to get 6 Sisters back from China

Relationship with Hierarchy & Clergy:

- China – horrible! The property was more important than the Sisters' safety; Bishop/priests do not seem to have Sisters' best interests in mind: not encouraging them to leave when money is cut off; only 3 Sisters and insisting they open the middle school as well as primary ("If the Bishop orders it, you must obey" – Hx of ND pg 53)
- Japan – very supportive and affirming – when the Sisters are under house arrest and Christmas is approaching, Bishop Ross assures them they can go to Bethlehem in their hearts and gives Mary Kostka permission to give the Sisters communion without a priest present.
- Japan – more of a sense of clergy suffering with the Sisters
- Vatican Diplomatic Pouches make communication possible 1940-1943
- Italy – fantastic; huge sense of collaboration; It is Monsignor Noots, at that point the Postulator of the Cause for Julie, who gives us a house when Paciotti can no longer serve the whole community
- Italy & Belgium: collaboration to help Jews and others

Primitive Spirit:

- Deep care & concern everywhere
- Letter writing
- WWII: Japan – dependence on Mary for protection as during Napoleonic Wars; and Alum step in to help keep schools going as during time of William of Orange in Belgium
- Unity – Japanese & American Sisters do not want to be separated, deep concern for each other, Japanese Sisters see to care of Americans in camp & three of them keep Sr. Lucilla company
- Unity – horror on part of Americans in China when they have to leave Marie St. Edward and the Chinese Sisters behind
- Extra prayers being said in USA; Mass being offered for safety of our Sisters
- Devotion to Julie: hand carry case of relics to rue Pepin after it becomes clear Mother House can't be saved from fire;
- 1943 in Italy: translation of the Themes of St Julie, the Counsels of Perfection, Morning and Night Prayers and Prayers for the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament into Italian, by Sisters at via Urbana

Spirituality underpinning everything:

- Trust in God
- Devotion to Eucharist and challenge that brings in different places
- Standing at the foot of the Cross
- Devotion to Julie: her relics go with the Sisters who flee the motherhouse
- Devotion to Julie not just by the SNDdeN but by people in places we serve
- What does it mean to be the Body of Christ? Ecclesial women?
- United in the suffering Heart of Christ

What touched your heart?

- All of it.
- The Sisters watching the Motherhouse burn
- Frantic waiting for word of fate of Sisters in Belgium
- The written accounts

- Japanese students: “We love you even if we have to hate your country.”
- American Provincials keep tension among themselves – do everything they can not to pass it down to Sisters as they worry about all our Sisters and especially American Sisters in war-torn areas
- Efforts to get information about Sisters (Red Cross, State Department, brothers, uncles, cousins, former students in Armed Forces)

New insights?

- Condition of Belgium’s surrender in 1940: Germans would not hurt Belgian citizens. The Cardinal and the Queen use that to save Belgian Jews. They cannot protect non-Belgian Jews within Belgium’s borders.
- Of 56,000 estimated to be in Belgium in 1940 – 25,000 deported (starting in 1942); 20,000 hidden
- 1,612 Belgians named Righteous Among the Gentiles by the State of Israel, including SNDdeN: <https://snddensjb50.org/righteous-among-the-nations/>
- Silence about work to help Jews in Belgium
- Impact of Blitz & evacuation of London’s children on SNDdeN communities
- Poverty in Italy: people probably would have starved without international aid administered by the Vatican.
- Terribly long journey of repatriation: Japan to India, around Africa and across to Rio, up to New York

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rescue_of_Jews_by_Catholics_during_the_Holocaust#Belgium