

## INSTITUTE HISTORY WORKSHEET

### TOPIC: Mother St. Joseph Part 1: The Rule & William of Orange

#### Places

- Namur: growth in spite of the odds
- Ghent: epidemic (1819), fire & survival endangered because there's no bishop when the Sisters have to apply for royal approval (1820)
- Dinant: opens in June 1816
- Liège: opens in October 1816, same 1820 threat as above
- Thuin: opens in 1817; same 1820 threat as above
- Verviers: foundation opened in 1827
- Bastogne: foundation in 1836
- Philippeville: foundation in 1837

#### People & Relationships between them:

- William of Orange – thorn in side!!!!; 1829 visits to ND houses
- Alexander Blin de Bourdon – nephew; efforts to bring SNDdeN back to France during reign of William of Orange
- Sœur Anastasie – named assistant superior general and superior of motherhouse in 1816; dies February 9, 1823
- Sœur Marie Steenhaut – asks her to replace her as Superior General in 1824
- Sœur Marie-Thérèse Van de Putte: superior at Thuin, becomes superior at Namur & assistant to Mother St. Joseph after Sœur Anastasie's death
- Bishop Demandolx – death August 14, 1817, prayers said by the community at Namur
- Bishop de Broglie – dies in Paris in 1821
- Bishop Pisani – dies 1826 (Namur has no bishop for 2 years)
- Bishop Oudernard – bishop of Namur 1828 - 1830
- Bishop Barrett – bishop of Namur 1833 - 1835
- Abbé Neujean - pastor of St-Nicolas in Liège, uncle of Sœur Marie-Cornelie who went to Willamette & California
- Amersfoort Sisters:
  - Fr. Wolff, provincial of Jesuits in Holland approached Mother St. Joseph about training women
  - 7 were trained by us 1819-24 in spite of difficulties posed by William's regime
- Marie Claire de Boilley – begged SNDdeN to come to Verviers; made it possible
- Abbé Jean Francois Pierlot (Brother Gregory) – 42nd & last prior of Monastery of Oignies; curate in Jumet & chaplain to SNDdeN, entrusts Tresor de l'Oignies to SNDdeN (1818)
  - <https://oignies.collectionkbf.be/fr/decouvrez-le-tresor>
  - <https://fr.calameo.com/read/003722050003d47bdfca8>
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oignies\\_Abbey#:~:text=Oignies%20Abbey%20\(French%3A%20Abbaye%20d,banks%20of%20the%20Sambre%20River.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oignies_Abbey#:~:text=Oignies%20Abbey%20(French%3A%20Abbaye%20d,banks%20of%20the%20Sambre%20River.)

### **Dates and Events**

- 1816: June 2 - elected Mother General
- 1817: has oratory built
- 1818: September 8 - rule approved by Bishop Pisani
- 1820: January 6 - Marie Jeanne Joseph Collin enters
- 1821: July 11 - Thérèse Goethals enters
- 1824: December 27 - becomes a Belgian citizen
- 1825: sends Sœurs Marie-Thérèse & Emmanuel to investigate possibility of French foundation

### **Impact of War/Political Unrest:**

- 1816: temporary recognition of SNDdeN schools by Dutch government
- 1816-1817: help for the poor of Namur during famine
- 1818: disbanding contemplative religious orders, teaching orders only tolerated until Department of Education can do all the work, lists of demands on communities
- 1820: scrambles to apply for royal approbation for all houses, vows can only be taken for 5 years
- Approbation of houses threatened because of discrepancy between 1818 rule and what is contained in 1806 approbation by Napoleon
- 1821-1824: increasing rules and regulations regarding religious teaching orders, quotas for houses; experiences of examinations
- New foundations have to be refused because of difficulties with government
- 1823-1824: William tries to eliminate all French subjects from religious orders; ousting of French superiors & class mistresses
- 1824: would Mother St. Joseph resigning be better for SNDdeN?
- 1825: suppression of minor seminaries; no one can attend University or be admitted to public or ecclesiastical offices if educated outside of national system
- 1827: ministry dismisses random number of Sisters from Jumet, Fleurus, St Hubert, Liège, Ghent & Zèle - with no warning
- 1830: threat of war & great uncertainty as Belgium struggles for independence
  - No summer travel to Namur for retreat
  - Calls meeting of all superiors as soon as it is safe to travel
  - Status of schools in new country?
  - Will all SNDdeN houses be within Belgium borders?

### **Relationship with Hierarchy & Clergy:**

- OK
  - Almost like everyone is united against William of Orange
  - Lack of bishops in some places for long periods of time because the government will not appoint them complicates things

### **Primitive Spirit:**

- Collects all of Julie's writings from 2ndary houses (See Primitive Spirit info at end of document)
- Rule has to fit both Martha and Mary

- Asks Sisters' prayers for writing of rule
- Lived experience of the Sisters: try it on for a while, tweak it, before submitting it to Bishop
- 1832: After much prayer, expands curriculum to include music, painting, drawing - some older Sisters resist because it is "worldliness"
- Commitment to the poor & ND ministry to the poor
- Imitate the goodness of God instead of judging
- Living of poverty

### **Spirituality underpinning everything:**

- Deep discernment and reliance on prayer while writing the rule and with everything else
- Devotion to Julie already very much alive
- Reminders everywhere we are an institute marked by the cross

### **What touched your heart?**

- In her grief after Julie's death, Mother St. Joseph re-roots herself and gets the rule done
- The stress of the situation with the government and the strength of faith needed by Mother St. Joseph to keep going
- The commitment of the Sisters and strength of their call:
  - Kicked out of their communities with no warning
  - Constant threats/persecution

### **New insights?**

- Content of the Rule needs to be put in context of our history from 1804-1816 & reality of what it meant to be unmarried women
- Look at each article & ask yourself:
  - **How does this preserve the primitive spirit of the institute?**
  - **How does this further the mission?**
- Importance of adaptation: broadening ministry to place/keep/accept more Sisters in a time that was very difficult - accepts direction of:
  - the Girl's Sunday School in Namur 1820
  - the orphans of the Hospice St Gilles 1822
  - Hospital of St Jacques 1826
  - Hospice at Huy 1830
  - Hospice d'Harscamp in 1836, transferred to others in 1869
- Great ingenuity and creativity on part of Sisters (especially Mother St Joseph) to keep things going; use of alum to help continue the mission
- Its clear Sisters expelled from houses go to lay clothes
- As gold in the furnace: Ignace, Marie-Therese, Constantine
- Are we in the furnace now? How can this be gift?

## THE “PRIMITIVE SPIRIT” OF NOTRE DAME

1. **We would be one**, and we needed to focus on ways to strengthen **unity** as we spread out. **Unity in Diversity** would be a virtue.
2. We would also be open to serving where ever we were needed (we call it **apostolic mobility**). **Courage** would be a virtue.
3. That openness meant we needed to be **adaptable** - we keep the focus on unity, not uniformity. **Liberty of Spirit** would be a virtue.
4. We would serve, first and foremost, **poor women and children - especially in the most abandoned places** - and our ministry would be **educational** in its focus.
5. We would live a **common life**, a vowed life. How did Julie and Françoise understand that?
  - a. There would be **three vows**: poverty, chastity and obedience.
  - b. We would hold all in common, **sharing resources** where they were needed. **Simplicity** would be a virtue.
  - c. We would be **equal**: there would be no choir and lay Sisters
  - d. We would love one another, support one another with our prayer and actions, allowing each Sister to grow and share the unique gifts God has given her. **Charity** would be a virtue.
  - e. We would obediently discern together God’s ongoing movement and call in our lives together. **Obedience** would be a virtue.
6. How would we do this? To support and deepen unity there would be a **centralized government, a mother general, regular communication** (going both directions), **and a common formation**.
7. The role of **visitation** was already forming as a central tool to build and deepen unity. It enabled the mother general to know the Sisters personally, it facilitated holding all things in common because stories of the needs and realities of Sisters in one house were carried through visitation to other houses and shared. It helped build a sense of “where one of us is, all of us are.”

8. We would do this by structuring our lives in ways to fuel a **contemplative/active spirituality** that would support our deepening relationships, our common discernment, our ministry, our common life.
9. We would be **Sisters of Our Lady** - striving to live the spirit of Mary, the virtue of Mary, the strength and power of Mary.
10. Our **loyalty to the church would be marked by the cross** - deep devotion to the people of God, collaboration with the Institutional Church that is marked by a healthy tension of constantly discerning where God is in what we are being asked to do.