

INSTITUTE HISTORY WORKSHEET

TOPIC: Mère Constantine (1843-75) Guatemala

Places:

Guatemala City: site of temporary house; 1st boarding school – did not wait for Belén construction to be finished

Belén: (a neighborhood in Guatemala City) site of boarding school, day school, poor school

Ciudad Vieja: site of **Colegio San José** (about 28 miles west/southwest of Guatemala City)

Orphanage: walking distance to Belén



People & Relationships between them:

- Mère Constantine: sends 3 groups of Sisters to Guatemala, dies right before the Sisters are exiled
- Don Rafael Carrera: president of Guatemala who invites SNDdeN, held office for 30 years
- Mr. Cowan: British Consul at Colon who meets 1st colony and get them from Colon to Panama City

- Mr. Jean Serigiers: conducts colony on another part of journey; nephew of Sr. Hermance; brother of Sr. Hermance Joseph
- Don Vicente Cerna: succeeds Don Carrera after his death in 1865;
- Justo Rufino Barrios: ousts Don Cerna, one by one religious orders exiled and replaced by teachers from England, Germany & Spain
- Donña Luz Bartes/Don Luis Bartes family: devoted friends; Donña Luz & her brother both suffer imprisonment for their support of the Church & our Sisters; daughters of family among the 1st boarders; Donña Luz asks us to take over the orphanage she has started
- Don Francisco de Paúl García Peláez: Archbishop of Guatemala, requests Sisters; sets up fund for Masses at Belén, titles property to Sisters before he dies in 1867
- Don Bernardo Piñol y Aycinena: Bishop of Leon, Nicaragua, follows García Peláez in 1867 as Bishop of Guatemala
- Donña Victoria: 4th ministry in Guatemala is housed in her house
- Dolores Aquino: could not be accepted as postulant because of a canon law impediment; opened a school in her own home for former students at Belén & kept ND education going in hopes the Sisters would soon return

Dates & Events:

1854: 1st request for Sisters

1859: 2nd request

1859: October 11- 1st colony leaves Namur for England (7 Sisters with Sister Hermance as superior)

1859: October 17: depart Southampton for Guatemala

1859: December 1- 1st colony arrives at Guatemala City

1859: December 31 – prospectus published in newspaper

1860: February 1 – receive 1st boarders

1860: March 30 – Sisters & students move to convent (40 boarders, 26 day paying scholars, 77 in free school)

1862: March – the 2nd colony leaves Namur, the 4 Sisters reached Guatemala April 10

1862: April 27 – 1st 2 postulants enter

1862: June – Orphanage taken over by SNDdeN – sponsored by Donña Luz

1865: April 11 – 3rd colony leaves Namur, the 4 Sisters arrived at the port of San José May 17

1869: land granted in Ciudad Vieja on condition we start school (Colegio San José)

1871: May – Sr. Hermance dies

1871: July – Barrios comes to power

1873: 3 Sisters begin a 4th school in the home of Donña Victoria

1874: February 11 – decree dissolving all religious communities and obliging them to leave convents in 18 days (did not apply to SNDdeN because too many daughters of leaders of other Central American countries were boarders at school in Belén, but handwriting was on the wall)

1874: families pressuring novices to come home; about 10 leave, rest planning how to follow Sisters into exile if they cannot leave with them

1875: communications to Sisters in California and Cincinnati; monthly journal sent to Namur

1875: November 17 notified they have to leave on November 27

1875: November 27 – 42 SNDdeN depart Guatemala (14 entered in Belgium)

1875: December 11 – arrive in California

1876: 13 of the Sisters from Guatemala travel to points East to join Notre Dame communities

Impact of War/Political Unrest:

- Government incredibly supportive the 1st 12 years
- Similar tension as is playing out in Belgium and other countries in terms of religion & politics
- Barrios is ruthless – flogs the British consul, description of priests being flogged/killed; outlaws the church and then uses the church for proclamations, etc.
- Big disconnect between the political situation and the people: they are devastated when the Sisters leave

Relationship with Hierarchy & Clergy:

- Very positive – except when schismatic priests are put in at very end of time there
- Bishops bless them along the way; many requests for Sisters along the way.

Primitive Spirit:

- Commitment to the poor
- Guatemalan Sisters see themselves standing strong as Julie and Françoise did at Amiens
- Unity in diversity is very strong – 1st colony consisted of Sisters who were French, Flemish, Walloon & Irish
- Adaptability also very strong – incredibly creative adjustments to education and curriculum
- Sharing of resources from one area to another
- Where 1 of us are all of us are (the Guatemalan Sisters could go with the expats because they KNEW they would be welcomed by SNDdeN anywhere)
- Devotion to Julie
- Diversity of women who enter: all social classes, born in Belgium, Antigua, El Salvador, Costa Rica & Guatemala
- Understanding of the cross takes a unique form

Spirituality underpinning everything:

- Focus on the cross/prayer before the crucifix – the El Niñado crucifix dates to early 1700's; gifted by Queen of Spain to boarding school she sponsored c. 1750, gifted to SNDdeN by Doña Luz to the orphanage

- Devotion to Mary/Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Devotion to the Child Jesus on the 25th of each month; procession with the statue of Santo Niño
- Devotion to the Sacred Heart

What touched your heart?

- How hard the ongoing danger to/uncertainty of the future of this mission must have been for Mere Constantine as she is dying
- Commitment on the part of the Sisters to the people: they are willing to live with the uncertainty of the reality they could be expelled at any moment. They live with this tension for over 18 months
- They speed up their work and focus on training lay teachers in ND principles to take their places
- How deeply the Sisters were connected: women who had only been in the congregation a very short time were so bonded they faced the unknown to go with the expatriates
- Cultural and ethnic diversity among the Sisters in Guatemala

New insights?

- Horrible discrimination against the Indians: It was at Ciudad Vieja that the Sisters successfully worked with the Indigenous people. Deep, deep mistrust had to be overcome by Sister Marguerite. By 1875 there are children, parents and grandparents taking part in classes
- Guatemala was cultural center of Central America
- Creative ways Sisters handled things
- Thanks to partners in mission everything prospers: 3 bands sent, 3 houses started, thousands of children educated
- Education at Belén traditional; orphanage focuses on general schooling and vocational training; Colegio San José most original: a boarding school less academically rigorous than Belén with a focus on practical knowledge rather than speculative
- Impact of Notre Dame de Namur shown in November 1875 enrollment:
 - Belén school: 487 poor girls, 188 paying day students, 58 boarders, 186 in Sunday School
 - Colegio San José: 65 poor students, 58 boarders, 98 in Sunday School
 - Orphanage: 114 girls
 - School at Doná Victoria's house: around 200 boys & girls

List of Guatemalan Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

- **Sister Hermance:** 1st band, superior; 46 when they head to Guatemala; Jeanne Van Puyflick, b. June 12, 1813 at Antwerp; educated at ND boarding school at Gembloux; entered in 1834, vows

February 1835; taught at Jumet; frail of health from young age; known for humility, intelligence & amiability; gifts of management & planning construction

- **Sister Marie Aloysius:** 1st band; 36 years old; Nathalie Bosteels, b. August 14, 1823 in Lebbeke, Flanders; entered June 9, 1846, vows in September 1848, taught at Philippeville
- **Sister Marie Beatrix:** 1st band; 30 years superior of Santa Clara; Rosalie de Cal, b. October 20, 1825 at Elverdinghe, near Ypres; cared for mother & grandmother before entering in 1851; professed in 1852; taught at Namur; a good packer – had all the cases that had come from Namur packed and ready for expulsion; Superior at Belén in 1874 & deals with government officials when they want to see the novices
- **Sister Mathias:** 1st band; Rosalie Eeckhoudt, b. March 6, 1825 at Schoonaerde, Flanders; good friend of Marie Beatrix, knew only Flemish when she entered; lived with Sisters at Zele as aspirant, entered in 1851, professed 1853, cared for her mother before entering; stout, unflappable, cook & infirmarian her entire life, business manager; considered from missions from moment of entrance; calm, able to sleep through all storms
- **Sister Marie de St. Patrice:** 1st band, Charlotte Verdon, b. January 28, 1832 in Galway, Ireland; entered in March 1851, brother a Carmelite encouraged her vocation; 27 years old; sent to teach at Manchester before her vows in 1853; only English speaker in 1st band, became business manager; interpreter for all the Sisters on journey to Guatemala; volunteered for Guatemala & prayed hard she would be chosen; served as novice mistress in Guatemala & then California
- **Sister Julie de St. Joseph:** 1st band; Anna Dur, b. July 5, 1832 at Arlon, entered in December 1856; 1 of 23 to enter novitiate in March 1857; vows April 8, 1859; traveled to Paris before she entered, taught German to boarders in Namur and then was Mistress of Boarders at Gembloux; asked to go to Guatemala, described as 'chubby'
- **Sister Marie Philippine:** 1st band; Sidonie Portemer, b. May 14, 1835 in Clermont, France; enters November 1852, vows in April, 1855, ministry in Brussels; also called Felipa or Felipina; author of account of journey of 1st group; youngest at 24; work at orphanage; photo in midst of orphans to whom she ministered from beginning of that work in Guatemala; dies young due to grief at leaving orphans in Guatemala
- **Sister Louise des Seraphins/Serafina:** 2nd colony; called Sister Serafina in Guatemala; annalist of this group, takes 2nd class in boarding school at Belén; Hermance de Marneffe, b. at Liège January 6, 1837; 25 years old; entered Feb. 2, 1859; served in boarding school at Marche 1860; vows April 16, 1861; mystic, great intellect, devoted to Sacred Heart; 2 of her Sisters are SNDs: Srs. Marie de la Croix & Marie Virginie
- **Sister Marguerite du Saint Sacrement:** 2nd colony; Josephine Kridelka, b. February 17, 1837 at Liège, entered in 1854, vows April 28 1857; musician who studied at famed Liège Conservatory; served as clotheskeeper at Antwerp; takes charge of music; marvelous teacher of art; ready wit & cheerful disposition; 26 when sent to Guatemala
- **Sister Hermance Joseph:** 2nd colony, Josephine Louise Serigiers, born 1839; made vows in 1861; niece of Sister Hermance; 23 years old; assigned to Day School; **buried at Mount Notre Dame**
- **Sister Marie Eleanor:** 2nd colony, Marie-Pauline Lotin, born at Hour June 22, 1830; baker; entered 9 August 1857, vows September 12, 1859; 32 years old
- **Sister Marie Ludovie:** 3rd colony; Marie-Joseph Domken; b. May 18, 1823 at Clermont, France; entered May 13, 1855; vows September 13, 1857; her account is basis for much of Sr. Nancy

Wellmeier's book; Sr. Eulalie in London is her blood sister; 42 when she left for Guatemala; only Sister from Europe to Guatemala who returns to Belgium to die

- **Sister Marie Pharaïlde:** 3rd colony; Marie Lemaire, b. Feb 7, 1828 at Vilvoorde, Belgium; entered December 22, 1853, vows April 11, 1856; served at girl's reform school at Beernem as clothsekeeper & seamstress; 37 years old
- **Sister Auguste:** 3rd colony; Hortense de Kegel; b. 1835 in Belgium; vows at Namur 1858; 30 years old
- **Sister Leontine:** 3rd colony; Eugenie Perwudz; b. March 25, 1838 in Ounezier, Belgium; entered November 6, 1859; vows April 11, 1862, managed students refectory; age 27
- **Sister Stanislas/Estanislao:** 1st postulant - enters 27 April 1862; Margarita (Marie) Gerard, b. in Belgium, her mother is Guatemalan
- **Sister Gonzague/ Maria Gonzaga:** 1st postulant - enters 27 April 1862; Jesus Castro, b. 1840 in San Salvador; boarder at Belén school before entering
- **Sister María Teresa de Jesús:** Dolores Arias, b. February 22, 1836 in Guatemala; entered May 27, 1862, professed Dec. 8, 1865
- **Sister Josepha:** Juana Cayetana Pineda, b. October 19, 1846 at Contreras, Guatemala; entered march 19, 1865, vows December 17, 1869 - cook
- **Sister Rafaela:** Concepción de León, b. in Amatitlán, Guatemala Dec. 18, 1846, entered in 1867 - vows in 1869; dies of scarlet fever in 1873
- **Sister Ignacia Salvadore:** Trinidad Guitérrez died of T.B. October 15, 1869; orphan & eldest of large family from San José, Costa Rica. Joined community around 1865; sacristan, secretary & accountant for Sr. Hermance
- **Sister Luisa de la Trinidad:** sacristan at orphanage in 1871;
- **Sister María Josefa:** Beatriz Muñoz of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, b. November 29, 1849; entered May 31 1868, vows December 2, 1873; primary teacher at Belén; had been a boarder & was protégée of Sr. Ludovie; Summer of 1873 receives last sacraments; cured by Novena to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
- **Sister Berchmans:** Maria Cristina Salazar, b. Sep. 10, 1850 in Guatemala; entered 1867, vows **Jan. 6, 1869 - 4th ministry; photo - buried at Mount Notre Dame**
- **Sister Mariana de Jesús:** Ana Maria Castro b. 1841 in Guatemala; entered 1869, vows 1872; 4th ministry
- **Sister Josefina María del Sagrado Corazon:** María del Pilar Corzo de Sanches, b. January 20, 1832, entered May 24, 1863, vows Dec. 8, 1865 - music & piano teacher
- **Sister Magdalena de Guadalupe:** Ana María Muñoz, b. at Santa Rosa Guatemala July 26, 1843; entered May 24, 1863
- **Sister María Victoria:** Leandra Gonzáles; b. Hacienda Nueva, Guatemala May 4, 1844; entered October 1, 1863; vows Dec. 8 1866
- **Sister Clara del Sagrado Corazon:** Carmen Zabadira, b. in Guatemala March 6, 1839; entered Nov. 21, 1865 after having been a boarder at Belén; vows 1867 (helped 1st Belgian Sisters learn Spanish)
- **Sister Catalina del Sagrado Corazon:** Agnes Arévalo, b. at Quetzaltenango April 21, 1844; entered Nov. 21, 1865; vows 1867
- **Sister Matilde:** María Albertine Lutz; b. Jan. 19, 1837 in Rosenwinkel, Belgium; entered 1866; vows 1868; cook at Belén; **buried at Mount Notre Dame**

- **Sister Elena de la Cruz:** Jesús García, b. in Guatemala 1848; entered in 1866; vows 1868
- **Sister Gertrudis du Sacré Cœur:** Dolores Arzú; b. in Guatemala March 9, 1843; entered April 1, 1860; vows 1869
- **Sister María del Carmen:** Concepción González, b. in Guatemala 1848; entered June 17, 1869
- **Sister Isabel del Sagrado Corazon de María:** Anaclea Catalán, b. at Amatitlán, Guatemala July 14, 1849; entered April 12, 1868; professed 1870 - a cook
- **Sister Rosa del Sagrado Corazon:** Emilia Padilla b. at Santa Ana, El Salvador April 26, 1849; entered April 13, 1868; vows 1870
- **Sister Sofía de Notre Dame du Sacre Cœur:** Soledad Girón; b. at Dolores, Jutiapa, Guatemala Dec. 5, 1842; entered Nov. 30, 1870; vows Feb. 2, 1872
- **Sister Adelaida du Sacre Cœur:** Mercedes Van Dorn, b. 1851, took habit June 17, 1869; vows Feb. 2, 1872
- **Sister Inez del Sagrado Corazon:** Concepción Pineda, b. in Guatemala Dec. 7, 1853; entered Nov. 1869; vows Feb. 2, 1872
- **Sister Filomena de San José:** Cristina Sánchez de León; b. in Guatemala April 27, 1842; entered Dec. 19, 1869; vows Feb. 2, 1872
- **Sister Eulalia de la Cruz:** María Magdalena Zelaya b. in Guatemala Sept. 8, 1849 & entered Jan. 18, 1872; vows Dec. 8, 1874; teacher at Colegio San José & took care of the children's clothing
- **Sister María de la Cruz (Mary of the Cross):** Teresa Solita; girl from Orphanage, begged to accompany Sisters and given postulant's cap on ship; b. in Antigua October 14, 1851; orphaned at 15; talent in arranging flowers; long time sacristan at San Jose, California
- **Sister Cecilia:** musician, on photos from Guatemala
- **Sister Rosalia:** on photos from Guatemala, owner of beautiful ivory statue of Our lady of Guadalupe in the Namur that was over 200 years old when sent to Namur in 1865 having been in possession of Sister's family in Amatitlán; **buried at Mount Notre Dame**
- **Sister Angelina:** family name: Sanchez - left the congregation in 1881 after losing her mind - brother came to California & took her back to Guatemala
- **Unknown number who opted to stay in Guatemala** at the time of exile. Some names appear on photos but do not appear on later lists of those going to California:
 - Micalia
 - Martha
 - Bernadette
 - Lucia
 - Elizabeth of St Celestine
 - Marie of St Albert