

Inter – Ursuline



September-December 2022

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Fondi (Italy)

PAINTING OF OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF FONDI

Sr Mariangela Mayer initiated this article with the contribution of several Ursulines. Thanks to Sr Armida Veglio who finalized it in June 2022.



Many sisters who have lived at the Generalate or who have passed a short time there have also visited Fondi. Several have asked at different times about the painting of Our Lady in the Church of “the Queenship of the most holy Mary and St. Pius X”. Tradition has it that it was given to the parish by Mother Judith Mietzfeld when she was Prioress General (1971 – 1983).

Sr Mariangela Mayer, present Prioress of the Generalate Community, undertook some research on the origins of the painting and here we present the results.

Sr Mariangela and Sr Maria Letizia Usai (Province of Italy) visited the present parish priest, Don Giuseppe Marzano, on 22 February 2022. He said that according to tradition the painting came from the Ursulines but that there is no documentation in the parish.

Sr Mariangela also wrote to several Ursulines who might have had information. Their responses supported the tradition that Mother Judith had given the painting to the Church and led to some further information and hypotheses and also connections with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

The Parish of Salto di Fondi

A first small church was built in 1955 by the parish priest, Father Oreste Ripoli. In the 1970s, the small structure was enlarged on land given by Opus Dei, which owned a large local farm. In the 1990s, the parish priest, Father Tullio Piacentino, began building the present church. After work on liturgical adaptations, the church was inaugurated on 28 June 2009 by Archbishop Fabio Bernardo D'Onorio. At that point, the painting was moved to the chapel on the right, where it is enthroned inside the sail of a boat, with a beautiful frame and a golden halo.



Sr Natalia Rey sent some further information from the 1970s. She arrived in Rome in 1973. “Our house had just been built there (at Fondi), and I was in one of the first groups of Ursulines to stay in this beautiful place. Every day we went to Salto di Fondi to the parish for Mass. The present church did not yet exist; there was not even a provisional chapel. The Masses were celebrated in those days in a kind of shack, very small and poor...The Sisters who were with me at the time told me that the painting of the Virgin that was there was a gift from Mother Judith.....I also know that the Generalate was modernising its chapel at that time... Later, when the temporary chapel of Fondi was built, it was there that Masses were celebrated as they were for many years,

before the church was built and opened to the faithful, and this painting was hung there in the temporary chapel. Later, when the church was already built, Don Sandro, the parish priest, had it renewed and put it in a special place. He also had rosaries made with a medal reproducing the painting. ... And that's all I know. I know nothing about the painter. The date of 1914 seems to be the date of the painting. The "monograms" seem to be a signature - in those days - out of modesty - one did not sign the things one did..."

Sr Jasna Kogoj, Province of Slovenia, had some information and some hypotheses to offer.



"The date on the painting takes us back to the time when Mother Angela Lorenzutti was Prioress General. She was from Škofja Loka. Her name with her predicate was "Angela Lorenzutti of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart". Because of her predicate I suppose (it is an assumption) that the picture was given to her and thus came to the Generalate. The motif is similar to those of other of our artists."

“In Ljubljana there was an Ursuline artist M. Mihaela Merčon (1856-1919). In her necrology, it is written that she was a good artist; among other things, she painted many pictures of the Sacred Heart for different people. “MM” could be her name (Mihaela Merčon) or Mater Misericordiae. “S” could be Srce in Slovenian (Heart) and “J” - could be Jesus. But all this is only a hypothesis.”

Fr. Armando Genovese MSC replied on behalf of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart: “You have helped us discover an image of Our Lady present in a parish, of which we were not aware. The picture you sent us is very beautiful, an interesting hand! Painted in oil (apparently on canvas), with all the characteristic features of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart: Mary points to the Heart of Christ, and Christ in the act of blessing points to Mary. In the child's halo is the cross, in Mary's halo is the title Mater Misericordiae, taken from the Salve Regina..... Observing the characteristics of Mary (young, white skinned), of Jesus (blond, curly) and the square necks of the clothes, it does not seem improbable to me that the artist could be the Mother Mihaela Merčon, the double M under the cross in the detail of the date could be her signature. It would also explain why she used the appellation Mater Misericordiae (MM). If this hypothesis is true, Mother Mihaela Merčon could have been a woman of great faith and endowed with excellent painting skills. A virtuous woman who left a trace not to be underestimated.”

No further information has been found either in the Generalate archives nor in the General Archives of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, but thanks to the memories shared by Ursulines and MSCs we do have a clearer idea of the history and of the religious significance of the painting. Thank you to all who contributed.

Saint Mary of the Incarnation

COLLOQUIUM ON MARIE GUYART DE L'INCARNATION

This colloquium was organized in the French Seminary in Rome. The videos, in French, can be found through this link on the YouTube channel. KTOTV:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkhvIjTF_vI&t=2s

From 8 to 10 June 2022, five Ursulines of the Roman Union took part in a Colloquium on **Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation: « autrement moderne » Theological foundations and prophetic dimensions of a “life according to Christ”** which took place at the Pontifical French Seminary in Rome: Sr Mariangela Mayer, Sr Angela Poggi, Sr Florence Marie Le Garrec, Sr Armida Veglio and Sr Marie Amélie Desmeulles. There were also several Ursuline sisters, mostly from France and Canada, who followed on line. They were three very intense days. In the introduction, Fr Vincent Siret, rector of the Seminary, explained that the organising group, the CUEG (University Circle of Guyartian Studies) has as an aim that Saint Marie de l'Incarnation be universally known and be proclaimed Doctor of the Universal Church.

We would like to share here some of our general impressions of the colloquium and then some points which particularly struck us from the different contributions.

“I was delighted to take part in the three day colloquium on Marie de l'Incarnation. All the excellent conferences enabled me to see her in a new light. I appreciated the connection made with other figures like Saint Paul, in the same apostolic spirit, or Teresa of Avila and the spiritual marriage..... This colloquium really made me want to immerse myself in her writings with, now, new lights and keys to reading and understanding them. It also strengthened my attachment to the one I truly consider to be a big sister and a model for my life of following Christ.”

“It is always an opportunity for me, even a grace, to deepen my knowledge of our wonderful Sister Saint Marie de l'Incarnation Guyart Martin. So it was with pleasure that I participated in the colloquium at the French Seminary in Rome and I was not disappointed. The speakers were all of a high level, not "professors" so much as "researchers", who encouraged us to go further, not to be satisfied with what we have learned, to leave the commonplace definitively for an exploration that will bring us closer and closer to the reality of Saint Marie de l'Incarnation. It seems to me that she has become more contemporary to me in the search for how to respond with "gentleness" and determination to the One who calls us to transmit to those who approach us the passion that Jesus be known, loved and adored by all those who are redeemed with the Blood of Christ.”

“During these two and a half days, we were immersed in the world of Saint Marie de l'Incarnation. Her relationship with God-Trinity sheds a special light for our life today in the twenty-first century. She is “mistress of the spiritual life” and can help us to enter into the mystery of God in a refreshed way... There is the testimony of Marie de l'Incarnation and ... there is also the testimony of her friends! The speakers at the colloquium were certainly academics capable of very precise presentations, but they were above all friends of Marie de l'Incarnation, often long-time friends! During

one meal, Thérèse Nadeau Lacour shared, informally, how Marie de l'Incarnation was present in her life and guided her through unexpected paths when she arrived in Canada. Gertrude Martineau explained how, as a student with the Ursulines, she saw an Ursuline sister reading the writings of Marie de l'Incarnation and “felt” that “what she was reading must have been beautiful”... how she understood it better much later, up to the point of writing an icon that she presented to us. Seeing the impact of Marie of the Incarnation in the life and mission of Cardinal Marc Ouellet, or of Fr Vincent Siret of the French seminary in Rome, and others were occasions for which to give thanks.”



The subjects of the conferences were

- *The important dates of Marie de l'Incarnation* – Philippe Roy-Lysencourt, Director of the Institute for the Study of Christianity at Strasbourg
- *The Pauline presence in the writings of Marie Guyart* – Fr Matthieu Rouillé d'Oreuil, Director of Studies at the French Seminary
- *Marie de l'Incarnation and the visions of the Trinity* - Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops
- *The Church in the Relation of 1654* – Fr Roland Varin, formator at the SJMV Seminary
- *Marie de l'Incarnation: the spirit of Christianity* - Thérèse Nadeau-Lacour, author and founding member of the CUEG
- Round table: *the Virgin Mary for Marie de l'Incarnation and for the Ursulines* – Sr Alexandra Diriaut and Sr Lise Munro osu
- *Presentation of the icon of Marie de l'Incarnation* – Gertrude Martineau, artist and icon writer
- *Marie de l'Incarnation and the gentleness of God* – Hélène Michon, Lecturer at the University of Tours
- *Marie de l'Incarnation and Teresa of Avila* – Fr Max Huot de Longchamp, author of numerous texts and studies on western mysticism
- *A third party in the “régime épistolaire”: the place of God in the correspondence of Marie de l'Incarnation and of Mme de Sévigné* – Isabelle Landy, Founding member of the Study

Group of the History of the French Language and the International Association for the “Recherche sur l’Epistolaire”

- *Marie Guyart de l’Incarnation...and of the Redemption* – Dom Thierry Barbeau, monk of Solesmes, has published several studies on Marie Guyart’s experience of the spiritual marriage and its double dimension, unitive and apostolic; in collaboration with Fr Max Huot de Longchamps, he has just published a new edition of the *Relation of 1654*
- *Marie de l’Incarnation, missionary and mystic in the thought of Charles André Bernard* – Marie Giovanna Muzj, she teaches at the Gregorian University and at the Oriental Institute
- *Ignatian resonances in commitment - Louis Lallemand, Jean de Brébeuf and Marie de l’Incarnation* – Fr André Brouillette SJ, he is professor of systematic and theology and spiritual theology in the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College; he is a member of the scientific committee of the Centre for Studies of Marie de l’Incarnation at Laval University, Quebec
- *Marie de l’Incarnation and the ordained ministry of her son, Claude* – Fr Vincent Siret, rector of the Pontifical French Seminary, founding member of the CUEG
- *Marie de l’Incarnation and the ideas of Pope Francis* – Cardinal Gérald-Cyprien Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec

The Pauline presence in the writings of Marie Guyart

I found fascinating the parallels established between the mission of Marie and that of Saint Paul. Fr Matthieu Rouillé d’Oreuil drew attention to certain characteristics of a missionary call which we see both in Marie and Saint Paul. A few examples:

- The experience of conversion of these two saints and the change into a new person.
- The call, or more precisely the push, to announce the Good News, in Canada or throughout the world of the early Church.
- The mission and the obstacles found on the way. God calls and sends but there are obstacles – some placed there by God. We see obstacles all the way through the Acts of the Apostles and all through the life of Marie. But they are accepted, faced up to (sometimes with great patience) and overcome, and finally seen even as an aspect of God’s providence.
- The theology of the redemption. Christ died for all. Marie went to Canada to save all, all the souls redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ.

This was a biblical aspect of the life and mission of Marie which touched me and has encouraged me to look at it more deeply.

“I have very much present in my mind the words of St. Paul: “Jesus Christ died for all”. I see with extreme sorrow that all do not live for Him and so many souls are plunged in death. At the same time I am filled with confusion that I dare aspire and even to think that I am able to contribute something to help them find life.” *Letter XII, to Dom Raymond, 1635*

Marie de l’Incarnation and the visions of the Trinity

I was touched by the presentation of Cardinal Marc Ouellet in which, it seems to me, the Cardinal gave a personal testimony, for example, Marie de l’Incarnation as a guide/companion for him in his intimacy with God. He quoted the song *En ce Pays* “Au centre de mon âme, il est un air si doux...” (At the centre of my soul the melody is so sweet)... and he emphasized the importance of the central place of the Trinitarian Life in our Christian life.

Presentation of the icon of Marie de l'Incarnation

The writing of a new icon by Gertrude Martineau impressed me straight away: inspired by the portrait of Marie de l'Incarnation made before her departure for Canada, Gertrude drew out some fundamental characteristics of the spirituality of Marie de l'Incarnation: the Trinitarian visions, the familiar daily presence of

Marie with the Child and Jesus the Master with the inscription of the great and simple invocation: “may your will be accomplished in me”.



This icon was given to Pope Francis, who blessed it during the private audience for our group – those who were present in Rome.



Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation... and of the Redemption

More than once has the singularity of Marie Guyart in her mystical and apostolic journey been expressed. Dom Thierry Barbeau, Benedictine of Solesmes, presented among other things the Spiritual Marriage as "mystical arrival" and "apostolic departure". I was touched; I found myself completely in our Ursuline charism: “contemplative – active”. The action that springs from the Love of the Spouse... Moreover, also our Foundress, Saint Angela, does not fit into a fixed plan.

Marie de l'Incarnation and the ideas of Pope Francis

“The points of resemblance between Marie de l'Incarnation and our Pope Francis were recalled by Cardinal Gérald-Cyprien Lacroix. Pope Francis names the evils of our time: self-referentiality, self-realization, ... self-destruction (cf *Laudato Si* n°204, 206...). Marie de l'Incarnation warns her son against 'our wretched self-love...our self-love enslaves us and reduces us to nothing' (Letter LXVIII, to her son, 1643)... On several occasions during the colloquium, saints have been mentioned as antidotes against 'self...' Today Marie de l'Incarnation can open a path for postmodern humanity in an identity crisis. Marie de l'Incarnation, through her life and testimony, invites us to revisit our life as baptized persons, to rebuild, to rediscover, to be reborn... By learning from Marie de l'Incarnation we deepen our path as 'disciple-missionaries'.”

The audience with the Holy Father

We were struck by his simplicity, and the depth with which he spoke to us from the heart! Pray! Live! May this faith that Marie bore be renewed by the testimony of our Life and of the Word.

Some personal reflections:

“The Apostolic Prayer of Marie. "The souls redeemed by the most precious blood of my divine Spouse" – are they not here as much as in distant lands in the 17th century? Coming home in the evening, I saw most people fixed on their cell phones. I also opened mine at first. Then I closed it. I looked at the faces, and in my heart I began to present these diverse people in the bus in Rome "through the Heart of my Jesus".”

"I was very touched to see how Marie de l'Incarnation reaches and touches not only the Ursuline family but a varied number of people, religious of various orders or lay people. A real encouragement to promote the modernity and the example of Marie de l'Incarnation for our society and our Church today.”

“Will we soon see Saint Marie de l'Incarnation as a Doctor of the Church? We hope so: it would be a great joy and motivation to know her more and more as our travelling companion.”

European Exchanges and Experiences

BELOVED LUBLJANA

In 2021, the Provincials of Europe wished to give all the sisters who are willing and able to do so, the possibility to live an European experience. The aim of the EXPERIENCE is to allow the sisters of Europe to get to know each other better, to go beyond their borders and to learn something about another province and another culture.

Variety, colour, attraction: Slovenia is the only European country that brings together the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian plain in an easy-to-cover radius.

Colourful, it is! Green everywhere. Alpine slopes, meadows, leafy trees generously offer fruits and flowers of multiple colours. Raspberries, blueberries, mushrooms, spicy herbs, keep the taste buds awake.



Lake Bled

Unique cliffs and chalk caves, the vertiginous peaks of Triglav, enchanting lakes, forests as far as the eye can see, Mediterranean azure, everything is fascinating!

Ljubljana, whose name means "the beloved", the green capital of Europe, with pedestrian streets lined with lime trees, the city charms the walker with its white stone and red brick buildings and its gardens.

In the heart of a jealously preserved nature, lives a warm and welcoming people. Celebrations, religious and secular, are frequent. The musical gene of the Slovenians is revealed in popular folk music as well as in the works of great composers such as Mahler.

To those who take the time, Ljubljana provides some surprising discoveries: an axle wheel (the oldest known in the world) dating back 5,200 years, a Neanderthal flute found in one of the villages built on stilts because of the marshes, 60,000 years old!



Neanderthal flute

I had the joy of participating in two jubilees of 50 years of religious profession in Ljubljana, those of Sister Darjana Toman and Sister Magdalena Cimerlajt, and I really felt the happiness of living together. Happiness that is all the greater in that being in a foreign country, without knowing the language, is a real challenge, a challenge that many of our contemporaries must face (especially those who have not chosen to be in a foreign land). Accepting not to participate in the ongoing conversation, waiting for someone to translate for you, depending on others for the smallest thing. We find ourselves in the situation of a child totally dependent on its parents. Challenge of humility, patience, basic learning. The experience is worth it, it teaches you to accept yourself as different from the other. It teaches the patience of beginnings!

When visiting historical places, former convents converted into museums, tourists immerse themselves in the turbulent history of the country. The Second World War and then the nationalization of the property of religious by the communist regime left many marks on the country. Consciousness of religion is no longer something natural. The Church, as in many European countries, no longer is in the forefront (except in Ljubljana!) but parishes and Catholic movements are very much alive.

Visiting places where so many elderly sisters gave their lives to God by announcing his word, allowed me sense how much could be required in a spirit of faith to enter into a new life.



Convent of Mekjnje, now a museum.

The discovery of the places is exciting, but that is not the main part of the visit. What really delighted me during this month-long stay in Slovenia was meeting the sisters, sharing their daily life. Participating in their liturgy (the simple and prayerful chants of the office sometimes led me to believe that I spoke Slovenian), offering my small service (picking cherries or currants,

drying the dishes, helping with the housework, accompanying an elderly sister ...) all these little gestures make us really feel like sisters, members of the same family.

Far from separating us, the differences in our ways of life, in our apostolates are a call to openness, to welcoming diversity in the spirit of Saint Angela.

In Sveti Duh as in Ljubljana, during visits to Brezje, Mekinje, Izola, it was a great joy for me to get to know the sisters and their mission, their apostolate, while also discovering the country, always green thanks to its waters and forests. Bonds have been created between us sisters and we promise to keep them alive.

Iwon't forget the attention I was given during the walks and excursions in the beautiful nature or in the picturesque streets of Ljubljana (always with ice cream or coffee).

How can I thank the communities who opened their doors and their hearts, or the Provincials of Europe for having proposed and encouraged these European experiences? Only the Lord can do this and I ask him to do so.



These exchanges express the reality of the Roman Union.

Many other sisters, from Slovenia, Poland, France/Belgium/Spain..., had an experience of this sort. They are welcome, and encouraged, to share it in the next issue of the Inter Ursuline bulletin. Whatever the length of their text, in English or French!

Synodal Process

EXTRAORDINARY PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BISHOPS

IN LYON 14-15 JUNE 2022

You will find below another experience of our involvement as Ursulines in the current Synodal Process. It comes from Sr Marie Dolorès ALEGRE de la SOUJEOLE, Province of France/Belgium/Spain, diocese of Mende.

Please continue to share your experiences of this process, even it is an experience from some time ago.

Since November 2019, the Bishops of France have been holding working meetings in full assembly with lay people participating, on the following subjects: Laudato Si, the report of the CIASE (Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Church), the renewal of the CEF (Bishops' Conference) and, on 14-15 June 2022, synodality.

As the designated person for the diocese of Mende, I experienced for the first time, in Lyon, the spirit of synodality with the bishops of France.

Listening to the Word of God and invoking the Holy Spirit nourished us throughout the process.



Mass at Notre Dame de Fourvière 14 June 2022

I was struck by the great importance given to the prayer together. Throughout the day, the prayer of the hours kept us under God's gaze. We devoted the first whole morning to prayer, in various forms: a pilgrimage in the footsteps of Pauline Jaricot, the Eucharist at Notre Dame de Fourvière (Basilica in Lyon), sharing of the Word of God in pairs, sharing a difficulty and an act of thanksgiving entrusted to the prayer of two other people.

A brotherly and sisterly way of life.

I noticed many volunteers from Lyon who were there to inform us, guide us and facilitate our moving around. The three testimonies that we were offered came from the “little ones”, from those whom we can find it hard to hear (a diocese without a bishop, people with disabilities, the voice of children and young people). During the breaks and the meals, each person tried to meet others that he or she did not know and to discover the richness and newness of "our Church on the way".

Synodal and collegial discernment, an interaction to be lived out.

Through our successive workshops, sometimes with “peers”, sometimes mixed, I understood better what the synodal discernment and the collegial discernment of the bishops is. In this way we moved ahead in mutual trust between the bishops and the designated persons from the dioceses and movements, by expressing what had been unspoken. Those invited to the extraordinary plenary assembly of bishops are not decision-makers, but they helped their bishops to live out their mission: to listen, to gather the words of the people of God and to decide what they wanted to highlight in this first national synodal phase.



Mgr A. Joly and a member of the national synodal team giving spiritual exhortation about synodality, collegiality and primacy

Conversion and synodal learning, the fruit of our exchanges.



Reaching out and listening to another person participating in the plenary assembly.

Although the object of this meeting was modest (to take stock of the synodal process launched in October 2021), the expectations of the participants were high (to make clear the deep aspirations emerging from this consultation). Having been invited to this meeting, I wanted to bring to it the experience of the Lozère diocesan process, and also to receive the grace to open my heart to the other diocesan processes.

During our multiple exchanges, the grace of humility, of trust in others, of a love for the Church greater than my own interest, opened a path of conversion for me to be more confident in the Holy Spirit and to serve better the women and men to whom I am sent.



The Catholic University of Lyon was the place of our many exchanges.

NEXT INTER-URSULINE BULLETIN

As usual, the next issue of the Inter-Ursuline bulletin will welcome all your experiences to be shared around the world, whatever the topic: the Synodal way “Synod on synodality”, the European Exchanges, centenary, anniversary, languages experiences, time of tertianship in other provinces...

Please send short articles **before 1st December 2022**. With thanks!