

FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CANADA
RESOURCES FOR
THE GLOBAL COORDINATING GROUP PRAYER CALENDAR

During the **FIRST** week of July we *listen to the heart of the world* and hold the Sisters of St. Joseph and the people of **IRELAND** in our prayer.



(Information and photos from Wikipedia)

Ireland is an island in the North Atlantic, separated from Great Britain to its east by the North Channel, the Irish Sea, and St. George's Channel. It is the third largest island in Europe.

Politically, Ireland is divided between the Republic of Ireland (officially named Ireland), which covers five-sixths of the island, and Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. In 2011, the population of Ireland was about 6.6 million, ranking it the second-most populous island in Europe after Great Britain. Just under 4.8 million live in the Republic of Ireland and just over 1.8 million live in Northern Ireland.

The island's geography comprises relatively low-lying mountains surrounding a central plain, with several navigable rivers extending inland. Its lush vegetation is a product of its mild but changeable climate, which is influenced by the Atlantic Ocean. Winters are milder than expected for such a northerly area, although summers are cooler than those in Continental Europe. Rainfall and cloud cover are abundant.

The earliest evidence of human presence in Ireland is dated at 10,500 BCE. Gaelic Ireland had emerged by the 1st century AD. The island was Christianized from the 5th century onward. Following the 12th century Norman invasion, England claimed sovereignty. However, English rule did not extend over the whole island until the 16th–17th century Tudor conquest, which led to colonization by settlers from Britain. In the 1690s, a system of Protestant English rule was designed to materially disadvantage the Catholic majority and Protestant dissenters, and was extended during the 18th century. With the Acts of Union in 1801, Ireland became a part of the United Kingdom. A war of independence in the

early 20th century was followed by the partition of the island, creating the Irish Free State, which became increasingly sovereign over the following decades, and Northern Ireland, which remained a part of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland saw much civil unrest from the late 1960s until the 1990s. This subsided following a political agreement in 1998. In 1973 the Republic of Ireland joined the European Economic Community.

Irish culture has had a significant influence on other cultures, especially in the fields of literature. Alongside mainstream Western culture, a strong indigenous culture exists, as expressed through Gaelic games, Irish music and the Irish language. The island's culture shares many features with that of Great Britain, including the English language, and sports such as association football, rugby, horse racing, and golf.

Sisters of St. Joseph

There are about 62 Sisters ministering in Ireland, from the Congregations of Lyon, Annecy and Chambéry. They can be found in homes for the elderly, parish and pastoral work, retirement homes, health care, education, justice ministry, refugee work, governance, grief and loss programs, media, spiritual direction, and formation work.

For photos of the Lyon Sisters see: <http://www.stjosephlyon.org/index.php/en/where-are-we/englandireland>

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy have a convent in Co. Kerry, Ireland.

From the Chambéry Congregation we have this memoir of Sr. Sr. Joan Margaret in [CSJournal 2013 #1](#)

The International Eucharistic Congress of 2012 was a huge event in Ireland, since the last one held there had been 80 years earlier in 1932. Due to these turbulent times and the recent scandals that have rocked the church, there was opposition and it was difficult for the church to host the Congress. However it was decided to go ahead with the plans which began more than two years earlier.

For two years all dioceses around the country prepared for this event, announced in each place by the Congress Bell as it crisscrossed Ireland, went to Rome and to our neighboring countries. In each community many people, old and young rang the bell in the church and streets, making all aware of the coming of this great event. A pilgrim walk to seven churches scattered around the city of Dublin was another way many prepared. Groups from various parishes made this pilgrimage with their priests to pray for the renewal of the Church in Ireland. The walk from church to church took three hours including a moment of prayer at each one.

I found it remarkable that the theme of the congress was: "The Eucharist: Communion with Christ and with one another", so reflective of our spirituality during the year of our 200th anniversary celebration. The opening ceremony was magnificent, full of symbols of our Irish Catholic heritage dating back to St. Patrick in 432, whose evangelization of Ireland was presented in Celtic song and dance. We were reminded of the faithfulness of the people through centuries of persecution and martyrdom. A contemporary issue was visible with the unveiling of a healing stone engraved with a prayer by one of the survivors of abuse in the Church. It was clear that the Church in Ireland is suffering, and faces many new and serious challenges.

The weeklong event was filled with conferences, prayers, workshops and moments of catechesis for young and old. Many conferences and workshops were given by famous speakers both Catholic and from other Christian denominations, exploring communion and present day challenges to living our Christian life. Many were overbooked, a sign of real hunger for spiritual nourishment among the people. It was fascinating to watch young Catholics and Christians of other traditions mingle and share their faith in the Youth Space.

The closing ceremony took place in Croke Park, our historical football stadium, which was transformed into an open-air Cathedral, with 80.000 pilgrims enthusiastically filling it. We enjoyed the best of our Celtic music as we gathered there. The Liturgy was one of hope for the future, which drew together the threads of the eight days with their focus on reform and renewal. The witness of faith from so many parts of the world was profound. Such an event was made possible only with the help of two thousand volunteers, of which I was one, in action all week. I was on duty from early morning until afternoon, meeting and helping people in English and French so they might find their way to the various events. I then stayed on to participate in the Mass, catechesis and conferences. The congress called us to be committed to building a Church of communion and service, after the model of Jesus. It was wonderful to be at the hub of all this, and it was a life-giving and unforgettable experience.

In Canada

So many of our Canadian CSJ congregations have benefitted from the rich cultural heritage of our Irish Sisters. Many travelled to Canada and entered our communities, joining in ministries of education, home-making, administration, care for the sick and elderly, and later to work in pastoral services and justice work. Our histories are rich with their endeavours.

May we also be mindful of these women of faith, during this week of prayer for those ministering in Ireland.

United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 11,000 sisters in 54 countries, listening to the heart of the world.

