



## INFANT JESUS SISTERS

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### Pentecost 2016

Dearest Sisters and Friends,

May the Holy Spirit bring new life and energy to you all on this feast of Pentecost! Once again we have the opportunity to be united across the world in our different nations, with diverse cultures and languages, as we reflect on the amazing gift of God's Spirit in our lives. Pentecost is a time for opening doors and allowing the breath of the Spirit to breathe through every aspect of our lives and mission.

For the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis called for every cathedral to have a special door, a 'Holy Door', representing the passage to salvation and to a new and eternal life that was opened by Jesus for all of humanity. It symbolizes an entry to God's mercy - the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet people. Mercy is "the bridge that connects God and humanity, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness." (MV 2)



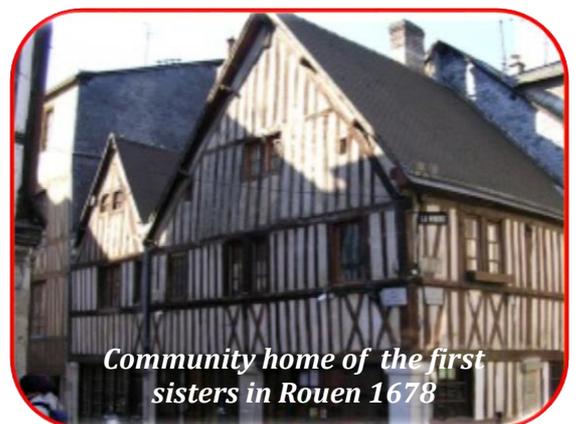
In the Gospel for Pentecost Sunday (John 20:19-23), we read that "the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were." When Jesus appeared to his disciples on the evening of his resurrection from the dead, he found them gathered behind closed doors, full of anxiety and fear. They were in hiding and wanted to be protected from what lay outside the doors; but Jesus ignored the closed doors and came in to stand among them. His first words were *'Peace be with you.'*

Doors allow for privacy as well as welcome. At times it is appropriate that our doors keep people out and at other times we open them to offer hospitality and welcome people in. Doors can create places of confinement or places of sanctuary. They can speak of welcome and safety. They can also speak of imprisonment and fear. For the disciples the doors were closed because of their absolute fear.

Jesus walked through the closed door and gave the disciples the mission to offer God's mercy to the world. Their mission was to be the same as his: they were to continue doing what he did. During this year of Mercy Pope Francis invites us not only to walk through a Holy Door into a church but also to walk out of the church to continue the mission of offering God's mercy to others.

*Are we ready to walk out of the church and show God's mercy to others?*

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Nicolas Barré invited our first sisters to open their doors to one another, which led to the first community in the Institute. He relied very much on the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit as the source of the life and mission of the first sisters. He wanted the Holy Spirit to 'take possession' of this small community so that the sisters would always be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Three hundred and fifty years later, who could have imagined how this first community would have grown and evolved into the Institute we know today! It has been and



*Community home of the first sisters in Rouen 1678*

continues to be the work of the Holy Spirit. At this time in our history we are more conscious than ever of being one community in the Institute, trusting in divine providence and in the love and support we receive from and give to one another. The Institute is a community that continues to hold its doors open to others – friends, colleagues and those who are drawn to its spirit and who wish to share all or part of its life and mission.

At Pentecost Jesus filled the disciples with new life, making them into a new creation and giving them the life of his Spirit. God has formed us into a community in the Church and in the Institute, into instruments for bringing life and love to our world. But what makes the Church and the Institute more than just a gathering of good people is God's "breath" infusing us with the music of divinity. The feast of Pentecost celebrates that unseen, immeasurable presence of God in our lives –

- the *spirit* that animates us to do the work of Gospel justice and mercy,
- the *spirit* that makes God's will our will,
- the *spirit* of God living in us and transforming us so that we might bring life and love to our broken world.

God "breathes" the Spirit into our souls that we may live in love; God ignites the "fire" of the Spirit within our hearts and minds that we may seek God in all things in order to participate fully in the coming of God's reign.

The disciples, who had been terrified, were filled with joy when Jesus stood among them on that first Pentecost evening. He then gave them their mission, "*As the Father sent me, so am I sending you*" (Jn 20:21). The presence of Jesus in our lives is always accompanied by peace and joy.

We also radiate our spirit of mission through peace and joy. By our word and example we invite others to share it. The gifts of the Spirit are not just for ourselves: they are to be shared. After the coming of the Holy Spirit the disciples did not stay in the room luxuriating in what they had been given. They threw open the doors and went out to tell the world how much God loves everyone and how he wants everyone to experience that love.



The Holy Spirit impels us to open our doors and go forth to proclaim and bear witness to the good news of the Gospel, to communicate the joy of faith and the encounter with Christ, who is the 'face of God's mercy'. The Holy Spirit makes us look to the horizon and draws us to the fringes of humanity in order to proclaim life in Jesus Christ.

How many doors will you pass through today? Or maybe you wish to welcome someone in; perhaps you long for a closed door to be opened. May the Holy Spirit open the closed doors in our lives. In a world where there is so much fear and anxiety, so much avoidance and separation, may the open doors of our daily lives speak clearly of the peace of Christ.

Kimiko, Maria and Noreen join me in wishing you renewed energy, joy and zeal on this feast of Pentecost.

With love and peace to you all,

*Marie*

