

## PROFILE OF THE FRENCH PROVINCE

### *A little history*

**France** – the cradle of our Congregation - is one of the oldest countries in Europe. Washed by the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and by the Mediterranean Sea in the south, the three other sides of the ‘Hexagon’ have borders with Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium.

After Roman occupation and various invasions by northern peoples, it was only in the 6<sup>th</sup> century that the country acquired its present name, its cohesion and its national awareness. It was a kingdom until the revolution of 1789; it was an empire under Napoleon and finally became a republic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From the 18<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it had a colonial empire, mainly in western Africa and the Pacific. Following the Second World War, little by little it handed back independence to its former colonies.

Evangelised in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, it became a Christian nation in the Middle Ages and still proudly carries the title of ‘Eldest Daughter of the Church’.

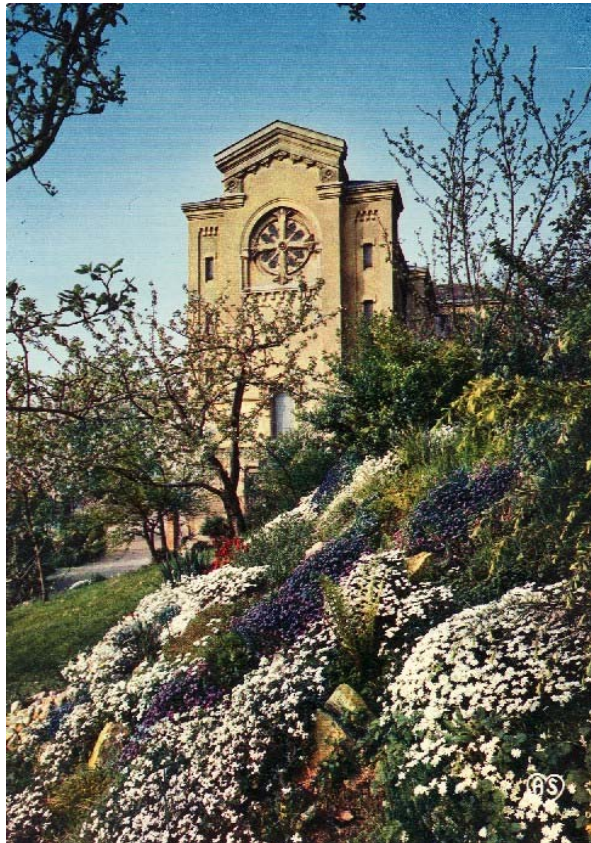
**Euphrasie Barbier** was born in Caen in the north of France in 1829, and founded her Congregation of religious missionaries on 25 December 1861, in Lyon on the hill of Fourvière. Up until 1901 all the Sisters who entered the novitiate in France were sent to the overseas missions – Oceania, New Zealand, England, and India, or to Armentières in the north of France; only those in formation and the sick remained in the Mother House. In 1901, as a consequence of the government laws for associations which impacted on all religious congregations at that time, all of our Sisters emigrated to Switzerland, Belgium, Canada or England; only in 1924 did some Sisters return to Lyon. In 1933 a Province was established for Europe, and the provincialate and novitiate re-opened in Lyon. At the time of the Indo-China War, Vietnamese postulants, novices and young professed Sisters were welcomed to France. In 1971 the French Province opened the mission in Senegal and there is still one French Sister working there. In 1995 two French Sisters went to Romania; one of those Sisters continued to work in Romania for about ten years.

**Our province logo** (above) highlights the missionary spirit of our province. The flame of zeal enlightens the world, and the links of our Sisters are around the world.

## **Convents and their works**

Presently (in 2011) there are five RNDM communities in France:

- 1) **Lyon**: on Fourvière hill, where we have a small community living now in the former chapel wing; they welcome visitors and RNDMs from other provinces, including Sisters studying for degrees at the Catholic University. Some Sisters have an outreach into pastoral, immigrant and health work.



*The chapel wing of the Fourvière property, built under Mother M. St Pacôme, the second Superior General, and recently remodelled for a small community.*

- 2) **Toulon**: on the Mediterranean coast, where we have a school catering for pre-school, primary and secondary students. One Sister is involved in catechism and other school activities, and other Sisters work in pastoral, health and immigrant work.



*The main entrance to the school, with the statue of Our Lady of the Missions on the balcony. Their school motto is 'To promote a Christian and human formation, rooted in Gospel values'.*

- 3) **St Rambert**: in the Jura foothills east of Lyon, where we have a house of prayer and hospitality; this property is a registered heritage site of a former early Benedictine monastery.

*The little chapel in the grounds at St Rambert is built over the crypt of the early Benedictine monastery church of St Domitian. This is a registered heritage site, and visitors to the crypt are welcomed by the Sisters.*





4) **Charenton**: a suburban city on the Seine River, on the eastern rim of Paris, where a small community maintains a presence in our large school of more than 1500 students; one Sister contributes to the English language, catechetical and liturgical life of the school.



*The front entrance of the main school for secondary and senior students, pre-school and some primary classes; there is also another school site for the primary students about 5 minutes walk away. This building originally belonged to the Diocese of Paris and was a minor seminary; since the Sisters developed the present school, there have been a number of additions to this building.*

5) **Givors**: a suburb of Lyon, where a small community contributes to parish life in a largely Muslim suburb.

## **Mission activities**

### **Education:**

#### **Charenton**



*Sr Patricia Boyd (at right, back row) with her First Communion group from the school 2011*

## Toulon



*The Director, Mr Mathon and Sr M Danielle Babou discussing the mission outreach of the Sisters with Sister Catherine Brabender (International RNDM Solidarity Coordinator).*

## Health ministries: (including care of elderly Sisters)

**Accueil des Buers, Lyon** the retirement home where some of our elderly Sisters reside.



*(left) Sr Pauline Barnan taking Sr M. Eugénie Vu for a walk.*



*(right) Sister Maureen McBride, Congregational Leader, joins our Sisters for a meal.*

## Maison St Raphaël, Lyon



## Convent Toulon



*(left) Sr Pauline Barnan is a nurse for the blind at St Raphaël; some of the blind women were formerly in the St Odile home which was on our property in Lyon for many years.  
(right) Sr Marie Chantal Hoang thi Hong enjoys the Mediterranean climate of Toulon in her retirement with the community there.*

## Vietnamese community work:

### Lyon



### Toulon



*(left) Sr Thien An Nguyen thi Chung (back row) with a Vietnamese catechism class.  
(right) The Vietnamese community in Toulon celebrating Tet.*



## Pastoral involvement:

### Givors



*(left) Sr Odile Le with an adult catechumen;  
(right) the Givors Sisters working with the Sunday liturgy group.*

## House of prayer and hospitality:



*The main house at St Rambert which welcomes residential and day groups for retreats, conferences, the sacraments, Congregational and parish activities.*



*(left) A group from Cor Unum gathers for prayer during their retreat at l' Abbaye  
(right) The 2011 international group of our Sisters gathered for their six week session at St Rambert.*

## Study opportunities and other activities

We have young Sisters studying French at Toulon, before going to Mission Langues, at Angers, in preparation for our missions in France and Senegal. Two Sisters are pursuing higher studies at the Catholic University of Lyon.

### Lyon



*Sisters Anna Duong thi Hong Thuy from Vietnam (left) and Fabiola Carcares from Peru(right) are both very busy with higher university studies.*

### Charenton:

*Sister Mary Rose Holderness is preparing the letters and other documents of our Foundress in English for access by computer.*





## Toulon



*Three young Asian RNDMs hard at work with Sr M Danielle Babou (centre) learning French before going on mission, (l-r) Sr Teresa Nguyen thi Nhan (from Vietnam) and Sister Dora Khonglah (from Bangladesh) will go to Sénégal, while Sister Rebecca Karmokar (from Bangladesh) will stay in France*

## Associates etc



*(left) Josette Louvet, our faithful Associate, joins Sister Marie Bernadette and the St Rambert community for Christmas dinner.*

## France Vietnam Association, Toulon – Solidarity Partnership

Since the creation of the **FRANCE – VIETNAM Association** by Sister Marie Danielle Babou, the Notre Dame des Missions School at Toulon, France has been involved in different projects such as the building of schools, dispensaries, youth hostels, and homes for the handicapped. Since 1995, the association has worked with the **Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions in Vietnam** in setting up these projects.



**Photo:** *The small school at Vinh Trang, Vietnam, built with money raised by the France Vietnam Association, along with a donation from the city of Toulon.*

### ***To contact:***

#### **Contact for the Province, and l'Abbaye, St Rambert:**

:Sister Marie Laurent Vonlanthen RNDM  
Post: L'Abbaye, 01230 Saint Rambert en Bugey  
Email: [m.laurent.rndm@orange.fr](mailto:m.laurent.rndm@orange.fr)

#### **Contact for vocations:**

As above, for post and email addresses

#### **Contact for Archives:**

Sister Marie Celestine Dinh thi Nga  
Post: Notre Dame des Missions  
14 Chemin de Montauban  
69005 Lyon  
Email: [celestine@gmail.com](mailto:celestine@gmail.com)

### ***Links***

#### **Our Charenton school**

Ecole Notre Dame des Missions- St Pierre,  
4 Rue du Président Kennedy,  
94220 Charenton-le-Pont

[www.notredamedesmissions.fr](http://www.notredamedesmissions.fr)

#### **Our Toulon school**

Cours Notre Dame des Missions,  
673 Rue Docteur Barrois,  
83000 Toulon

[www.nd-missions83.fr](http://www.nd-missions83.fr)