

Great Communion of Women and Men

As we gather, we know that we do not stand here alone,
but in the company of countless forebears
whose generous lives have given birth to this moment.

You young women of Le Puy, France, first Sisters of St. Joseph --
your spirit inspires us still.

Over three hundred and fifty years ago --
a time of wars and plagues, constant turmoil and crushing human misery --
you left behind comfort, security and propriety
to care "without distinction" for the suffering "dear neighbors" around you.

You first Sisters of St. Joseph who heard the gospel
and risked everything to respond to its call:

Response: Be with us and pray with us today!

Jean-Pierre Medaille of the Society of Jesus,
mentor to the fledgling groups of Sisters of St. Joseph,
you withstood the ire of your superiors and the disdain of your community
for daring to work with women.

By placing at their service, the education to which you had access
you helped them to find their own voices, visions and vocations

Jean-Pierre Medaille, friend of women and man of justice -- we need you
still:

Response: Be with us and pray with us today!

Mother St. John Fontbonne, in the traumatic years following the French
Revolution,

you regathered the scattered Sisters of St. Joseph,
still mourning the sisters lost to the guillotine--
which you yourself had barely escaped.

Under your leadership, the community began to thrive again beyond all
expectations.

Mother Fontbonne, wise and brave leader:

Response: Be with us and pray with us today!

You six sisters who sailed across the Atlantic to Carondelet, Missouri,
leaving your homeland behind forever--
you traveled in disguise to avoid anti-Catholic mobs,
you lived in a hut and begged for your food,
but with your humor, your tenacity and your resilient creativity
you began what was to become the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet--
who traveled deserts and climbed mountains and endured every hardship,
bringing together women of many different cultures and backgrounds

to respond to the needs of the "dear neighbor" in America --
in orphanages and schools, in hospitals and colleges

All you pioneer Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet:

Response: Be with us and pray with us today!

[Name the founders of the college/university]

you looked out at the world around you and saw the value of a Catholic college,
a college to meet the particular needs of the times

[Name the founders again] -- founders, builders, visionaries

Response: Be with us and pray with us today!

You past presidents of [name the college/university]

You lived with such concern for the students, such desire for learning itself --

[Name all the previous presidents]

You models of spirit, tenacity, resourcefulness and stubborn, shining
hope:

Response: Be with us and pray with us today!

All you women and men who have loved and served this college [university]
since its founding

You gardeners and librarians, professors and cooks, benefactors and
housekeepers:

Response: Be with us and pray with us today!

Leader: Together in this great company, let us all pray.

God Eternal and Ever New, you pour out your Spirit upon every generation.
Sustained by the gifts we have received from the past, inspire us now to bestow
new gifts upon the future. With the guidance of our current leadership may we at
[name of college or university] continue always to search for your truth, walk in
your ways and live in your love with trust and with courage.
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our brother and savior. Amen.

*Adapted from a prayer prayed at the inauguration of Jacqueline Powers Doud, as
President of Mount St. Mary's College in October, 2000*