

SOCIETÀ DEL SACRO CUORE – CASA GENERALIZIA

Rome, 30 June 2005

Ref. 05/97

To the Society

Dear Sisters,

Today we are writing to you about a subject that is very close to our hearts and that touches all of us: the **Trinità dei Monti**. Fully aware that the provinces of France and Italy are particularly affected by what we are now communicating, and have been prepared for this letter for some months, we want to let you know without further delay that the Society's 178 year presence at the Trinità is about to come to an end.

Not everyone is aware that the Trinità does not belong to the Society, and never has. The monastery, which had belonged to the [Order of Minims](#) for over 300 years, was confided to the Society by the Diplomatic Conventions of 14 May and 8 September 1828 between the Holy See and the Government of France, for the purpose of educating young girls. Throughout its history, generations of French and Italian religious, as well as RSCJs from other countries, have carried out the mission of the Society at the Trinità, in the context of a complex situation and the sometimes competing demands of the various political entities involved (the Holy See, France and Italy). God alone can measure the corporate generosity, courage, creativity and fidelity of 178 years!

For over twenty years, the provincials of France and Italy and the General Councils have been preoccupied by the question of the Society's continuing presence at the Trinità. This preoccupation has echoed that of successive French Ambassadors to the Holy See who, while appreciating our long history there, have been realistic about the aging of both provinces and, periodically, have raised the question of the future. In November 2002, the French Embassy to the Holy See, which had obtained considerable funds from the French government to renovate parts of the Trinità, approached Clare Pratt as Superior General of the Society, to ask what our plans were for the future and, in view of undertaking more renovations, to demand a significant reinforcement of personnel for the coming years.

Faced with this request, in March 2003, the General Council, in concert with the provincial councils of France and Italy, made the decision that **the Society will withdraw from the Trinità no later than the summer of 2006**. Clare communicated the decision to the French Ambassador to the Holy See, Pierre Morel, and the President of the French Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Jean-Pierre Ricard in June 2003.

Our decision to leave the Trinità was met with sincere regret on the part of Ambassador Morel. In a letter to Clare of 18 February 2005 he wrote:

“Allow me to tell you once again how much we regret this departure. The spiritual influence of the Community, the quality of the school, the

contribution of the House of Welcome, Saint Joseph, all give witness to a mission that has been inserted and very appreciated for a long time in the life of Rome. The formation sessions, “Art, Science and Faith” have been a recent addition which has nicely rounded out this whole endeavour. I never miss an opportunity to underline the value and the richness of this work...”

Once Ambassador Morel knew that our decision was definitive, he set out to find another (French) religious congregation to which to confide the Trinità in its ensemble: the convent, the church, the Istituto Sacro Cuore (the school in its various sections), the Petite École Française (administered by a separate Association) and the Centre d’Accueil, the hospitality center, that has welcomed thousands of young people and families since its opening in 1975. One aspect of the complexity of the situation is that despite the fact that the Diplomatic Convention governing the Trinità does not include the Italian government, the School is subject to Italian legislation and belongs to the province of Italy, and the community of the Trinità is a community of the Italian province.

The search for another congregation has been a long one and, as of this date, the signatures on a new accord between the Holy See and the French Government are still pending. Despite that fact, we do not want to wait any longer to tell you that the congregation that will replace us at the Trinità is the Monastic Communities of Jerusalem (Fraternités Monastiques de Jérusalem). This congregation of monks, nuns and lay people whose vocation is to live “in the heart of the city, in the heart of God” was founded in 1975 in France by Fr. Pierre-Marie Delfieux, who is still Prior of the Communities. Over the years they have expanded to several other countries. (You can learn more about them through their website <http://jerusalem.cef.fr>). Although they have never run their own school, a number of them are teachers, and the congregation is very willing to embrace the spirit and practice of Sacred Heart education.

There are still many details to be worked out between the Italian Province and the Monastic Communities of Jerusalem, particularly with regard to the school whose faculty is practically 100% lay, and which will continue with a new juridical Association to be formed by the Pieux Établissements, the department of the French government that is the proprietor of the Trinità.

For a variety of reasons, the “loss” of the Trinità affects us all, particularly the provinces of Italy and France. For many Religious and Alumnae/i of the Sacred Heart, the question that is perhaps uppermost is “**What about Mater?**” We can assure you that throughout the negotiations we have insisted that we (religious, alumnae/i, pilgrims and visitors to Rome) be assured of continuing access to Mater and, in the new accord, that access is clearly stipulated. Part of the vocation of the Communities of Jerusalem is **welcome**: of the city and its citizens, of guests, of outcasts, of the poor, of children.

Actually, there is a passage at the end of the *Book of Life* of the Communities of Jerusalem that gives a sense of the place of Mary in their lives, and helps to assure us that they will understand and value the place that Mater holds in so many hearts:

“Our communities are specially consecrated to the *Blessed Virgin Mary*. You should be able to turn to her each day...”

Because she is the mother of fair love, she will help you to love.
Because she is the light of prayer, she will help you to pray.
Because she loves the mystery of silence, she will introduce you to its secret.
Because she loves you, you too must learn to love her.
With Mary, do all that Christ bids you and, like her, rejoice! Mary leads the way from the Jerusalem of today towards the new Jerusalem...
At Bethlehem Mary gave you the eternal God become a little Child. At the foot of the cross she stood near her Son while he died for you. In Jerusalem she will reveal the true face of Emmanuel to you.”

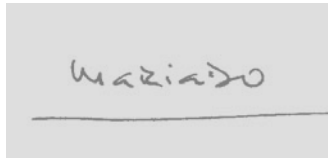
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During these next months let us accompany through our prayer the present community of the Trinità who, with a mixture of serenity and sorrow, will live their last year in this house where vital apostolic works are carried out. Let us remember as well the teachers and staff of the School who, understandably, look to the future with a certain apprehension. We pray that this transition time may be a time of collaboration in a spirit of welcome and love. May Sophie, whose own life was so affected by the Trinità, help us to see that this moment too is a “time of grace” in which God is present -- in our gratitude for the past, in our letting go of the present, and in our openness to the future.

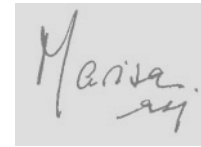
With much love,



Clare Pratt, rscj



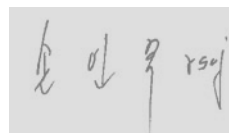
María Dolores Gorriz, rscj



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