



Cluny Sisters in Reunion Celebrate 200 Years

Sister Anne Marie Liston

Just a little over two years ago our Congregation held a meeting called the Council of the Congregation on an island called Reunion.

Located in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar, and southwest of Mauritius, Reunion was once known as the Island of Bourbon. It is approximately 970 square miles and has a population of 850,996. This island is considered to be the most prosperous of the Indian Ocean islands and is one of the overseas departments of France.

For us, Cluny Sisters, Reunion has a much more important role to play as we consider it to be the “first mission land of the Cluny Sisters.” In 1817, Blessed Anne-Marie Javouhey sent the first group of sister overseas to the Island of Bourbon. She had been asked by the administrator for the island, M. Desbassyns, to send sisters to look after the children on the island.

On the morning of June 28, 1817, after a voyage of five months and eighteen days on the ship, “Elephant” four Cluny sisters landed at St. Denis, in the north of Reunion. There they discovered that the Governor had decided that they would



Photos: Courtesy of the Province of Seychelles

Altar for the Bicentennial Mass

begin work in the southwest, so they had to re-board and finally reached their mission field in September of 1817.

They began with a primary school, and soon with the arrival of other sisters there were schools opening up all over the island. Today the Congregation has trusteeship of fifteen nursery and primary schools and one agricultural vocational school.

Their work continued and branched out into hospitals, home care, social services for the poorest of families, as well as parish work and catechesis.

Despite the lack of vocations the sisters continue working with the young people and the sick, conducting retreats and catechesis, and following our foundress' advice, “to be where there is good to be done.” They are accompanied by a growing number of lay Cluny Associates who collaborate and support them in their mission.

Like the mustard seed of the Gospel, the little island of the Indian Ocean has sent forth its fruits to all of us and to the Church beyond.

Congratulations, dear Sisters, you are an example for us all!