

Today we celebrate 90 years of the presence of the Franciscan sisters here on the Faroe Islands. From the beginning our sisters responded to a call and came from different nations to an unknown destination that was both poor and isolated. They were ready to face whatever difficulties lay ahead, serve the Faroese people in any way they could and help re-establish the Catholic Church.

***But who are these Franciscan sisters? What do you know about them?***

We are known as the Franciscan sisters on the Faroe Islands, but the official name of our institute is the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. The Institute of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary was founded by Blessed Mary of the Passion, born Hélène de Chappotin, a French noble woman of strong character and deep faith. The first community of sisters formed in Ootacamund, India, during difficult circumstances, and the Institute was officially recognized by the Catholic Church on the Feast of the Epiphany, January, 1877, becoming part of the Franciscan Order in 1882. The new institute grew rapidly despite few resources and many difficulties. When our foundress died in 1904, there were already 3,000 sisters present in 13 different countries. Today, 5,580 Franciscan Missionaries of Mary from 78 nationalities are present in 73 countries around the world.

As our foundress put it, “The world is our home”, and thus we are ready to go wherever we are sent.

We live in international and intercultural communities. In the Faroes today, we are five sisters from four different nationalities. Sisters from several other nationalities have also been part of our community over the years. All over the world, our sisters are involved in various sectors of the pastoral and social life of the Church: education, childcare, medicine, social work, media and communication, catechesis, whatever need manifests itself. On the Faroes, we have been mostly engaged in education, childcare, pastoral work and catechesis. Jesus revealed to our foundress that he would always love her more than she loved him. We too seek to grow in this great love of God for each one of us and to proclaim it through our lives wherever we are sent.

Many of our sisters live and work in difficult situations of war, poverty, disease and natural disasters in many of the countries you hear about in the daily news. A significant number of our sisters have endured kidnapping, imprisonment, torture and even death in the course of the history of our Institute, right up to our time, simply for living out their call to share the Gospel and serve their brothers and sisters. Seven sisters were beheaded during the Boxer Rising in China in 1900. They were declared saints by the

Catholic Church in 2000, along with 200 others who lost their lives at the same time. An Italian sister was also beatified, that is declared blessed, by the Catholic Church in 1954. Blessed Mary of the Passion was beatified in 2002. I was lucky enough to be in St. Peter's Square for that occasion. It was a moving experience to stand with hundreds of our sisters from all over the world and hear the Church publicly declare that our foundress was a holy woman of virtue.

***What gives us strength and motivation to live out this beautiful calling on a daily basis?***

Above all, it is the experience and conviction of God's love for each one of us, and the desire to share that with others. We find strength and unity in the vision of our foundress, made concrete in our Constitutions and our shared mission. We are nourished through our life of prayer as communities and individually, most especially in the Eucharist: the Mass and daily adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We strive to walk in the footsteps of Jesus in the same way that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Saint Francis of Assisi and Blessed Mary of the Passion did, in a spirit of courage, faith, joy and simplicity. We also find strength in our life lived as sisters in community, witnessing to the fact that we are all called to be sisters and brothers in Christ. Strengthened, we are ready to go wherever we are asked, eager to share the Good news with all whom we encounter. Please pray for us, that we remain faithful to our calling and that we always radiate Christ.

If you would like to learn more about us, you can visit: [fmm.org/](http://fmm.org/)

You are welcome to take the Mass booklet home with you as a souvenir of this great day. Thank you for your time and attention.