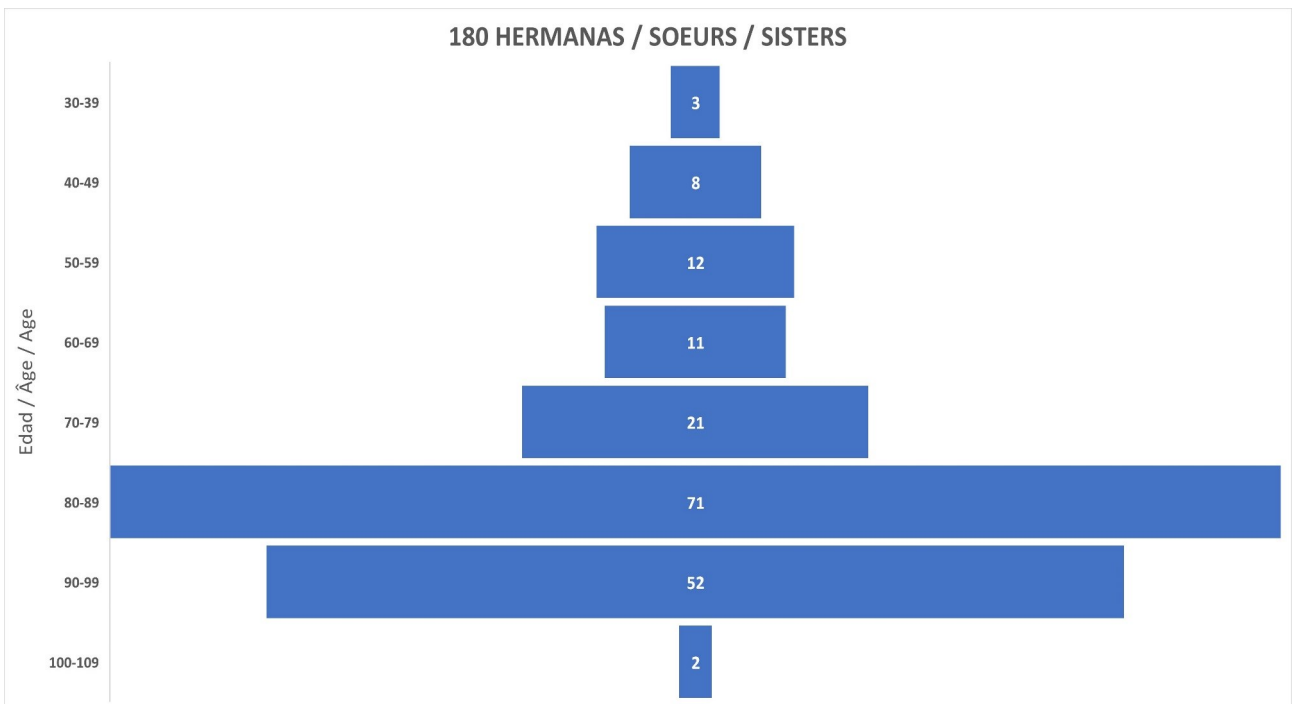


## PROVINCE OF EUROPE

The 55<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of our Congregation asked various structures to reflect on re-structuration. It was a call to transformation, on the recognition of our vulnerability. It is an invitation to " partner with others to birth a new way of being", making place for the new.

It is in this movement of solidarity that the two provinces of Spain and France are turning towards each other to give birth to the Province of Europe. Sr. Angela Anta and Sr. Véronique Margron, Provincial Superiors at the time, together with their councils, were the first interlocutors in these conversations which had already taken place but which now needed to be deepened in order to be able to take the necessary steps towards our unification. So a commission called "Theodore" (name of the first French sister who was sent to Spain) was set up to create a way of getting to know each other. Initially, this was based on short videos, in which a personal presentation of each sister was made, as well as a presentation of the mission in progress.

A few months later, the first meeting took place in Tours. We had a very fraternal time of sharing and reflection. Then it was time for the Chapter and the creation of the new Province.



Our new Province of Europe, established on December 29, 2023, has 180 sisters - including one temporary professed sister, spread in 24 communities: eight in Spain, thirteen in France, two in Belgium and one in Jerusalem.

We would like to highlight the presence of sisters from other Institutes among us who have recently joined our Congregation, through fusion, in the Province of France: *Petites Sœurs Dominicaines* (August 8, 2021); *Congrégation des Sœurs Missionnaires de Fichermont* (August 8, 2023); *Union in capite of Sœurs Dominicaines de Béthanie* (August 8, 2023).

With them, we discover other approaches to Dominican life which enrich and broaden our vision, so that together we can live the passion of proclaiming the Gospel and bearing witness to it. In Marseille and in Paris, sisters live the experience of inter-congregational communities where mutual aid and building of fraternity are modest, but very real testimonies to the Gospel.

As on the continent of Europe, cultural pluralism is very present in our Province. Within our group, it is fundamental to take into account the diversity and to bring out a common culture, while respecting diversity.

This pluralism is also marked by the diversity of our members: sisters from Belgium, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, France, India, Korea, Spain, Switzerland... ... It is at once a strength, a responsibility and a challenge.

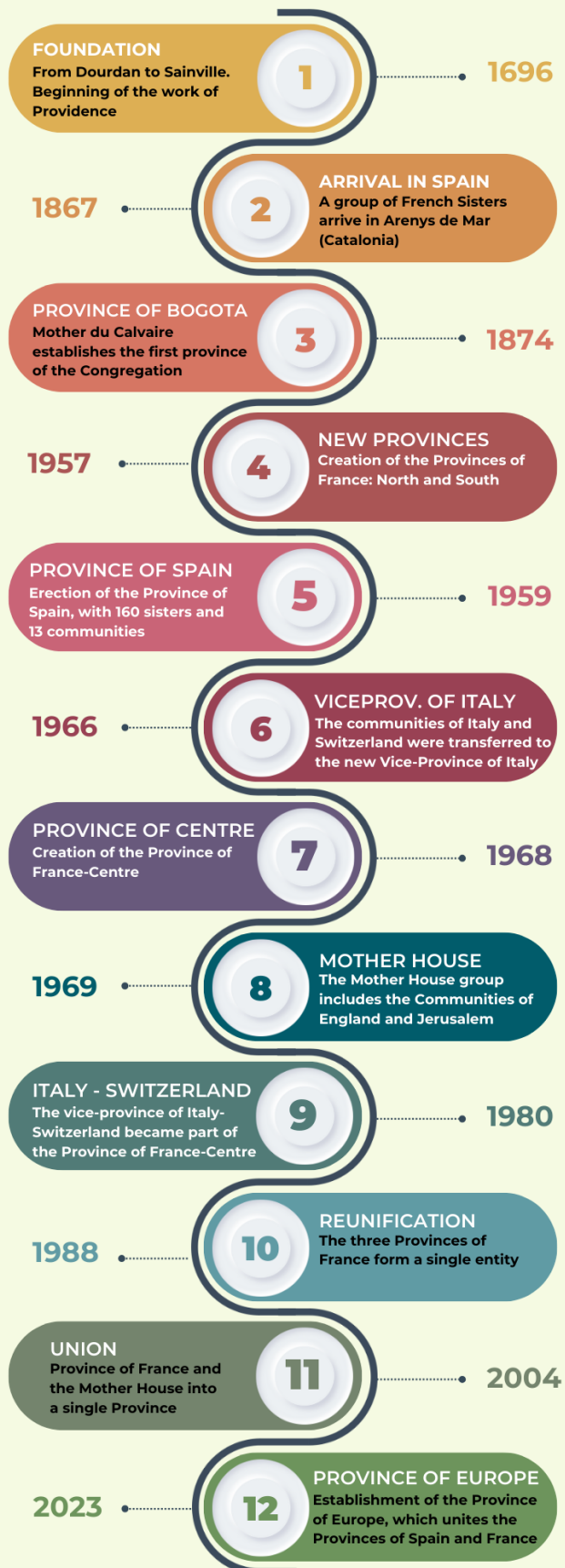
***It is our responsibility, sisters of Spain, France and Belgium, to promote a sense of Europe and a deep attachment to its values: peace, respect for intrinsic human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, pluralism, the rule of law and respect for human rights. All of this, sought by the founding fathers of our old Europe, including Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann, is not just for voting days, but marks the way we live our daily lives. Religious life and, more broadly, the Church are no longer a land apart, still less societies apart. This world is teaching us. The European heritage common to our countries is essential and calls us out at this wounded time in history. It is our common responsibility, wherever we are, as part of the congregation.***

**Sr. Véronique Margron  
Provincial Superior**

## THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY

Since the foundation of the Congregation in 1696, the sisters have spread in various regions of France over 171 years. Over the years, the group formed in Sainville has been able to adapt to the different realities of history to participate in the growth of the society of the time in the country, right up to the time of missionary expansion, when the Sisters were called elsewhere.

## PROVINCE OF EUROPE THROUGH ITS HISTORY



**1867- Arrival in Spain.** The first community, with Sister Théodore, arrived in Arenys de Mar, then a small village on the coast, in 1867, to take charge of a hospital-asylum. The good reputation of the first French sisters encouraged priests and lay people interested in pastoral and social work to seek their collaboration. At the same time, certain benefactor families wanted the sisters to take charge of their daughters' education. The first schools were born out of this desire and the need to give financial stability to social work.

During the first 35 years of the presence of the Congregation in Spain, nine houses were founded, seven charitable centers in the style of the time and two schools, all in Catalonia. Attempts to expand into other regions were unsuccessful because the bishops refused, as the large number of congregations present in their dioceses covered all their needs.

**1874 - First structure of the Congregation: Province of Bogotá.** On May 10, 1874, Mother du Calvaire established the first structure of the Congregation.

Little by little, along with the missionary expansion and growth in numbers, structures were established or transformed. They have always been at the service of better organization, more immediate contact with realities of mission, a more dynamic presence and growth in communion. They are also in harmony with the animation and needs of apostolic and community life. These criteria and the same spirit have determined the history of the structures in France.

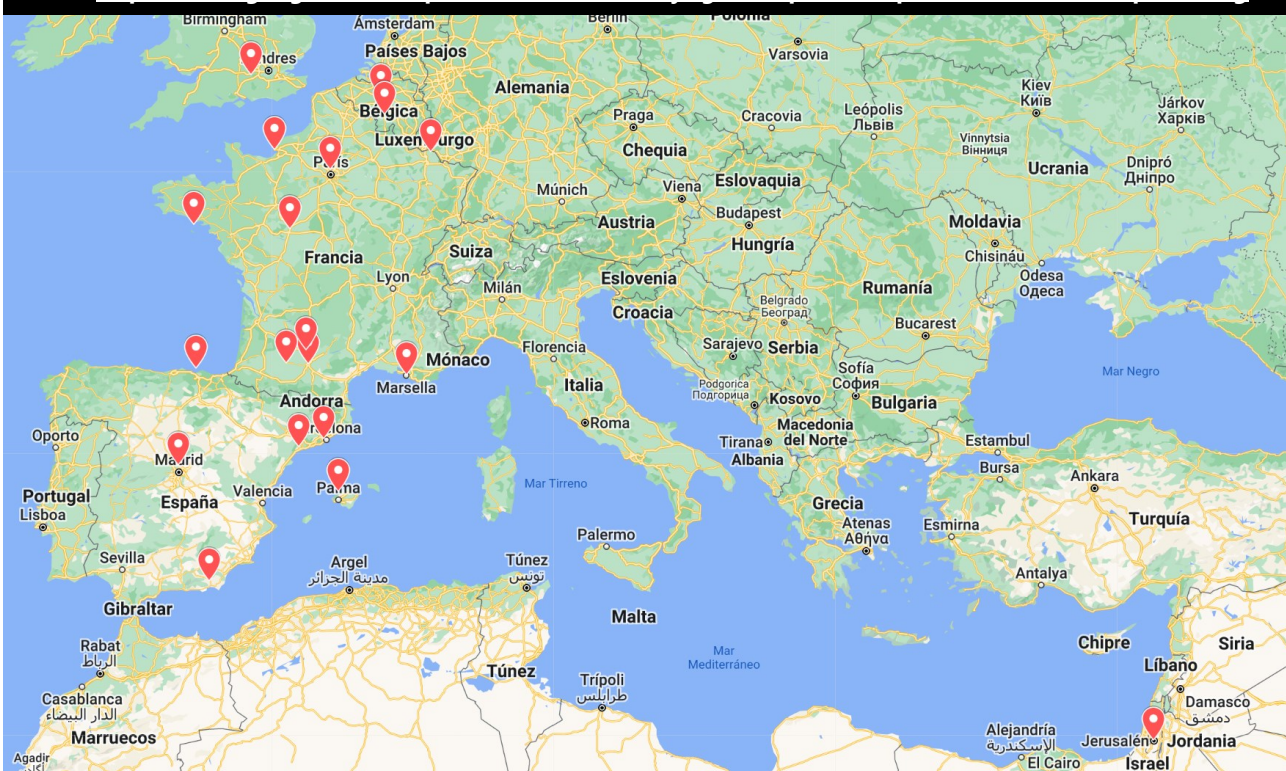
**In 1904**, an event in France changed the direction of the mission in Spain. The Combes law (July 7/1904), which prohibited religious from teaching, led many Sisters who were teachers to go to Spain, and, with them came the need to open new schools to carry out the mission.

In the years that followed, seven schools were opened, a single social work center and collaboration in two clinics for a few years. The need to establish a structure of its own began to be felt, centered on the house in Les Corts (Barcelona), which in fact played the role of provincial house, in relation to the other communities, and in relations with the Church and public administration. However, the Spanish Civil War, from 1936 to 1939, brought this project to an abrupt halt.

**1957** - Creation of two provinces as France - North and the France - South.

**1959** - Province of Spain. When the Province of Spain was created in 1959, it had 160 sisters in thirteen communities. Coinciding with the post-conciliar period, the mission was diversified with residences for young workers and students, insertion of small communities in villages and working-class neighborhoods, children's homes, communities in public hospitals, crèches and the presence in education, health care and social work of sisters with personal contracts. In all the communities, collaboration with parishes and work alongside lay people, characteristic of the province, were intensified.

Enlace: [https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1rjZig81E1-qmw3Oikqw52Y50KU52c\\_E&usp=sharing](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1rjZig81E1-qmw3Oikqw52Y50KU52c_E&usp=sharing)



**1966** - The houses in Italy and Switzerland were transferred to the new vice-province of Italy.

**June 28, 1967** - Circular from Mother Thérèse des Anges: decision to transfer the government of the Congregation to Rome.

**1968** - Creation of the Province of France Centre.

**1969** - The Mother House group includes the Communities of England and Jerusalem.

**1980** - The vice-province of Italy-Switzerland was attached to the Province of France-Centre.

**1988** - The 3 provinces of France form a single structure. The Mother House group remained an independent entity.

**2004** - Union of the Province of France and the Mother House into a single province "Province of France" with its Provincial House in Paris.

**2016** - The communities in Rome are directly dependent on the General Government.

**2023** - Creation of the *Theodore* Commission and organizing the first combined meeting of the two provinces at the Mother House, with the aim of circulating information and experiences.

### **December 2023 - Erection of the Province of Europe**

From December 27, 2023 to January 3, 2024, the Chapter Assembly was held, first, each of the former provinces of France and Spain separately, and then on December 29 in a single assembly presided over by Sister Maria Escayola, Superior General, the government of the new Province of Europe was appointed.



*Participants in the Chapter Assembly held in December 2024*

## **OUR MISSIONS TODAY**

Responding to the charism of both Dominic and Marie Poussepin, we are present:

- **In residences** such as St Pierre Quiberon, La Bretèche, Paris 106 rue de Vaugirard, Toulouse Rue Joly, House of Abraham in Jerusalem, communities of Rosellón, Barcelona and Madrid.



Saint Pierre Quiberon



Rosellón (Barcelona)



- **With students**, at the St Dominique residence and St Thomas d'Aquin hostel in Tours, as well as with youth groups and in the pastoral care of students in the dioceses. Residence Reina de la Pau of the Bellafila community in Barcelona. Some sisters teach at the university.



Residence Saint Dominique (Tours)



Bellafila (Barcelona)



Foyer Saint Thomas d'Aquin (Tours)

Colegio La Presentació (Reus)



- **In schools**, The Presentation School in Reus (Tarragona) and Santa Teresa in Pont d'Inca (Balearic Islands).
- **In the chaplaincy services** in hospitals, prisons and Funeral Homes.
- Others have a **professional activity** in various fields.
- With our **elderly sisters** in Montauban, Auch, La Bretèche, or visiting lonely people, or in shelter homes like the communities of Gracia and Lourdes in Barcelona.



Gracia (Barcelona)

- **With vulnerable and disabled people**, such as at the **IME des Douets** in Tours, or in Rettel. In Roquetas de Mar (Almeria), which takes in a small group of people without shelters, in Madrid with various voluntary projects, and in Bellafila with courses for elderly people suffering loneliness.
- **Within the diocese of Tours**: Ongoing formation. Diocesan services of liturgy and Sacred Art.
- **Sharing life in inter-congregational** houses, such as Les Accates and 310 in Paris - where different congregations live together, as well as single-parent families: a fine example of an inter-generational project.

Chaplaincy in the hospital - 106 (París)



In many of these missions, we work with lay people.

**La Grande Bretèche remains the Mother House** of the Congregation, with a place for the General Government, Congregation's archives, a Museo-graphic Space and an annex of the General Secretariat.

In addition to a community, Mother House also houses an EHPAD (*Establishment for the Accommodation of Dependent Elderly People*) with 25 rooms reserved for the Congregation, a residence for independent elderly people, a hostel for young students and the headquarters of the *Secours Catholique of the diocese* (Caritas). The EHPAD and the Residence for Seniors are managed by the Léopold Bellan Foundation, which owns 67 establishments, most of them in the Île-de-France region, and a gerontological hospital in Paris. Léopold Bellan Foundation is a not-for-profit institution, founded in 1884, committed to the values of solidarity and respect for others. It welcomes or supports people who apply to it, regardless of their origin, religious affiliation, or resources.

## AND THEN?

Still driven by our desire to preach the Good News and in partnership with some associations, several projects are foreseen in the light:

- In Toulouse, in the former student hostel on Joly Street, house will welcome women and families in precarious and emergency situations (domestic violence, etc.).
- In Lourdes, we chose a project run by a Tarbes-based social integration association, which will create a youth hostel and a home for seasonal workers. In this way, our house will remain open and welcoming, providing a service to people of low income.
- In Spain, we are going to start discussions, consultations, and studies to see what would be needed and possible.



***Together, we want to remain open to the future and the unknown. Above all, we want to remain alive and concerned about others. This is undoubtedly how we can modestly continue to be witnesses to the Gospel of God made man, the companion of each and every one of us.***

***Members of the provincial government, from left to right. Rosario Amelia Garcés del Castillo, Françoise Marie Béguin, Véronique Margron, Provincial Superior, Claudine Perquin and María Concepción García Fernández.***