

ON THE WAY TO THE
55° GENERAL CHAPTER 2019

Province of
Bogotá

June 2019

Brief Historical Review of the Province of Bogotá



Doing a historical review of the Province of Bogotá will take us to the beginnings of the Presentation in Colombia, and to say, to the New World. It is interesting to take a look at the past of our Province and to find the arrival of our **"first six"** Sisters from France, who **"arrived because they left"**, they had **"the audacity to go beyond borders"** to the unknown world at that time.

These brave daughters of Marie Poussepin, who were not afraid of the unknown, who did not know Spanish, who perhaps had not ridden on a horse, in short, they did not know this new culture. They came to our land, inspired by the love of Jesus Christ and with the desire to announce his Kingdom through the service of Charity to our brothers and sisters.

Their names are engraved on a plaque of honour that is in the conference room of the Cas Central in Bogotá. It is good for us to remember them: **Sister Pauline, Superior, Sister Marie Françoise, Sister Saint Paul, Sister Emerence, Sister Augustin Marie and Sister Gaëtan.**

These six sisters of ours, renewed their vows in the chapel of the Mother House. Then, Mother du Calvaire, Superior General and Mother Theophane, second assistant, accompanied them to the port of Saint Nazaire, where they left France, in the boat "Louisiane". They left to Colombia on May 7, 1873 crossing the ocean to bring to America the Charism of Marie Poussepin which germinated hundred percent on Colombian soil. On May 26, they arrived in Sabanilla, where they were received by the Customs

Administrator, Mr. Joaquín María Palacio, who took them to the railroad. With particular deference, they received the sisters as honorary travelers to take them to Barranquilla, a Colombian port, from where they would embark on the ship "Colombia" to continue the trip through the Magdalena River to Honda. From this city to Facatativa on the back of a mule and then by car to reach Bogota, on the afternoon of June 21, 1873.

Our first six Sisters arrived directly at Saint John of God Hospital on June 21, 1873. Here, they sowed the first seeds of the Kingdom, which fell on good soil giving abundant harvest from the beginning with the emergence of the first vocations, which allowed the growth of the missionary presence of the Presentation in American soil.

"The piety of the first ones attracted others," wrote Marie Poussepin in the Rule of Sainville. Words that were perfectly fulfilled in Colombia, where the novitiate was opened soon to receive the young women who wished to continue the work that the sisters were doing with great dedication.

Time of Grace for the Presentation in Colombia:

Establishment of the Province of Bogota and creation of the Novitiate

The mission in Colombia, according to the reports given by the Archbishop of Bogota and by the administrators of the Saint John of God Hospital and the Orphanage, had given excellent results. Several young people requested to join the Community. Mère Pauline, full of faith and audacity, had received seven young women, as postulants, according to one of the clauses of the contract between the Mother House and the General Board of Trustees, which says as follows: "The Sisters may receive young women from this country who have aptitude for works of charity and religious vocation, in order to initiate them in the service at the Hospital and to give them the habit of our Institute, according to our Rules."

On May 30, 1874, the Council of the Congregation presided by His Excellency Monsignor Truchaud, Archbishop of Tours, made decisions regarding the residence of our sisters in foreign missions, and decided to appoint one of the Superiors of Bogota as Provincial. It was made in order to establish a central authority under the dependency of the Mother House, in Saint Symphorien, Tours."

This is how the Province of Bogota was born on May 30 of 1874, appointing Mother Pauline as the first Provincial Superior, from 1875 to 1882.

Mother Pauline loved her religious family and was a faithful guardian of its spirit: she knew how to transmit it to the Sisters and to keep very close ties of union with the Mother House. She awakened in the Sisters confidence in the Superior General, as the first depository of authority in the Congregation. Our first

Provincial guided the mission as a response to the needs of the time in the country. A religious with a strong character like Mother Pauline and with such a profound spiritual profile, was the Provincial that was needed to sow the seed in this soil that the Divine Providence had prepared to welcome the Daughters of Marie Poussepin.

During her period, the following foundations were made: **1873** Saint John of God Hospital in Bogota. **1874** Orphanage or Sheltering House in Bogota. **1875** Novitiate with its annexes: Free School, Visit of patients at home, external workshops, Nursing room, Centro School. **1876** Military Hospital Bogota, Hospital of Barranquilla with its annexes: Free School, Orphanage, School. **1876** School in Medellin with its annexes: Free School, Orphanage, Nursing Room and visits to the poor. **1880** The "Aserrío" Asylum in Bogota for the mentally ill and also for the indigent, men and women. **1881** Sogamoso Hospital with its annexes: Free School, Orphanage and School. **1882** Neiva Hospital with its annexes: Free School, Orphanage and School.

During these years, several groups of French Sisters were sent to Colombia on mission. They were protagonists of heroic stories along with the new vocations that arose in our country.

The admirable missionary zeal of Mother Pauline and the other five first Sisters who arrived in Colombia continued admirably in the Province. Their selflessness and generous dedication to the service of charity in favor of the sick, children and youth and the neediest, made the Charism of Marie Poussepin to take foot in our homeland. The multiple foundations throughout this fertile land were witnesses of this.



Marie Poussepin *"built a house where our first sisters were able to live the Gospel with her"* -IP-. Mother Marie Gertrude, Second Provincial Superior, was very clear about this important fact in view of the life and mission of our sisters.

The large number of novices and professions every six months made the Sisters understand the need of building a large and solid house. Mother Marie Gertrude put all her effort into buying land, asking for the intercession of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Congregation and particularly of the mission in Colombia. The search was long and difficult, but the "God's time" arrived. Mr. Arturo Melo, needed to sell land near the Sabana Station and offered it to the Sisters at a very low price. This was on February 21, 1894.

There were two other owners who, knowing the intention of the Sisters, offered their lots that were in the same area and sold them at a reasonable price. In this way, when the public deed was obtained, we proceeded to build what would be called the Novitiate, the Chapel and the College. The blessing of the ground and the first stone was laid on July 26, 1894, at the feast of St Ann.

This was the beginning of our current, beloved and beautiful **Casa Central, which is the *house of all*.**

This is an opportunity to thank, once again, France and our French Sisters, for their generous dedication to the mission in Colombia.

The tree grew... Because of the great development of the Province of Bogota, a large number of establishments and Sisters to work in them, there was a need to create a new Province. The General Council, in accordance with the instructions of the Holy See, decided to create the Province of Medellin in 1930.

The sowing and harvest of the Presentation in Colombia continues to flourish. In 1954, Mere Therese Augusta, Superior General, in her circular on May 9, 1954, announced the creation of the Province of Bucaramanga, formed by two States of Santander (north and south), the State of Magdalena and the Republic of Venezuela. Also, in 1954, he announced the creation of the Province of Manizales formed by the States of Huila, Tolima, Caldas and Valle.

The Province of Bogota is constituted with the State of Cundinamarca, with its capital Bogota, Boyacá and Casanare. Later, the missionary expansion brought the Province of Bogota to the States of Putumayo, Caquetá, Vichada and Vaupes. In 1960, the Province of Bogota extended its horizon to South America with two foundations in Chile. Today, Vice Province of Aconcagua, where the Charism of Marie Poussepin came to sow the seeds of the Gospel in the tender hearts of children. Soon, the Sisters were asked to be present in other dioceses in the same country and this became the Region of Chile.

In 1979, the missionary zeal led the Province to unfold its wings again in the land of the "Morenita de America" who welcomed the daughters of Marie Poussepin in Mexico. This missionary presence was blessed with native vocations that allowed a considerable growth to be able to become the Viceprovince of Guadalupe in 1988, which is the Province of Guadalupe today.

Once again, after reflecting and searching for ten years for a better service to the Sisters and mission, the Province of Santa Fe de Bogota was created. On May 24, 1980, the new Province was erected canonically. In 1994 Nicaragua received the Dominican Sisters of the Presentation to carry out the mission in the educational field, catechesis at the parish and diocesan levels.

In 1997, to respond to the of the Bishops from Cuba, the Sisters arrived in the Island where they carried out a discreet, effective and worthy pastoral work with the favorites of the Lord, in two communities.

At present, the Province of Bogota has in total:

236 Sisters:

228 perpetual vows

8 temporary vows

31 Communities:

26 in Colombia,

3 in Nicaragua

2 in Cuba

In initial formation: two postulants and two novices.



Where are we?



A community vocation for promotion and youth ministry and it welcomes and accompanies young people, aspirants and missionaries.

One house of Initial Formation: the Postulancy.

Educational mission in 7 private schools, in 6 public schools: 3 in Colombia and 3 in Nicaragua. CONACED (National Conference of Catholic Education), Mary of Magdala Pastoral Biblical Center, participation in the Episcopal Conference, in multipurpose works: social promotion, parish ministry, diocese, mission in the peripheries and Justice and Peace.



Mission in health care: The Palermo Clinic, Lourdes Nursing Home, a Nursing Home in Simijaca - Cundinamarca, Alternative Medicine and a House for Elderly Sisters in Saint Joseph of Nogales - Chía.

Clínica Palermo



We are present in Colombia, Cuba and Nicaragua and we focus on the geographical areas of the periphery, which are our priority:

In Cuba our presence is characterized by an urgent evangelization done from person to person or



in small communities. It is like the first announcement of Jesus Christ, sowing hope to recover the meaning of life in a country where freedom has been restricted due to the political system.

Nicaragua is a Central American country that has



suffered violence because of the war and it is going through a complex political, social and economic situation now. Even in the midst of difficulties, its people endure patiently and, those who adhere to the Church are committed lay people who encourage the birth to new communities. At the moment, there are six native vocations.

En el Putumayo we are present in Puerto Leguizamo and Mocoa, the Amazon region of Colombia. This region is the most important area in the world and now it is experiencing a transcendent event, at Church level. It is because of the preparation of the Synod of the Amazon that will take place from October 6 to 27, 2019 with the theme: "Amazon: new paths for the Church and for an integral

ecology". It is convened by Pope Francis and led by the REPAM (Catholic Church Network promoting rights and dignity for people living in the Amazon).

It is a project of the nine churches of the Amazon that has the support of the Latin American Episcopal Conference.

Community in Puerto Leguizamo,



It is part of the missionary team of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Leguizamo – Solano, and follows the evangelization objective proposed in the Pastoral Plan of the Vicariate 2017-2020. It is:

To accompany and encourage processes of identification with the person of Jesus, the Good Samaritan, according to the missionary options (indigenous, rural, Afro-descendant and urban) and the Project of the Church. It is in order to have a formation that strengthens our being as disciples and missionaries who gradually commit themselves to develop a society that lives the values of the Gospel, respecting cultural and environmental diversity.

The Charism of Marie Poussepin is present in this part of the Church, in the Colombian Amazon, through pastoral ministry, Catechesis in the Vicariate, accompaniment of children and families in the soup kitchen support to the parishes and all that charity can inspire us.

The Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Leguizamo - Solano is recent with particular characteristics. At national level, it includes part of the States of Putumayo (Puerto Leguizamo), Caquetá (Solano) and Amazon (Puerto Alegria). It is located in a tri-border territory, since it is the center of commercial, social, cultural and political relations between Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.



This reality makes the style of mission very special: rivers are not only limits and means of transportation, but also they are a place for evangelization and unity: **"Rivers do not separate us, they unite us"**.

The multiculturalism of the vicariate with the unique richness of the Amazon gives a different face to the Church, for that reason, it is a meeting place where borders do not exist for evangelization.

Community in Mocoa

It is part of the Diocese of Mocoa Sibundoy since 1992. The missionary objective from the beginning has been the service of evangelization through family promotion (sewing and crafts workshop), especially women who are head of the family. It has been done at the parish and Diocesan level.



After the torrential avalanche of March 31, 2017, which left Mocoa with numerous deaths, victims, and families in extreme poverty, the Sisters of the Community have supported and accompanied the most affected population through the solidarity contribution of the Congregation and donations received throughout these two years, in which they were able to carry out financial projects to offer opportunities for people.

71 families have been benefited from productive projects that gave them the possibility of getting a job or starting small family businesses.

Community John Paul I,



It was founded in 1983, and carries out its mission in two fields, in Bosa -Bogota- and in Trujillo, Valle del Cauca.

The Sisters do their best to accompany these communities, to build fraternity and to offer service of charity.

They participate in the group GEMPAZ, (Ecumenical Women Builders of Peace); also in MEP (Ecumenical table for Peace); and in CEV (Special Commission for Peace)

as a space of reflection and enrichment from the reality they live.

Mission in Trujillo –Valle del Cauca



This mission has four areas to work:

1. Formation in human rights, the Word and Christian values
2. Socio-cultural: recovering the Memory as a bridge of reconciliation
3. Legal: supporting and accompanying families in public hearings to demand justice
4. Organization: accompaniment of groups with productive projects, administration and training.

School reinforcement in John Paul I. With the support of an educator, in the Home 'El Pueblo', groups of girls and boys come to receive tutoring on their homework and reserchings. They have cultural activities, celebrations, rituals and meetings with mothers. As a community, the Sisters offer accompaniment, follow up and give snacks to the little ones.



News and Challenges

- The Provincial Chapter of December 2018 agreed with an option that guides and energizes the life of the Province in 2019:

"Sent to go beyond borders" we chose to revitalize our personal and community life according to the Gospel and our Charism, to continue the process of our missionary going forth to strengthen the integration and articulation of the missionary and geographic areas."

We prioritize:

- To create welcoming and inviting atmosphere in community.
- To strengthen vocation promotion.
- Accompaniment and effective support to the sisters sent to Cuba, Nicaragua and Amazon.
- To specify some steps for the integration and articulation of the missionary and geographic areas.
- To continue giving accompaniment in all stages of life (Formation Plan).
- To care for our "Common Home". Mutual responsibility in the environmental project of the Province.

Rereading experiences and newness must become together to teach us how to continue and how to awaken the spark of the social concern, today, here and now. The journey is enlightened by the texts chosen for the General Chapter:

"This is the way, follow it" (Isaiah 30: 21) and "My grace is enough for you" (2 Cor 12: 9).

- Faithful to the educational Charism of our Mother Foundress, the **Educational Project** has been elaborated to encourage the humanization of our educational mission having as criteria the Gospel, the Marie Poussepin pedagogy and the reality, in order to accompany children and youth in their search for Christian and Catholic identity, which prepares them to respond to the current challenges within their family, society and the Church.
- The **openness to work together** with the different schools we have has strengthened the administrative management and the economic result of the whole Province. Within this joint work, it is necessary to highlight the creation of a common fund for schools, which has increased the contribution for physical plant to an annual participation of 15% of the income of each one of the institutions for the reinforcement of the structures and maintenance. The implementation of joint purchases has led to significant savings of resources, benefiting all institutions.



- **The centralized accounts and investments** and the management of the monthly purchase plan to transfer resources, has had a more austere management of resources, which has allowed that, in addition to the contribution to the common fund, the reserves of each institution have increased.
- **Integral wellbeing program for older sisters:**



This program was created in 2017 to provide care for our elderly sisters. The focus is on strengthening their autonomy, improving – maintaining the quality of life, fostering interpersonal relationship, developing skills and abilities, and to promote the continuity or reformulation of the project of life. This program is led by a Gerontologist and an interdisciplinary team which includes: a psychologist, a physiotherapist and a nurse.



- With the Laity, we advance with small communities or humble presences of lay Dominicans in Colombia and Cuba who follow Jesus, from their situations and commitments in the midst of a society that has learned how to earn a living, but not how to live a life in abundance. In 2018, the Dominican Laity of the Presentation Colombia was formed, made up of one layman and one sister from each Province.



This way, the process of greater integration begins. The laity becomes a renewing force for our Consecrated Life.

- With the alumni, we seek to promote, guide, and accompany the organization of the associations of alumni of each Province. Through its connection and integration to different projects and activities, we ensure the continuity of Marie Poussepin Charism with the spark of social concern. In order to strengthen the process, a team of sisters was formed.



"Sent to go beyond borders to revitalize life and mission"

We continue walking holding the hand of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Presentation