



# News

## Visit to England - September 2023

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Sr. Monica Joseph RJM, Superior General, accompanied by Sr. M<sup>a</sup> Carmen Muñoz RJM, General Councilor, liaison with the Delegation of England/Lebanon/Syria, made the canonical visit to the Delegation at two different times: Syria and Lebanon August 12 to 27, 2022 and England from the end of August to September 10, 2023.

**England.** We are situated in the current reality of the country.



The population of England at the end of 2022 was approximately 56,000,000.

The breakdown of ethnicity is as follows: 81.7% are white, 9.3% are Asian, 4% are black (African/Caribbean), 2.9% are mixed race and 2.1% are "other".

The religious background has changed in the last 12 years: 46.2% are Christians (it was 59.3% in 2011), 37.2% have no religion, 6.5% are Muslims (an increase compared to 4.9% in 2011), 1.7% are Hindus, 0.9% are Sikhs and 0.5% are Muslims. % are Buddhists; 0.5% are Jews; 0.6% are "Others". This means that Christianity is now a minority faith in England.

The United Kingdom voted in a referendum in 2016 to leave the European Union, Brexit. The actual departure was December 31, 2020. The arguments for and against the decision still continue.

There has been a marked economic recession in recent years, aggravated by the COVID pandemic, there are many in the country who have a real need for financial support for food, heating and other basic needs. This has led to a growth in the number of food banks and the way the Government has had to help families in difficulty.

**JM's sisters** arrived in England in 1860.

England has had several reconfigurations within the organization of the Congregation.

Lebanon and Syria became part of the former Province of England in 1967 and 1983 respectively.

In November 2005, the Province of Europe was formed by the union of the Provinces of France, England and the Vice-Province of Italy.

On September 4, 2020, the Province of Europe was divided into two Delegations: England/Lebanon/Syria and France/Germany/Italy, this being the current reality.

The members of the Government of the Delegation of England/Lebanon/Syria are:

Superior of the Delegation: Sr. Helen Mary Haigh  
Councillors: Sr. Joan Hunter  
Sr. Annie Demerjian

There are 20 sisters who live in England forming two communities: Felixstowe and Thornton.



**The visit to England** has been an experience of fraternal encounter and joy. We spent some beautiful days with each community and we shared life, prayer and mission.

Sr. Monica interviewed each sister.

We had two meetings with each community. The theme was “I chose you to go out and bear fruit.” (JM preferences).

The tree of life was the logo that accompanied us throughout the days.

Another important moment was the time dedicated to sharing in the Assembly with which we concluded these days.



We had one very pleasant meeting with the **group of AFJM.**





## The mission of our sisters

In England, religious women are actively engaged in various apostolic activities. Age is not a handicap for apostolic vitality.

**In Felixstowe** they frequently organize youth retreats involving groups of girls from St. Claudine's School in Willesden. The community continues to work closely with this school.

This year they hosted a retreat for 60 students from the school, offering them the opportunity to take time out of the city to join the sisters and add an additional spiritual dimension to their education. The theme was "Taking care of our common home."



Pastoral care through retreats continues to be a blessing for the Community and is a help to continue promoting the charismā of St. Claudine.

The Ecumenical Youth Beta Group has continued to meet every two weeks and new members have joined throughout the year.

At the St Joseph's Centre they offer days of reflection and prayer.

Different training activities are offered in our house for people from the town who meet regularly: art classes, crafts, music. The Sisters of the community are involved in all of this according to their possibilities.

We have a Nursery in the House that began operating in January 2022. It is very well organised and equipped. It welcomes about 20 children. It provides a good service to the local families and also gives life to the sisters.





**In Thornton**, we have a JM school that teaches different educational levels. It has a boarding school for students from different parts of the world. The three sisters of the community collaborate in the mission of the school, their presence is highly valued by the teachers. Education in faith is vitally important. The Trustees and Governors are very committed to the school and meet regularly to discuss aspects of the life of the School.

England has offered quality education since 1860.



Sister Monica  
met with  
school  
staff



**In London**, we visited our old school Saint Claudine's Catholic School for Girls in Willesden. Claudine's values are kept alive even though we no longer manage or own the institution. Great care is taken of the admission of the teaching staff. The Sisters invite staff and students to participate in international events organized by the Congregation. Sisters Helen Mary and Joan Hunter along with Mrs. Carol Charles are members of the Governing Body.



In September 2021, the school changed its name from Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College to Saint Claudine's Catholic School for Girls.

**In the international Shared Mission Meeting that we held in Mexico** in the month of July 2023, a group of religious and lay people from England, Lebanon and Syria participated. It was a good experience for all of them.

**London, house in KENSAL RISE.**

No community currently lives in this house, but it continues to be used for the mission in London as well as for travel accommodation needs.

Due to major flooding on the Kensal Rise property, the house has been completely restructured and updated.

**We have left the home and community of Ipswich.** This property is the founding house of the Congregation in England, our presence there dates back to 1860. However, given the advanced age of the Sisters, it was no longer possible to maintain a community there. In October 2022 the property was sold to the Community of L'Arche.

**Middle East Mission.** The sisters of England share, accompany and help the Middle East mission in all areas. Lebanon and Syria are within the heart of every sister. There are many Sisters who have given part of their lives in these countries.

The older sisters accompany us with their prayer. They are interested in the life and mission of the Congregation.

*"I chose you to go and bear fruit... and abundant fruit."*

*We ask Saint Claudine to accompany you, so that together with the Companions in Mission, you may give much fruit and live as one apostolic body JM.*

*Through the intercession of Mary our Mother, Saint Claudine and Blessed Dina, we ask for God's blessings on the Delegation, on each of the religious, the communities, the apostolic mission, the staff, the students and families.*

**Praised for ever be Jesus and Mary!**