

Dear Mission Partners,

November 10, Founder's Day, is a very special day for Sisters of IHM! On this day the sisters celebrate the life and legacy of Fr. Louis Florent Gillet, CSSR. As a young Redemptorist priest from Belgium, he traveled to Baltimore, then was assigned to do missionary work in a parish in Monroe Michigan in 1843. He wanted to begin a school for his parish.

He was unable to find a teaching community of sisters anywhere so he said, *"If I can't find some sisters, I will make some!"*



On a visit to Baltimore and his Redemptorist Community, Fr. Gillet said Mass for the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Two of these sisters, Theresa Maxis, and Charlotte Schaaf, were eager to collaborate with Fr. Gillet and they traveled to Monroe with the dream to begin the school. Fr. Gillet had been in contact previously with Therese Renault in Gross Pointe, MI, who would join them!

On November 10, 1845, they met with Fr. Gillet after morning Mass. They established a new religious community which became the Sisters, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Fr. Gillet gave them a rule based on the Redemptorist rule and a simple habit. The two sisters professed vows as Mother Theresa Maxis, Sister Ann Schaaf, and Therese Renault became a novice, named Sister M. Celestine. Two months later, they opened a school for 44 girls in two log cabins there on the Raisin River.

In 1847 Fr. Gillet was recalled to Baltimore and the Redemptorists left Monroe in 1855. Eventually, Fr. Gillet returned to Europe. For many years he was lost to the IHM's. Through letters, he was reunited when he was found in a monastery in Savoy, known as Pere Celestine.



In 1858, the IHM sisters, at the invitation of the Redemptorist Bishop, now St. John Neumann of Philadelphia, traveled east and established a mission in his diocese.

The IHM community has grown since 1845. Seventy years later plans for Immaculata College were in the works, thanks to the genius of Mother Camilla and her successors. Today about 600 sisters serve in over 40 missions (parishes, schools, programs, etc.) in PA and IHMs also minister in Florida, Georgia, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Virginia as well as in Peru, South America.

Father Gillet died in 1892 and he is buried at the original IHM foundation in Monroe, Michigan. Mother Teresa also died in 1892 and she is buried in the IHM cemetery by Camilla Hall.

It is a blessing for us to consider the lives of our ancestors in the faith. They have many lessons for us, such as dedication to the mission, and trust in Divine Providence. May the courage of Fr. Gillet and the creative hope of Mother Theresa Maxis inspire you as the Immaculata community continues to live the IU mission!

Happy IHM Founders' Day everyone!

Sincerely, in the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

Sister Antoine Therese, IHM