



ADDRESS BY THE PROVINCIAL SUPEROR AT THE INAUGURATION OF OUR NEW PROVINCE OF JUNE 13, 2026.

Dear Sisters,

First and foremost, we give thanks to **God** for his faithfulness and love, which have accompanied us at every stage of our journey, and have sustained our former provinces (DRC/CH and UGK) throughout this process of unification. Our two provinces are now one province, the Province of Africa, and our dream has become a reality! It is with deep gratitude that we celebrate this decisive milestone in our history and we bless the Lord for the wonders he has wrought among us.

It is in this spirit of thanksgiving that we also express our profound gratitude to Reverend Monsignor DR. Richard Kayondo, the Vicar General of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lugazi for kindly presiding over this Eucharistic celebration despite the many responsibilities and demands of his ministry. Your presence Monsignor DR. Richard Kayondo, among us today honours us deeply and bears witness to your closeness, your support and your communion with our Province and the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart here in Uganda. We sincerely thank you for this sign of love and goodwill, which encourages and strengthens us in our mission.

It is no coincidence that we are celebrating today the official birth of our new Province on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We wished to place this important milestone in our history under the sign of the Heart of Christ, the source of our charism, our spirituality and our mission.

As four countries come together to form a single Province, we recognise that it is the very love of Christ that brings us together and unites us beyond our languages, cultures, and histories. The Heart of Jesus invites us to open our hearts, to embrace our differences as a source of richness, and to grow in ever deeper communion.

In a world marked by divisions, violence and so many wounds, the Sacred Heart continues to call us to be witnesses to his love as artisans of reconciliation, justice and hope. By choosing this feast day to mark the birth of our Province, we wish to entrust its future to the Heart of Jesus and ask him to make of us, in accordance

with the vision of Saint Madeleine-Sophie, true ‘experts of love’ at the service of the Church, of Africa and of the world. To be experts in love is to choose charity over rivalry, understanding over criticism, and communion over division every day. It is to learn to look at others through the eyes of Christ and to allow ourselves to be transformed from within, so that our communities may become places of peace, welcome, joy and hope.

Since the General Chapter of 2016, the entire Society of the Sacred Heart has been engaged in a process of reunification, driven by a desire for deeper communion, strengthened collaboration and creative fidelity to our mission. Formerly organized into two Provinces UGK and DRC Chad encompassing four countries: Uganda, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad, we have embarked together on a demanding journey, yet one that is deeply filled with hope and new life.

Since boarding the « Rebecca »(the first ship that was taken by our very first missionary from France to America which we chose as symbol of our own journey), we have experienced a true journey of transformation.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the **two General Councils** that have accompanied us at various stages of this journey.

Barbara Dawson and her General Council stood by our side as we set sail. They helped us leave the shore of the familiar, with its certainties, habits and familiar landmarks, to answer the call for change. Through their trust, their vision and their encouragement, they invited us to weigh anchor and set sail, accepting with faith and hope to venture towards a still unknown horizon. They supported us in the first steps of this adventure, when uncertainty could give rise to hesitation and fear.

Claire Castaing and her General Council are with us today, right at the heart of this journey. They encourage us not merely to stay afloat, but to row boldly towards the future. They invite us to embrace the unknown not as a threat, but as a space for creativity, innovation and fruitfulness. Thanks to their support and trust, we are learning to read the new winds, to adjust our sails, and to invent new ways of being and of living out our mission together. Their constant call for creativity and inventiveness helps us to move forward with courage, convinced that the Spirit continues to go before us on the journey.

Thus, from one General Council to the next, we have been accompanied throughout the journey: some helped us leave the harbour and dare to set sail, while others are now encouraging us to continue the journey with boldness and

confidence. All have contributed, each in their own way, to making this ship a place of communion, hope and the building of our new Province.

Special thanks go to the former Provincials, **Anamaria Nankusu, Blandine Basosa and Redempta Kulundu, as well as their Councils**, for their leadership, their courage, their attentive support, their constant concern for unity and their generous commitment to the service of this mission. With faith, determination and perseverance, they have led this process in a spirit of dialogue, listening and trust, laying the solid foundations of our new Province and fostering a genuine spirit of communion that looks to the future.

I would like to extend a special thank you to the **Transition Commission**, which has supported us with seriousness, patience and dedication throughout this process of unification. Through your availability, your willingness to listen, your skill in mediation and your discreet yet effective commitment, you have enabled the Province to move forward with confidence towards this new stage. Your contribution remains a precious testimony to service, communion and hope.

We also express our gratitude to those who have offered their expertise and support in the service of this shared endeavour: our facilitator, **Sister Piluca Benevente** (Missionary Sisters of our Lady of Africa), for her attentive guidance and assistance in discernment; Br Jonas and his team, for their meticulous work in reviewing the finances; and our interpreter, **Peter Sabiti**, for his availability and faithful support in communication. Through their generosity and spirit of service, each has contributed to our shared success.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank **each member** of our two former provinces for your commitment, your participation and your contribution to this new stage in our history. Through prayer, dialogue, openness to change, patience and a spirit of collaboration, each of you has made your own contribution to the whole. This unification is the result of a shared journey, driven by a common desire to grow together in mission and fraternity.

Today, the journey continues. The future and vitality of this new province now lies in the hands of each of its members. We are called to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the mission entrusted to us: to build unity, to care for one another in sisterly charity, to share together the joys and challenges of our apostolic life, and to bring to life the charism of Madeleine-Sophie Barat wherever we are sent.

This mission finds a particular echo in Jesus' prayer to the Father: "***May they all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me***" (Jn 17:21). These

words reveal to us that unity is not merely a human ideal nor a simple organizational necessity; it is an evangelical call and a gift from God to be welcomed and built up each day.

Being united does not mean becoming alike in every way, nor does it mean erasing our differences. The unity to which Christ calls us has its source in the very communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: a communion that respects differences whilst bringing them together in the same love and the same mission. We are thus invited to make our diversity a source of richness, to welcome our differences as a gift and to place them at the service of the common good. (§181).

As we become a single province uniting four countries, we are called to open our hearts, broaden our horizons and deepen our missionary commitment even further. Geographical borders must no longer be limits to our apostolic generosity. Wherever the mission calls us, we are invited to go with confidence, inner freedom and a spirit of service. Crossing borders, leaving our comfort zones, and making ourselves available where needs are greatest are now part of our shared responsibility.

As Saint Paul reminds us: *‘There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3:28)*. This Word takes on particular significance today for our new province. Beyond our languages, our cultures, our histories and our countries, we are called to become one body in Christ, united in the same mission and the same love.

Building this unity, however, requires an inner journey: learning to listen before judging, welcoming others with trust, recognising the value of each person, accepting human frailties, and growing together in patience and mercy.

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In a world often marked by divisions, individualism and indifference, we are called to be credible witnesses to communion. Our fraternal life must become a

living proclamation of the Gospel. The more we grow in fraternity and sisterliness, collaboration and mutual love, the more we will make visible at the heart of the world the very prayer of Jesus: ‘May they all be one’.

In this new stage of our history, may generosity and openness characterize us deeply. May each of us keep an open heart, ready to serve, ready to set out, ready to welcome the new calls of mission. Our missionary openness will be a living sign of our trust in God and of our desire to help the Kingdom grow wherever we are sent.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide this new province so that it may be a living sign of unity in diversity, of sisterly communion and love in the service of the Church and the world.

With gratitude and fraternal fellowship.

Sr Marie-Jeanne ELONGA rscj