



Society of
the Sacred Heart
of Jesus

OPENING CONFERENCE
PROBATION 2025-2026

September 3, 2025

Claire Castaing
Superior General



Everyday place
gently in my heart
Your Son Jesus

Dear Sisters,
Dear Carmen, Chihiro, Elizabeth, Hilda, Jaqueline, Jeniffer, Mukta,
Dear Gera and Quena,

Today we joyfully celebrate the opening of your probation, and our joy is all the greater because this is “a first” for us too, and because the coming months will give us the opportunity to meet and get to know each other better.



Your sisters on the General Council, Ananda Amritmahal, Noellina Namusisi, Paqui Rodriguez, Sheila Smith and myself, welcome each of you to this blessed time of immediate preparation for your final commitment.

You bring with you the fire, the sounds, the joys, the cries, the voices of the earth, of a Creation that groans from the suffering inflicted on our sisters and brothers by conflicts, wars, poverty or famine, the exploitation of natural resources, but also the gestures of peace, the acts of education and solidarity, the hope of "a new heaven and a new earth"¹.

You bring with you the provinces and contexts in which you have matured in your vocation: India, Japan, Peru, Democratic Republic of Congo-Chad, Uganda-Kenya, and the experience of your journeys towards the New Provinces.

You bring with you your unique and sacred stories, your gifts and limitations, the love and support of your provinces, your communities, your families and friends, all those with whom you have exercised your apostolic service, your experiences of God's work and faithfulness in each of your lives...

We also extend a special welcome and thanks to your probation team, Gerardette Philips and Quena Valdés, who have been called and sent to journey with you in the coming months as you have the grace to explore more deeply your call to apostolic religious life in the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the life of the world and the Church.

You are here in Italy, in Rome, in a jubilee year that calls us to Hope, and this is an incredible opportunity for you to join the succession of witnesses to the risen Christ and to discover the universality and diversity of the Church.

You are here in the heart of Rome, at the Villa Lante, a beautiful house where Madeleine Sophie received much and prayed. She is waiting for you here. Not to mention the renovated buildings, the Casa Betania which is specially dedicated to you, the garden, the community and the lay collaborators who bring this place to life and offer you unparalleled conditions for your stay.

¹ Rev 21:1



You are here in 2025, the year in which we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Madeleine Sophie's canonisation and when the entire Society of the Sacred Heart is committed to implementing the decisions and recommendations of the last General Chapter in 2024 to support and develop our life and mission in the twenty-first century.

You are here, sent by your Provincials, to do, more precisely, **to live** your Probation: it is a MISSION that you have received.

Our Constitutions (which I invite you to read and pray over) speak of it in these terms:

The young professed sister will then have a period of immediate preparation for perpetual profession. Leaving her work, she prepares for her final commitment through prayer, study of our Institute, sharing and reflection on her experiences, and a 30-day retreat. §106

As far as possible, this preparation for perpetual profession takes place in an international group. [...]

The young professed sister gains a new awareness of the Body of the congregation: she becomes more familiar with the General Council and helps to create a community with sisters from different cultures and countries. She also deepens her sense of the universal Church. §107

Essentially, the Probation is a time of ENCOUNTER.

A profound encounter with God, who loved us first and whose Love is manifested in the Heart of his Son. He wants to reveal himself to each of you so that you may know the intimate feelings of his Heart. This is the grace of our vocation and the source of our apostolic fruitfulness.

A true encounter with oneself;

A true encounter with others, with the Society, and an encounter with the world into which we are sent to discover and manifest the love of the Heart of Jesus.

And every encounter requires us to be open, to open our hearts widely and generously, to leave familiar ground, to lighten our load and set off into the unknown, assured of God's presence at our side. And every encounter moves us and transforms us...



This encounter embraces all dimensions of your existence: heart, mind and body... I assure you that there is a programme (Gera and Quena have taken care of it) and that life together is made up of many small daily details... "Remember how Jesus invited his disciples to pay attention to details"² .

This is why the Society gives you the time and the means to live this stage to the full, to take a step back (physically, but also, I would say, from social media and instant communication channels ..) I could say that "the fate of your probation is in your hands". The result will be the fruit of grace, but also of your efforts and of each person's free, joyful and serious commitment.

Probation is a time to strengthen your INNER LIFE through prayer, reflection, re-reading and discernment.

The icon chosen for your probation is Our Lady of Silence. This may seem obvious: silence is the best way to listen to others. It is even the ABC of courtesy. However, listening is not just about keeping quiet. Being silent is a bit like resetting the clock. It means reconciling with oneself, catching one's breath, naming one's joys and fears, but also one's anger and enthusiasm... in order to allow oneself to be touched by the "voice of perfect silence"³ of God. To address Our Lady of Silence is to ask her for the grace to attain this silence.

The delicate gesture of her right hand also tells us that it is this disposition of the heart that allows us to 'listen to the Word and welcome the Life of Jesus in order to give it to the world'⁴

Our Lady of Silence greatly inspired Pope Francis, who requested that a copy of this icon be placed between the two lifts at the main entrance to the Apostolic Palace. She is "the Virgin who says: 'No gossip'," he explained.⁵ ...

The Probation is also an experience of SISTERLY LIFE IN AN INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY. It is a pioneering experience, like that of Philippine and her companions, which undoubtedly also foreshadows our common call to live fraternal life in the New Provinces, in communities, in government and work teams...

² Pope Francis - Gaudete et Exsultate §144

³ 1 Kings 19:11-12

⁴ Constitutions §22

⁵ Address by Pope Francis, 21 October 2017



The unknown, the languages, the diversity are undoubtedly already causing some apprehension, despite the desire that certainly animates you to build your community. Mary, woman of Faith among God's people, says to you with the gesture of her left hand, just as the angel Gabriel did for her, "Do not be afraid."⁶

Your cultural diversity is a fact, and you will need to patiently question and discover the different cultural logics needed to make dialogue and encounter between you possible. At the same time, the work of reflection on self-knowledge, which may at first glance seem out of place or unnecessary, is a prerequisite for truly discovering the other. Finally, you will need to accept the joys and difficulties of otherness. At the school of Our Lady of Silence, I invite you to practise generative listening⁷ .

Taking the words of Saint Mother Teresa as our own and entrusting you to the intercession of Our Lady of Silence, we want to reiterate that:

*The fruit of silence is prayer
The fruit of prayer is faith
The fruit of faith is love
The fruit of love is service
The fruit of service is peace.*

Know that you can count on Gera and Quena, on the support of our affection and our sisterly prayer, as well as those of all your sisters throughout the world.

⁶ Constitutions §9

⁷ The 5 steps of generative listening

- Slow down and become more aware of everything that is present,
- Listen with all my senses
- Listen to the words and images chosen
- Listen to the emotions conveyed by the person speaking
- Suspend my judgement



And together, in thanksgiving for the work that God has already accomplished in each of us, I invite us to sing the Jubilee hymn (each in her own language)

LIKE A FLAME MY HOPE IS BURNING,
MAY MY SONG ARISE TO YOU:
SOURCE OF LIFE THAT HAS NO ENDING,
ON LIFE'S PATH I TRUST IN YOU.

1. Every nation, tongue, and people
find a light within your Word.
Scattered fragile sons and daughters
find a home in your dear Son.

2. God, so tender and so patient,
dawn of hope, you care for all.
Heav'n and earth are recreated
by the Spirit of Life set free.

3. Raise your eyes, the wind is blowing,
for our God is born in time.
Son made man for you and many
who will find the way in him.

