

INAUGURATION OF THE VILLA LANTE MUSEUM  
SISTER BARBARA DAWSON, SUPERIOR GENERAL  
FEAST OF ST MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT, 25<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2024

Welcome everyone and thank you for joining us for this celebration of the Feast of St Madeleine Sophie. Thank you Fr Doug Marcouiller, Mary Finlayson, Rachel Guillien, Angela Galletto, Stefano Mhana (organist) for all you have done towards the beautiful Mass we have just celebrated together. We welcome today, Sister Rita Crivelli, Provincial of the province of Italy. I would also like to welcome Fedi Rossi Germani, who has a long association with the Villa Lante. In fact she came here with her mother during World War II at the age of 8 months old and has remained loyal and deeply interested in the Society of the Sacred Heart ever since. We are glad to have you with us today.

Now we come to this special moment when we officially open the Villa Lante Museum. It is so fitting that we are celebrating this occasion on the Feast of Madeleine Sophie. The items exhibited in the museum bring us very close to Sophie's daily life. We also get a close-up glimpse of the great legacy she has left us through her vision and passion for mission.

Sophie was a humble woman but she would appreciate that her story has been preserved and shared by generations of archivists. This museum carries echoes of their faithful work over many years. We are very happy to have our sisters from Napoli here today. They represent the many sisters from the province of Italy who have honoured Sophie's life here at the Villa Lante.

This inauguration is an opportunity to say thank you on behalf of the Society of the Sacred Heart to all those who have helped bring this museum to reality; those who designed it, those who restored valuable paintings and artefacts, those who worked on the lighting, the construction, those who painted walls, those who carried heavy cabinets and furniture and that very important role of those who gave ideas and suggestions. Some of you who did all this work are here today and we thank you.

Most particularly we thank Alice Usai who is the curator of the museum for her hard work and commitment to this project. We also thank her colleagues, Federica Palumbo and Sara Giannetti for their professional support and their care of our Society archives. For those of you who take part in the optional visit to the general archives this morning you will see original letters of St Madeleine Sophie and some informative history of the Villa Lante amongst other things.

Thank you Sister Lyn Osiek for your assistance and encouragement of the archivists over these past two years. We look forward to our archives contributing more and more to the life of the Villa Lante Centre for Lay and Religious Formation.

In the tradition of all opening ceremonies of the Society we will have a short blessing before we invite Alice to cut the ribbon.