

Like a Swarm of Bees
by Carol Anne O'Marie, csj

Preface

You, gracious reader, are doubly fortunate to be holding this book in your hands because **Like a Swarm of Bees** is fulfillment of both a prophecy and a promise.

The prophecy spoken in 1805 by Abbe Piron of St. Etienne, France, foretold that the Sisters of St. Joseph would increase in number and “like a swarm of bees” spread everywhere. Taking the priest’s phrase as title of her book, Sister Carol Anne O'Marie, csj in **Like a Swarm of Bees** weaves the prophecy with her personal life promise: to write, as a novel, the story of the first Sisters of St. Joseph in America, in particular, the six who in 1836 set sail from their native, cultural France to bring the love of God to the people of rugged, frontier North America.

This story, narrated by Sister St. Protais, one of the six, is told simply; the story is profound in Sister Carol Anne’s giving skin and bone, personality and emotion, strengths and, yes, human flaws to Sister St. Protais and her five pioneering companions. Sister O'Marie’s research and creativity combine not only to make real these women of history but also to let shine their spirituality as witnessed in their love of God and neighbor, in their spirit of unity and reconciliation, in their zeal, gentleness, peace and joy – these qualities reflecting the charism, the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph, dating from their origin in 1650 France under Jean Pierre Medaille, sj.

The charism is most evident in Mother St. John Fontbonne whose leadership after the French Revolution (with

its suppression of nuns and priests) brings about the refounding of the Congregation. As superior, Mother St. John in her prayerfulness, wisdom and love truly is mother to her Sisters calling them “my well-loved daughters.” With her blessing and her tears, Mother St. John bids farewell to six of her “daughters” as they embark on their venture to St. Louis, Carondelet and Cahokia in the New World. So begins the swarm predicted by Abbe Piron.

Today, through the varied Congregations of the Federation, thousands of Sisters of St. Joseph, with their Associates and Consociates, walk in the footsteps of Father Medaille and Mother St. John. While living the spirit and carrying out the mission that links them in common with the early Sisters, the 21st century “swarm” also looks to a future of others, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will continue the journey and be open to the vision of seeing more, fresh horizons in which to further extend the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph in their love of God and their love and service to “the dear neighbor.”

Sister Carol Anne kept her promise, completing her manuscript shortly before her death in May, 2009. She, the six and other Sisters of St. Joseph now welcome you into their lives.

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