

Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, United States Province
Development Office
616 Coopertown Road
Haverford, PA 19041
Phone: 610-642-5715 ext. 15
Web: www.acjusa.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARDINAL JUSTIN RIGALI AND SPANISH DIGNITARIES TO CELEBRATE VATICAN HONOR WITH LOCAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Cardinal Rigali will be joined by the United States Provincial of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as well as Dr. Herminio Muñiz, Honorary Vice Consul of Spain in Philadelphia, and Mr. Camilo Villarino-Marzo, Political Counselor in charge of European and Defense Affairs, Embassy of Spain.

Philadelphia, PA—On Saturday, May 8, 2010 at 5:00 pm at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Center City Philadelphia, His Eminence, Cardinal Justin Rigali, will be the Principal Celebrant and Homilist at a Mass to commemorate the blessing and inaugural placement of a statue of Saint Raphaela Mary, the Foundress of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, outside St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

Dr. Herminio Muñiz, Honorary Vice Consul of Spain in Philadelphia, and Mr. Camilo Villarino-Marzo, Political Counselor in charge of European and Defense Affairs, Embassy of Spain, will both be in attendance to celebrate with the Handmaids this unique recognition of their Foundress.

The Spanish born saint, canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1977, established the international community of religious women known as the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1877 in Pedro Abad, Spain. It has taken nearly 33 years for the Andalucian saint's statue to take its place among other founders of Catholic religious orders honored by the Vatican. Saint Raphaela Mary's statue represents the first statue of an Andalucian saint to adorn St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

The statue was sculpted by Marco Augusto Dueñas, an artist, who like Saint Raphaela Mary was born in Cordoba, Spain. Dueñas was commissioned to create the statue after winning a contest initiated by the Pope to honor Saint Raphaela Mary. The statue stands at approximately 20 feet in height and is made of marble from a region in Northern Italy. The sculptor says that the statue represents Saint Raphaela Mary's evangelical mission. In the statue's left hand, Saint Raphaela Mary holds an open Bible, symbolizing Christian education in the service of the Gospel. In the statue's right hand, she extends stalks of wheat to a young girl, signifying the Eucharist, a core component of the Handmaids' reparative spirit.

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Since 1926, the Handmaids have had a strong presence in the United States through ministries at the Saint Raphaela Retreat Center in Haverford, Ancillae-Assumpta Academy in Wyncote, Philadelphia, Georgia, and Florida. To evoke the universality of the Handmaids and their service to the Church for 133 years, at the beginning of Mass there will be a procession of representatives from various Handmaid ministries in the United States and abroad.

Date: Saturday, May 8, 2010

Time: 5:00 pm

**Location: Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul
1723 Race Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1204**

For more information, please contact Angela Saracino, Associate Director of Marketing and Development. Phone: 267-738-7923/ E-mail: angelasaracino@yahoo.com OR asaracino@acjusa.org

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The Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an international community of women religious who celebrate God's unconditional love with a passion for wholeness, peace, and reconciliation. The mission of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is Reparation. As Eucharistic women, Handmaids work with Christ to bring healing to people's hearts and peace to their relationship with God, with one another and with creation.

The Sisters dedicate their lives to bringing about social justice by providing services such as education, advocacy, counseling, spiritual direction, retreats, and outreach.