**Historical Development of the S.S.H.J.P Educational Communities.**

In order to promote the growth of the philosophy and ideals of the Founder, Saint Jose Maria de Yermo y Parres, the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Poor (SSHJP) resolved to open educational institutions under the Founder’s guidelines and pattern. The following is a summary of the most important stages the SSHJP have gone through history, religious and social events the order has lived since the foundation; the narrative gives importance to the work of the Sisters in the Southwest of the United States.

**1st Stage 1885-1904. From the Foundation of the SSHJP to Father Yermo’s death.**

- The SSHJP are born in 1885, under dictator Porfirio Diaz who introduced positivism and allowed the country a certain forced stability.
- The SSHJP open their first school on the second day of the foundation, December 13, 1885.
- New sisters began to arrive and organized their lives and the religious houses under Father Yermo’s leadership and vision.

- The first assembly (1888) approved the title of “Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Poor”. By that date, there were 83 sisters.
- Father Yermo died in 1904. The religious houses were already 13.

**Second Historical Stage 1904-1920.**

- The Mexican revolution against Porfirio Diaz began in 1910 and lasted until 1921.
- *Decretum Laudis* (1910) from Rome, approves the SSHJP as a Pontifical Congregation.

Early ministry in Laredo, Texas,
3rd Stage: 1920-1942

- In 1926, Religious persecution began in Mexico. The Mother House in Puebla is confiscated. Many SSHJP are forced to leave the country, while others hide with their children in different shelters.
- Bishop Schuler from the diocese of El Paso allows sisters to come to the diocese. The general government of the SSHJP establishes in El Paso.
- Sisters SSHJP work in parishes of El Paso, Fabens, Presidio, Alpine, Shafter, Hebronville, Lajitas, Fort Hancock, etc.
- Houses in Cuba open regardless of the persecution. The number of sisters is now 387, and they minister in 32 different houses.

4th Stage: 1942-1954

- Second World War strikes the world from 1939-1945. This is a time of restrain and anxiety.
- Many new vocations join the SSHJP and the sisters increase to 553 and run 55 different religious houses.
- There is expansion to Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia.
- Special attention is given to the professional studies of the sisters throughout the congregation.
- The House of Studies at San Antonio, Texas is opened to facilitate the attendance to Our Lady of the Lake College.
- As these are times of peace, the first steps are made to initiate the canonization process of Father Jose Maria de Yermo y Parres.
- In El Paso, Texas, Sacred Heart Orphanage closes and Heart of Jesus School opens in 1954. The school serves Mexican children of the neighborhood with limited English proficiency.

5th. Historical Stage: 1954-1966

- The Second Vatican Council (1960-1964) takes place as a summit for the Catholic Church. Saint John XXIII calls more than 2,000 bishops who gather in Rome to review the situation of the Church in the modern world.
- The SSHJP open house of studies in Rome to prepare the sisters in theology (1954).
- The SSHJP increase to 606 sisters and run 67 houses in six different countries.


- There is a great struggle in the Catholic Church in order to implement the IIVC guidelines.
- The SSHJP organize themselves into regions (1970). El Paso houses belong to the North Region.
- Sisters are expelled from Cuba in 1966, under the rule of the Communist leader, Fidel Castro. Five school communities close, Cuban sisters are exiled, and the rest are reassigned in different posts.
- The SSHJP expand to Africa in 1975. Pioneers begin their work in Roret, Diocese of Nakuru in Kenya. A USA sister leaves for the mission.
- At the end of this period, there are 548 sisters running 68 institutions.

- There is greater interest in studying the charisma and the philosophy of the Founder.
- The cause of Saint Jose Maria de Yermo y Parres for canonization moves forward.
- In El Paso, the two routes of studies, Business and College, prepare high school girls to successfully graduate and find executive jobs at maquiladoras, while preparing them for university studies.
- San Michael’s Special English school prepares hundreds of students for the mainstream of education.
- Saint John Paul II, recognizes officially the holiness of Father Yermo and makes him “Blessed” to the Catholic church in moving ceremony at the Basilica de Guadalupe in Mexico City, in 1990.
- All the Congregations of SSHJP rejoices with the event. Father Yermo and St. Michael’s Schools celebrate as one community with Mass at Saint Patrick’s Cathedral.

8th Stage. 1990-2002

- The world enters the globalization era. Technology is available, and brings changes to society.
- The Mexican government, after 150 years, recognizes the rights of the Catholic Church and requires all religious congregations to register as Religious Associations (AR), with fiscal and legal obligations to the government. Father Yermo high school becomes coed, accepting boys,(1997), turning into the only Pre-K to 12th coed school dually accredited by AdvancED and TCCED in El Paso and Las Cruces, NM. area.
- Saint Michael’s, Special English School, closes its doors in 1994, due to the severe economic depression in Mexico. In its place, St Michael’s elementary opens.
• The greatest event for the SSHJP is the elevation of Father Jose Maria de Yermo as a model of holiness for the universal church.

• Saint John Paul II, canonized Saint Jose Maria de Yermo y Parres in Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome on May 21, 2000. Saint John Paul II said during his homily: “Father Yermo lived a concrete experience from the abandonment and misfortune of the poor and through the awareness of God’s request, moved through charity, responded to the divine inspiration, trying to relieve the spiritual and material needs of the poor. He not only wanted to transmit systematically knowledge and skills, but to form men and women that would be well defined and determined in their values, culture, transforming society and developing their history.” (SJMY Personal notes, 11/08/1890, Doc. 4371 Position for Canonization)

9th Stage. 2002-2014

• The building of the Mother house, confiscated in 1936, is returned to the congregation as a “Colonial Jewel”. It becomes the “Founder’s Museum” in Puebla.

• The SSHJP expand with more religious houses in Chile, Venezuela, Italy and Africa. They return to Cuba after 39 years of absence.

• Father Yermo Schools builds the long expected multipurpose building(2006). Saint Michael School closes and the new building for the Early Learning Center Pre-k to 1st. is inaugurated in 2011.

• The SSHJP are now 657 in total and run 81 religious houses, serving in schools, hospitals, jail ministry, missions, pastoral work and nursing homes in 10 different countries in the world.
Symbols of the Father Yermo Educational Communities.

The symbols that are characteristic of the identity of the Father Yermo educational communities are:

Coat of arms of the house of Yermo or Heraldry.
The coat of arms of the House of Yermo consists of the following: a field of silver with an oak tree. At the base, there is a black wolf with an assuring attitude, a fringe of gold, and eight red blades. There is a shield with the military insignia of the Morrion or Zelada. A profile of a burnished steel face is on the right side, which signifies its legitimacy.

The viscera is open and raised, with three grills at sight studded with golden borders and lined with a tincture of red. The medium sized woven fabric has different shades of brown, pink and gold. They are illuminated and painted in the first quarter of the shield. The head view displays multiple weapons, which signifies protection. (Title of Nobleness SSHJP, Document #3901)

- The field of silver signifies a clean lineage, for those that use it.
- The field of gold signifies merit.
- The red blades signify victory.
- The oak symbolizes strength.
- The wolf represents boldness.

Logo of Father Yermo, "One life to illuminate the world."
The logo was established in 1990, the year of Father Yermo’s beatification. It contains elements that symbolically describe his life. The circle or sun, symbolizes Christ light of the world, transcendence, the union with God and with mankind. Sections symbolize a fragmented world caused by sin, hate, wars, poverty and misery. It is the world of the poor who suffers. The world is in movement, rupture and reconciliation; reconciliation that the Sacred Heart of Jesus shares with Father Yermo in his work of merciful love in favor of the poor.

The colors oscillate from orange to yellow, symbolizing the light of Christ. Due to the holy life of Father Yermo, the colors illuminate the world as long as the charisma of humility and merciful love are present.

The spike of wheat symbolizes the life of Father Yermo, meshed with pain and
suffering is also noted on the cross that forms the stem.

**The monogram** located to the right side of the wheat spike, contains the initials of Jose Maria de Yermo y Parres. (Design, Teresa Azcorra, SSHJP & Joaquin Xicotencati).

**The phrase**, “Giant of Charity”, written in three languages surrounds the circle. This title was given to Father Yermo during the flood of 1888 by Don Manuel Gonzalez, Governor of Guanajuato.

**Motto. “To educate, one needs to love intensely.”**

**Father Yermo’s Hymn.**

**Chorus.** Let us sing a thousand hymns of glory, in praise of the Grand Servant of God. Let us exalt his remarkable victory with accents of triumph and honor.

1. Father Yermo, your holy forehead, the eternal crown of laurel, Who grants infinite bliss, to the heroes that exalt the faith.

2. In the eternal mansion of heaven, you now enjoy with boundless glory. We see our desire fulfilled to see you raised in the altars.

3. Father Yermo, the poor and humble, found in you their Shepherd. A total surrender is not measurable, you gave them your life and love.

4. Father, you who loved the poor and children, and knew how to spend your life, in surrounding with tenderness and love, those who had neither roof nor bread.

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**Father Yermo Schools Song.**

1. Father Yermo Schools are named after a Saint. For Father Yermo Christ came first, he loved him in the poor. Saint Jose Maria, founder of the Servants, they inherited his love for Jesus and the Poor.

   **Chorus:** Father Yermo Schools where faith and knowledge, go hand in hand with Christian love, in one big family in the Lord.

2. Father Yermo Schools building community, where students, parents, faculty form one big family. In this family, what makes so unique is unity, friendship and care, the key to our success.

3. Father Yermo Schools help of those in need, affirming human dignity and Christian values too. At Father Yermo Schools the main values are Charity, Humility to love and serve in God.

**Cross the SSHJP wear on their garment.**

The cross was designed by the Founder. It is made of natural iron and burned to achieve the color black. In the center, a heart is carved surrounded by thorns. At the ceremony of the first vows, a similar cross is given.

**Current circumstances of the Educational ministry of the SSHJP.**

The Congregation of SSHJP provides programs of education in diverse countries such as Mexico, United States, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Italy and Kenya.

The task is to educate authentic men and women and to take them to God. This education molds human beings to reflect the image of Jesus Christ, Merciful and Servant. Teaching, challenges educators to involve themselves renewing the first actions of the Church and combine Evangelization and Promotion. The desire to promote the legitimate aspirations of the poor inspire educators to promote the
dignity of the student and to allow a free environment to develop whole personalities.

The SSHJP in the United States, serve the Southern Border towns of Texas and Northern Mexico. In Texas, the population they serve, are the residents of urban communities, where immense problems and enormous potentials are present. An estimated 30% of the adult population is not fluent in English. The Southern border cities are among the poorest metropolitan regions in the United States. Almost 27% of the residents live below the national poverty line; historically, from 10-11% of the population is unemployed. The border towns are in the forefront of demographic and ethnical growth with 70% Hispanics, 23% Non-Hispanic, 4% white, and only 2% African-American. Almost one-fourth of the population is foreign-born, and Spanish is the primary language of preference in more than 50% of the households. The border town median age is 28. The Mexican population from Juarez present the same characteristics, augmented by the phenomenon of eradication. People immigrate to the border in search of better opportunities, and they come from very different regions of Mexico and other Latin American countries. Mistrust and detachment are some of the challenges they face.

Father Yermo Schools commit themselves to provide quality education to this diverse population. The schools’ vision is to make private education available to all community’s economic levels. Father Yermo Schools offer the lowest tuition rates of the area with 50% less than any other Catholic school in the border towns. The CE-MYP (Centro Educativo Multicultural Yermo y Parres) in the Mexican border of Juarez provides possibilities of scholarships to all the student population. In the other hand, the academic curriculum has always been designed to fulfill the needs of the students facing a challenging society. Academic excellence provides students with the skills they need to successfully continue into higher education.

**Cultural Reality.** The Hispanic culture manifests itself in a variety of expressions that are either popular or sectarian. Among them is a highlighted openness for the transcendence, a culture of beauty in its relationships with nature and a fountain of inspiration. Likewise, the sense of community suggests interdependence and international communication. The culture of communication, however, is debilitating or destroying the customs and values of each country, which are slowly losing their identity. ("Educate for a New Society" Mexican Episcopate, p.124)

The experience of education, in a communication culture, becomes the most appropriate path by which “man can develop his diverse mental and physical endowments... he can express the great spiritual experiences and aspirations of men; he communicates to become an inspiration for the progress of many, even of all mankind.” (Vatican Council II, GS #53)

In this educational process, it is necessary to discern what contributes to form values leading to the fullest of human life, before the pluralistic culture with its richness claims control of many.

**Reality of the Family.** There is confirmation that the family continues to be the major base in countries where the SSHJP serve, although there is a decline. Many families develop values for life, justice, solidarity and a hospitality. However, “families appear to be affected by a culture of death and by means of social communication that have provoked instability and disintegration” (Sto. Domingo, p.216)
Problems seem to show in various incidences: decrease or disappearance of family communication, rise in divorces, and crisis of values. Exaltation of partial and egoistic visions about happiness that easily facilitate disengagement between sexuality and love; all this phenomenon serve to develop an anti-life mentality.

The economic crisis and unemployment in the country as well as in cities, have brought about an increase of immigrants to the major cities or other countries; as a result, there is an inevitable separation and disintegration of families that hurt human beings.

**Reality of Education.** Institutions of education are making an effort to reach to the poor, looking for affordable tuitions from parents and searching for other sources of income. There is also not enough preparation of lay people in faith formation; consequently, children and youth are not adequately receiving the full fruit of the Gospel.

“Schools ordinarily have limited autonomy. Principals have often extensive administrative responsibilities, and are obligated to participate in projects, restricting them in what was considered as the most important goal.” (“Educate for a New Society” Mexican Bishops, p#56)

There is also a noticeable decline in labor conditions for educators. The fact affects their quality of being witnesses of life; the complex reality of labor and the economy leads the parents also to a limited commitment in the mission of educating their children.

Youth, in the other hand, show impatience and at times, anguish, which leads them to rebel. Aware of their proper function in social life, youth rapidly desire to participate in society, which creates difficulty for parents and educators in the fulfillment of their mission. (GS #7)
**Mass Media Culture.** Scientific and technological advances in the area of Mass media and communications have allowed men to join the world, learn about other cultures, and make society sensible to the problems facing local and international communities. At the same time, have allowed the building of the human family. Unfortunately there exists a strong manipulative influence of materialistic, ideological and political interests that favor a minority; this minority instills anti-values that obscure or weaken the truth, giving the result of false judgments about the world and man. These judgment favor consumerism, violence and pansexualism ([CELAM, Sto. Domingo, p.55]).

If education lacks the formation of a critical conscience that confronts mass media and its manipulation, the result is an attitude of indifference to values and morality.

**Variable Economy.** The economic structure of neoliberalism applied to a variety of countries has demanded great sacrifices. It has created a major breach among social classes. The rich had become wealthier, while the poor have become poorer. The result has been extreme misery for some countries, where corruption concentrates the wealth in the hands of a few. ([CELAM, Sto. Domingo, p.54-56])

The lack of employment results in an increase of immigration and of over population in large cities, increasing the problem of prostitution and drug trafficking.

**Socio-Religious Reality.** Popular religiosity is not only seen as a privileged expression of faith, but as a manifestation of diverse values, criteria, conduct, culture and attitudes. They have a foundation in the Catholic dogma and build the wisdom of people formed by a cultural matrix. ([CELAM, Sto. Domingo, p. 36]).

The lack of understanding about Jesus Christ and the deficiency in family evangelization have consequences. They include indifference in the way life is lived, and in the celebration of faith; in some cases, are the result of little or non-existent hope, dismay, desperation and loss of the sense of life. The Catholic Church has redefined an image of a new life in Christ according to the Word of God.

Popular religiosity has open a channel to live a Christian life open to all brothers and sisters and to the sacramental life lived not as a social act, but as a way to live the cardinal and corporal beatitudes.

People have discovered in piety new paths of ecclesial unity, which favor participation at all levels, charismas and ministries. People have also unlocked an interest, each time more intense, to promote missions *ad gentes* and to prepare pastoral agents to serve as ministers.
• Have a basic pedagogical principle which is service as the expression of merciful love, attending to the spiritual and material needs of the poor, while sharing with them our lives, work, joys and sufferings.

• Shape the heart of the child since infancy, with solid and durable foundations, based on the principles and values of the Gospel.

• Have a balanced vision in the instruction, in accord with the conditions and necessities of the student, while caring for, and cultivating the development of his/her natural aptitudes.

• Strive to treat always our students with kindness, patience and justice, avoiding harshness.

• Believe that the student in his interrelationships is the protagonist of his/her own formation.

• Should place our students confidently in the hands of God.

• Should consider the education of the poor as one of the most important jobs in Christian life.

• To fulfill our mission as educators, we must teach the necessary sciences, and have a wide and solid understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

• Provide students with the same education that is available in the State we work, and in accordance with the official plans and programs of the Country, Diocese, enriching our students with religious and moral formation.

• Believe that parents have the mission and the right to choose the education they want for their children, and in this plan of education, their testimony of life is crucial.

• The religious community, shall obey with humility all of the determinations or directions of the Catholic Church, manifesting love, adherence and respect to the Pope. It is their duty to instill these same attitudes to the Educational community.