

## Sophie's Story: A timeline

12 December 1779	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Madeleine Sophie Barat was born in the Burgundy town of Joigny in France.</li> <li>• The shock of a fire caused Sophie's mother to go into labour prematurely. The small, fragile child was baptised in haste. Her elder brother Louis stands in as her godfather.</li> </ul>
1789	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophie's elder brother Louis takes charge of her education. He is rigorous and demanding.</li> <li>• Sophie follows the same curriculum that Louis taught the boys at the Joigny school. It is an extraordinary education for a young woman of her time, and Sophie proves to be a gifted student.</li> </ul>
1792	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louis Barat is forced into hiding, having retracted his oath of allegiance to the Nation and to the King following the Holy See condemnation of the revolutionary legislation.</li> <li>• By this time Louis is studying for the priesthood. The anti clerical nature of the French Revolution will seriously impact on his family.</li> <li>• Devotion to the Sacred Heart and obedience to the Holy See are associated with loyalty to the Bourbon kings.</li> </ul>
1793	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At 14 years of age Sophie decides to take a vow of virginity.</li> <li>• Sophie is a pious child, growing up in a strongly Jansenistic region. Although Louis brought images of the hearts of Jesus and Mary into the family home, Sophie would struggle with a cold and judgemental image of God for many years.</li> </ul>
May 1793	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louis Barat is arrested in Paris and narrowly escapes the guillotine.</li> </ul>
1795	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louis is freed and is ordained a priest. He takes Sophie to Paris to continue her religious formation under his supervision.</li> <li>• Sophie is torn between her desire for religious life and the needs of her mother, whose health is fragile.</li> <li>• In Paris Sophie dreams of entering a Carmelite monastery, teaches neighbourhood children, gives catechism classes, and continues her religious and secular education.</li> <li>• Sophie lives with other young women, initiating the beginnings of a community life.</li> <li>• In prayer Sophie has a vision of a spiritual and religious life that would give a new form of devotion to the Sacred Heart, as well as linking adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and education of the young, interiority and apostolic work.</li> </ul>
1800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophie meets Fr Joseph Varin who wishes to establish an institute in France of the recently founded Dilette di Gesu.</li> <li>• The Dilette di Gesu wish to dedicate themselves to the education of young girls as a means of communicating the love of the Heart of Jesus.</li> <li>• Sophie makes her first religious consecration.</li> </ul>
1801	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophie and two other young women set up a house at Amiens.</li> </ul>
1802	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophie becomes superior of the house at Amiens.</li> <li>• Two different kinds of schools are established – boarding schools for the better off and day schools for poor children.</li> <li>• The community separates from the Dilette di Gesu following a scandal involving its founder.</li> <li>• The name Sacred Heart cannot be used for political reasons so the community is known as the Ladies of Christian Education.</li> </ul>
1804	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sainte-Marie d'en Haut in Grenoble is incorporated into the Society. Former Visitation novice Philippine Duchesne had recovered the house.</li> </ul>

1806	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother Barat, who is only 26, is elected Superior General for life.</li> </ul>
1807 - 1813	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Society is shaken by conflict concerning the charism and the method of governing the Society.</li> <li>• Some contest the authority of Mother Barat and reject dedication to the Sacred Heart, and the Ignatian tradition on which the way of life was modelled.</li> </ul>
1815	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The restoration of the monarchy enables the use of the name Sacred Heart which expressed the Society's charism.</li> <li>• The Constitutions are adopted clarifying the judicial situation and providing a basis for the organisation of the life of the Society. They are ratified by the Holy See in 1826.</li> <li>• The Society begins to expand, making new foundations in France at the request of Bishops and benefactors.</li> </ul>
1818	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Society begins to expand beyond France.</li> <li>• Philippine Duchesne leads a small group to Louisiana. The Society is invited to Savoy, Italy, Belgium, Ireland, England, and Algeria, the Polish region of Austria, the Tyrol, Spain, Westphalia, and Holland.</li> <li>• The means of glorifying the Heart of Jesus are gradually diversified: some schools take in day scholars; special schools are opened for handicapped students, for orphan girls, and for boys; the religious run workshops, provide hospitality to adults; and train future teachers; retreats are held for Alumnae.</li> </ul>
1839-1843	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Society is racked by conflicts about the revision of the Constitutions and the location of the motherhouse.</li> <li>• Mother Barat's Council is itself divided and in 1839 decrees are issued modelling the Society's governance on that of the Jesuits.</li> <li>• The French Bishops and the State are opposed to the changes proposed.</li> </ul>
March 1843	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Sacred Congregation (that part of the Holy See responsible for religious orders) abrogates the 1839 Decrees.</li> <li>• Mother Barat undertakes a 'refounding' returning to the origins of the Society, particularly through attention to the training and formation of the youngest members, and the practice of prayer and poverty.</li> <li>• The Society continues to expand.</li> </ul>
25 May 1865	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophie Barat dies in Paris. The Society has 3,359 members in 89 houses (64 in Europe, 20 in the USA and Canada, 2 in Cuba, and 3 in South America).</li> </ul>
24 May 1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophie is beatified by Pope Pius X</li> </ul>
24 May 1925	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophie is canonised by Pope Pius XI</li> </ul>

### Learning More About Sophie:

The most authoritative biography of Madeleine Sophie Barat is Phil Kilroy's *Madeleine Sophie Barat 1779-1865 A Life*, Paulist Press, New York, 2000. More resources on Sophie from Phil Kilroy RSCJ can be found at <http://www.madeleinesophiebarat.com/>

Constance Solari has taken an imaginative approach in her self-published historical novel *Sophie's Fire: The Story of St Madeleine Sophie Barat*. Rich visual and contextual information can be accessed via the associated website [www.sophiesfire.com](http://www.sophiesfire.com)