

*Sisters of the Empress...*





## A new emergent order...

Though it can trace its roots back almost as long as the Empire is old, in terms of the veneration of the Empress as a living deity, until recently The Sisters of the Empress could not be described in any other fashion than as a cult. In recent years, however, it has begun to transform and is now a prominent religious movement. From the beginnings of Empire, there has always been a push in terms of the official narrative that the Empress herself is 'special' in some way, and this has been championed by the authorities, being wrapped up in the pomp and ceremony of Empire, to promote her as an almost mythic figure. Thus, it does not take much for certain individuals from a population who, if they do not already adore her, at least cherish her being with affection, to succumb to the human need to worship and idolise and focus this need on her, thus elevating her to a level of divinity. Although downplaying this worship, the Empire has never suppressed the cult, merely monitored it, finding itself in the difficult position of not really knowing how to deal with this movement as they do not wish to put themselves in a position to say that the Empress is NOT divine. It would be true to say then that the current state of affairs, particularly with the cult's burgeoning popularity, is a thorn in the Empire's side, but possibly a self-inflicted one.

Over time The Sisters of the Empress has grown with its ranks swelling but not overly so, so it is now possible to find small sections of many communities identifying with the Sisterhood. Although not fully organised there is a more





centralised basis in the capital of J'ah Ga Noor who have recently become more prominent as a collective, and have become more visible, vocal and proselytising, opening 'Chapter houses' in certain sections of the city and recently purchasing and converting a building ('The Main Chapter House') into a convent.

With this recent beginning of systematic organisation of a group within the capital it appears that they have begun to instigate a formal calendar of worship, with 'holy days' & special 'festivals' throughout the year. With the anniversary of the Volduron Uprising ~ something which in their mindset would be akin almost with blasphemy ~ it appears that a small contingent of nine Sisters is preparing to make a pilgrimage to Volduron, specifically the abandoned village of Ajbury to recognise Arya as a martyr & her son Zerin as a saint. It is likely that after this first sortie, the pilgrimage will become institutionalised within the Sisterhood & increase in frequency and numbers.

Dressed in white samite and walking barefoot, the route will take the Sisters on the old roads past Lake M'Armure and Ha, ultimately to the downgraded section of the old Imperial Highway running past the Silver Moon Inn. Cognisant of this pilgrimage, the Imperium have sent a courier to alert the garrison commander Tarth Gor at Aj'Torvahl barracks requesting that he 'receive, accompany, & protect the pilgrims and allow access to the village of Ajbury for the purposes of calm and pious contemplation'. It is quote: "imperative that the Pilgrimage be conducted & concluded without incident & the ladies of the Sisterhood are extended courtesy & charity whenever appropriate."

~ Sister R'enne ~



An original founding member of her chapter, Sister R'enne has helped set up a small worship room within the capital and also makes regular trips to smaller communities beyond J'ah Ga Noor's walls to hold observances. She is recognised as a devout Sister and an expert on doctrine. Being familiar with a variety of texts and rituals, she is convinced that something untoward is going to happen imminently, at which point the Empress will require the assistance of all of her devotees. Readyng herself for this moment, she has embarked on this pilgrimage as a means of purification and as a statement of commitment.

~ Sister Jesifae ~



A new initiate to the order, Jesifae has been plucked from the poverty of J'ah Ga Noor's back streets and, in being so, has found a new life and meaning. She is fervently committed to the order and is hoping that the pilgrimage will demonstrate her devotion, bringing her to the attention of Sister Mōrai, the head of the chapter. Having little education she is trying to learn to read with the help of some of the other sisters so that she can study and commit to heart the Doctrine of the Pure and understand her place within the divine scheme. Frightened and intimidated by the world beyond J'ah Ga Noor's walls, she is feeling very vulnerable.

~ Sister M'thawi ~



Sister M'thawi joined the sisterhood 2 years ago after the death of her actual sister. She has always sort and preferred female company and having met the Empress during the Shield Ceremony Festival and feeling that she was 'spoken' to by her, she has felt the need to explore the experience of that encounter and has thus found herself as part of a larger collective movement. Although not as fervent in her idolisation of the Empress as others, she has a calm faith and belief in the Order's doctrines and is quietly expressing her spirituality as she sees fit. the pilgrimage being a chance to get out of J'ah Ga Noor and experience the wider world has appealed to her sense of adventure.



### ~ Sister Austra ~



A confused & deeply troubled individual, Sister Austra has reached out to cling to many things in life. This tendency has now brought her to the Sisterhood whereby her need to find security (or more accurately for others to grant her security) has partially been met. Highly judgemental, with an inability for much self reflection she would most accurately be described as a nuisance & is a constant source of consternation & exasperation for those who have to interact with her on a regular basis. If patience were a virtue then she would be considered its source. It is unclear why she has embarked on this pilgrimage unless it is to increase the suffering of others.

### ~ Sister Ardenne ~



Having what she can only describe as a holy vision, Ardenne's world has completely transformed over the last six months. Abandoning her husband and child, she has undergone a total conversion and is now a fully annointed Sister, residing in the official main chapter house of J'ah Ga Noor under the auspices of Abbess Usia. She is completely committed and exhibits an outward aura of intense devotion. Inwardly, although at times struggling with the decision she has made, she still feels that it was the necessary and only one to have made.

### ~ Sister Rwena ~



A cytrene (a yellow eyed-one), Sister Rwena is one in ten thousand. A recognised abnormality, like many of her 'caste' she has been singled out and bullied for much of her life but has found a home and acceptance amongst the sisterhood. As her time amongst the sisters increases so too does her devotion to both the order and the Empress. Although initially hesitant she has decided to undertake the pilgrimage after encouragement from Eldest Sister, and Abbess, Usia, head of the Chapter Order in J'ah Ga Noor. Having received this instruction she is experiencing a sense of divine fate, as if the journey has always meant to be.

### ~ Sister K'Imba ~



A merchant's daughter from the Keelwa tribe, her family settled some years back in J'ah Ga Noor, where K'Imba has grown up. Cognisant of being an outsider, yet valued and protected by the citizens of Or due to the values spread by the Empress herself, Kimba has always felt a sense of kinship with Her Imperial Highness and joining the Sisterhood has been a slow but natural transition. Like many she is a simple lay Sister but has taken time out of her usual family life to undertake the pilgrimage as a demonstration of her devotion.

### ~ Sister D'gwyn ~



Steely eyed and humourless, Sister D'gwyn would be perhaps considered the Pilgrimage leader. Recognised, but not yet fully annointed, as an Elder Sister she commands respect, mainly through her demeanour but being able to recite all of the Sisterhood's texts word for word she is able to utilise this knowledge for leverage in most interactions with any of the Sisters. Only Abbess Usia appears to hold sway over her and when acting together they are formidable. It has been agreed that she is to 'oversee' this initial pilgrimage, the success of which will no doubt boost her standing further.

### ~ Sister Nestrelle ~



Anyone observing Sister Nestrelle would be forgiven in thinking that she does not take the Sisterhood seriously. Always slightly, idiosyncratic from the way in which she wears her robes, to the way in which she conducts herself, her ways are frowned upon by many. She is, however, an example of how light hearted joy, due to a feeling of emancipation through worship can manifest itself. Recognised by both Usia & D'gwyn, her 'frivolity' is excused & utilised as a means of attracting younger members to the order. Feeling a need to escape the suffocating confines of the city, & hoping to ease the anxiety of new initiate Sister Jesifae, Sister Nestrelle has volunteered for the pilgrimage.





## The Imperial Seal...

By whatever means she has managed to do so, Abbess Usia has obtained an official 'blessing' for the pilgrimage, having acquired an Imperial Seal of Freedom. The seal will not be recognised by most commoners but any within the employment of the Imperium will understand its significance, being, it is said, a direct diktat from the Empress herself, and a statement to any that the bearer or bearers of the seal may operate in effect with impunity. Any who hold the seal and present it must be assisted by whatever means necessary to allow them to fulfill their task. The seal is usually presented in an unadorned but secure wooden box, to preserve and extend its lifetime, wax stamped onto a wooden board. Beneath the board will be a parchment describing the nature of the bearers' task or endeavour, though by formality, the parchment itself is rarely checked or read, the authority of the seal itself being enough to provide unquestionable assistance.

It would be true to say that the presentation of such a symbol of authority would be enough to make the most seasoned employee of the Imperium nervous, for to err by any means in the duty to assist the bearer would be seen as a direct insult to the Empress herself. With the heady emotional cocktail of fealty, admiration and authority mixed with the possibility of losing one's livelihood if things go wrong, it is obvious why such a presentation would provoke anxiety.

As 'leader' of the pilgrimage, Sister D'gwyn is responsible for the seal's security.