

# INTERCONNECTIONS



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➤ THE AMAZON SYNOD

➤ HUMAN TRAFFICKING

➤ ASYLUM SEEKERS



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## EDITORIAL

This time as editorial, I would like to share some information about the 105<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees. This is another major crisis that the whole world faces at the moment. Surely, all of us are aware of this, but here I intentionally choose certain sections only to share some insights from Pope Francis, which surely help us to be in touch with this reality.

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"We are in a metal cage with 20 other teenagers with babies and young children. We have one mat, we need to share with each other. It is very cold. We each got a blanket, but it is not enough to warm us up. There are benches but we cannot sleep there. Sometimes it is so crowded we cannot find a place to sleep, so they allow a few of us to sleep outside the fenced area. The lights are on all the time." -**From a 16-year-old girl on the US-Mexican Border.**

"We have not been able to shower. The toilet is out in the open in the cage, there is no door for any privacy. There is water but no soap to wash our hands. There are no paper towels to dry our hands. We have not been given a toothbrush or toothpaste to brush our teeth." -**From a 17-year-old boy on the US-Mexican Border.**

The above stories are told by the migrant children when they were interviewed by some religious.

Pope Francis celebrated the 105th World

Day of Migrants and Refugees on Sunday 29 September 2019 at St. Peter's Square. During the Mass, the 20-foot sculpture was unveiled by Pope Francis. The work depicts migrants and refugees from all cultural and racial backgrounds and from all historic periods of time together.

### Some information about this sculpture

The figures stand together, shoulder to shoulder, huddled on a raft. Within this diverse crowd of people, angel wings emerge from the centre, suggesting the presence of something sacred among them. In fact, the sculptural work interprets the belief that the sacred is to be found in the stranger, in this case, in refugees and migrants.



The "Angels Unaware" boat! By the Canadian artist Timothy P. Schmalz

Pope Francis once famously likened the journey of Joseph and Mary to Egypt, to the migrations of millions of refugees fleeing wars. Depictions of Jesus' parents Mary and Joseph have been included in the piece.

**Pope Francis in his message expressed that:** "Each and every person who lives

on our planet earth is a child of God, created according to God's image and likeness, out of love. For each one of them, Jesus Christ, the Son of God suffered and died on the cross to reunite all of them with God.

Persons in an illegal situation and asylum seekers maintain that dignity. They remain children of God and deserve our Christian love and protection. How is the Church to respect the law and at the same time carry out her mission towards these people who have no legal right to remain in a given national territory?"

In today's society, we see, hear and experience the growth of global indifference; in this scenario, migrants, refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking have become emblems of exclusion.

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth and Love, will guide us in the process towards a new humanity. In fact, for it, the Creator has drawn a design of unity in the diversity of cultures and traditions.



**The inspiration:**

The inspiration behind the work is taken from a biblical passage - from the Letter to the Hebrews:

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews 13:2)

May this image and the words of our Pope urge us to reach out with loving tenderness to the most in need, assuring respect and protection!

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## HERE IN ROME

In the Generalate, we welcomed affectionately Amales PARIPOORNAM, from Jaffna – Sri Lanka to work as one of the secretaries in the English section. She joined us on 12 October 2019.

We received her with an affirmative gesture, during the prayer service, which we held after three days of her arrival. We are glad to have her in the local community in the Generalate and we wish her all the blessings.



## THE AMAZON SYNOD Geni DOS SANTOS (Generalate)

The month of October was especially marked by the Synod of Bishops whose theme was "Amazonia: new pathways for the Church and for an Integral Ecology", and which took place in the Vatican from 6 to 27 October.



"Life in the Amazon, where water, territory and the identities and spiritualities of its peoples are interwoven, invites dialogue and learning about its biological and cultural diversity. The Church participates in and generates learning processes that open pathways on ongoing formation on the meaning of life integrated into its territory and enriched by wisdom and ancestral experiences." (IL no. 43)

Intense preparation work had been going on since Pope Francis announced the Synod for Amazonia in October 2017. Communities, parishes and dioceses from the Amazon Basin as well as other Groups and Movements such as REPAM (The Ecclesial Pan-Amazonian Network) and CIMI (The Indigenous Missionary Council) took part in the work. The study and listening resulted in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, a working document giving the themes to be developed in the Synod. This document has three main parts:

### 1. The Voice of the Amazon:

This is a presentation of the Amazonian territory which comprises 7.8 million square kilometres and covers parts of nine countries. It is home to 2.8 million inhabitants including 400 indigenous communities who speak around 240 languages; it accounts for 15% of the Planet's biodiversity

### 2. Integral Ecology: the cry of the earth and of the poor.

"The aggression towards this vital zone of Mother Earth and its inhabitants threatens their subsistence, their culture and their spirituality. It also affects the life of all humanity, particularly the poor, the excluded, the marginalised, the persecuted. The present situation calls urgently for an integral ecological conversion." (IL no. 44)

### 3. A Prophetic Church in the Amazon: challenges and hope.

"The new paths for pastoral ministry in the Amazon require 'relaunching ... with fidelity and boldness' the mission of the Church in the territory and deepening the 'process of inculturation' and interculturality. This demands 'brave' proposals of the Church in the Amazon which, in turn, presupposes courage and passion, as Pope Francis asks of us. Evangelisation in the Amazon is a set of

tests for the Church and for society.” (IL no. 106)

With the aim of supporting the Synod, of making the situation known and of sharing and deepening reflection, around 270 events were organised during the month in religious houses and churches close to the Vatican. These were called Common Home Marketplaces.

We also had the joy of taking part in some of these meetings. Ana María and I were part of a group of volunteers in the Carmelite Church in Traspontina. There was an exhibition of photographs there showing mineral exploitation and the abuse of natural resources.

Throughout the day, there was prayer for the Synod, some celebrations and sharing of missionary experiences.

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity I had of spending a few days in the Marketplace and of taking part in some of the celebrations like, for example, the Prayer Vigil on the night of October 5; praying the Veni Creator and the Procession to the entrance of the Synod Hall the morning of October 7; and the Celebration of Reconciliation the night of October 12.



Geni - in the centre of photo



These are photos of the kind of synodal Church that we want where we all journey together, welcoming and celebrating diversity and, joyfully and creatively, seeking the best way of living and sharing our faith.

The Celebration of Reconciliation with texts from the Mass of an Earth without Evil by D. Pedro Casaldáliga, was presided over by a Bishop. But the sign and embrace of pardon was given to us by representatives of the indigenous Peoples.

We then ended with a procession to St. Peter's Square holding lights in our hands as a sign of hope for new light in the lives of our People and Church.

## THE UISG. CAMPAIGN SOWING HOPE FOR THE PLANET

Marie-Pierre OTIBA (Generalate)

We all know that in 2015, Pope Francis wrote the encyclical letter *Laudato sí* on safeguarding our common home. This theme is becoming evermore topical. The International Union of Major Superiors (UISG) is always very open to the calls of the Church and of the world. So in June 2018, the executive Council of the UISG, in collaboration with the Secretariat for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and the Catholic World Movement for the Climate launched the campaign "Sowing Hope for the Planet". The aim of this campaign is to gather together what Sisters are doing to put *Laudato sí* into practice. It is linked to the urgency of developing an ever-greater awareness and concern about climate change and its impact on the environment and society.

The UISG organises meetings and sessions on this topic and has contact people in the member Congregations. Since its headquarters are in Rome, the General Council asked me to be the contact person for the *Holy Family*.

What am I supposed to do? Nothing extraordinary apart from giving you the

news that you already receive through our website and to alert you to live our connectedness with the whole of humanity and the whole of creation and to respect and protect our common home. As the Family of P. B. Noailles, we are already living this. It is a confirmation that the Cosmic Vision – the New World View – must be integrated into every aspect of our life. We all must give our personal and community response to the cry of the Planet, and the reflections organised by the UISG awaken our awareness of this.

The Amazon Synod which took place in Rome from 6 to 27 October 2019 is one of the responses to the planet's difficulties because it opened new pathways towards an integral ecology. There were open meetings organised outside the actual Synod. I was able to take part in some of the prayers and reflections. That opened my mind and made me even more aware of my place in the universe. Since we are all interconnected, what I live affects others and the whole universe. I appreciated the testimonies of missionaries from the Amazon and of the indigenous people.

A comparison was made between the Amazon and the Congo Basin. I was





the Congo Basin. These people who live very close to nature teach us a sense of the sacred and how to safeguard the earth. "Often, when we destroy forests for purely economic reasons, we use the same violence against people; and by destroying Amazonia, we are endangering the future of humanity" declared one of the Synod Fathers.

touched by the sharings of several Religious women and men who live in the Amazonian forests and the Congo Basin. The Gospel has not yet reached the majority of the indigenous people of Amazonia, just as it has not yet reached the pygmies of the equatorial forest of

All inhabitants of our Common Home are called to be prophetic and to be converted. The commitment concerning our planet which was made by the Council of the Family is an opportunity for us, members of the *Holy Family*, to do something practical in the interests of an integral ecology.

## DID WE LEAVE OUR MARK?

*When we close communities, we often leave places where, for many years, the Holy Family has been present and active, serving and sharing life with the people. We can be forgiven if at times, we wonder whether we have really made a difference...*

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Josefina, from Barañain, where the Sisters lived for 44 years, said the following:

"We give thanks for the Congregation of the Holy Family of Bordeaux founded by Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. After their 200-year journey, their desire continues to be to experience the Spirit of Jesus in order

to bring healing, reconciliation and forgiveness to the women and men of our society.

For the past 44 years, the Friends and Sisters of the *Holy Family* have been with us here in Barañain, living and sharing love, service and faith among the neighbours, in the parish community and in various types of commitment like health, education, care of the elderly, other social works and also in the spirituality centre.

Sisters, we thank God for the ecclesial Charism which the Holy Family has lived for 200 years with fidelity and commitment, "living communion, celebrating

life". These words typify the journey of your human and religious Family, and are very much in keeping with Pope Francis's pastoral plan set out in 'THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL'.



There are five branches of a tree within this Family. This was the beautiful image that your Founder, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, dreamed about – a tree bearing much fruit and giving shelter to all kinds of people: Apostolic and Contemplative Sisters, Seculars, Lay and Priest Members.

You have been present in four continents and here in Navarre since 1903, living among different peoples in many places

doing pastoral work in parishes and in different professions.

We thank God and we thank you, friends and Sisters in the faith, for all the years you have spent in Barañáin, sharing your Charism of communion, family and love with the people here; for your non-exclusive openness; for your inclusive spirituality which was incarnated in the people, in immigrants, in drug addicts, in the rural areas and in the parish community.

You have been, and still are, the leaven and mustard seed in this society which is taken up by money, power and consumerism and which falls easily into banality and superficiality.

And finally I just want to say that we here are your community. We want to be a family like the Holy Family of Nazareth and of Bordeaux where nobody is excluded. We will miss you and we wish you much happiness and peace wherever you may be. Goodbye and best wishes."

## **SHARING EXPERIENCES** Sharmila Mennesa St. Gabriel's Road, London

### **If you don't dare now, then when?**

These words inspired me to make my desire to be a missionary a reality. When I look back on my life's journey here, I see God's footprints behind me, around me and in nature. I am grateful for God's presence that everywhere fills this Earth, and makes everything belong to one family. I feel that I am part of this crea-

tion, so I would like to share my experience through the symbol of nature.

I was like a small plant left in its own soil and comfortable surroundings and then taking root in a new place, a new weather. Energy from the Creator, warmth, love and concern of the sisters, helped me to grow. Eventually I realised that I belong to the Universe, not just one place.

Once somewhat accustomed to the new culture, I started to work with homeless people. Who are these homeless people? The homeless are like strong birds that built their own nests in a big tree and lived happily with their families. But suddenly a cyclone of war, or other problems, came into their home and destroyed everything. The trees are fallen down. Family members are missing or killed. They come to seek refuge with much woundedness. Homeless people are normal people like every one of us. Suddenly, disaster came and changed their lives totally.

Charity organisations all over the UK help the homeless to get the basic needs of a human being, that is, food, clothing and shelter, but still, thousands of people live on the streets. Some organisations give holistic care – physical, mental, spiritual, social – and also health care, counselling, providing a faith room open to all religions and respecting all religions, giving training in skills such as drawing, baking, handcrafts. However, many don't take any interest because of distress due to not having the right to stay or work in the country.

I am doing voluntary work in one of these Charity Organisations called 'The Passage'. As part of a team, I help the homeless to get food and also medicine by directing them to doctors or helping them to see

the nurse. I feel happy that I am taking part in helping in one of the current global crises. This ministry is also challenging since the homeless people are from different countries so the way of seeing things and thinking is also different. Many times I feel that I need to be full of positive energy to work among them. Sometimes it is painful to see their situation. For example, I had been visiting a young homeless person who was dying with cirrhosis of the liver. He wanted to live



even though he lived on the street and had no hope of recovery. Life is precious for the dying and the desire to live on this beautiful Earth is remains strong.

We are seen by homeless people as fortunate to live in our own houses with proper food that we take for granted. Working with the homeless made me realise that life is short and can change at any time. However, the world is full of positive energy as well as negative energy, so let's choose positive energy always and spread it among people because our Earth is longing for peace.

## ASYLUM SEEKERS RETREAT IN GRANGE-OVER-SANDS

Kathleen Diamond, Aberdare community London

A group of asylum seekers from the JRS centre in London were delighted to be offered a stay, free of charge, with the Canonesses of St Augustine in Boarbank Hall, Grange-over-Sands. It was decided that the most regular participants of the women's prayer group which I lead every Tuesday, and the men's group led by Fr Harry SJ, should be given the opportunity. Four women and three men took up the offer, as well as 4 staff/volunteers including myself, who accompanied them.

Our friends were really moved by the whole experience. I will let them speak for themselves (helped by interviews with Fr Harry before leaving, and a translator where necessary). I have changed the names.

**John** (W Africa): I didn't know what to expect but felt the need of a break. The welcome I received and the quiet surroundings immediately made me feel relaxed. I could meditate easily and reflect on my life. I could sleep better, I enjoyed one another's company here. I was touched by the personal attention to my welfare. Seeing hills was a novel experience for me as I had always been accustomed to flat surfaces. It was the first time I visited an English village and I was really impressed.

I was inspired by my visit to the nursing home - I was chatting to a blind lady, a nurse, who was forced into a prisoner of war camp. On my return, I want to do whatever I can to help others. Before leaving I put in a fresh claim for asylum

but I have heard nothing. Now I feel prepared to accept whatever comes. When I return, I plan to put aside time each day for prayer.

**Destiny** (Ivory Coast): While praying before the Blessed Sacrament during Exposition, I was shocked to feel as if a baby was on my lap, and from him a voice which I took to be my grandson calling out, 'Grandma, Grandma'. I felt acutely the pain of separation from my grandson. I resolved to make another attempt to see him but to be forgiving if I



First visit to an English village

was not successful. I felt joy in my heart and the pain there being eased. I gained a lot from sharing with others in the group.

**Peter** (Georgia): I usually have broken sleep, no more than three to four hours. Here I had an unbroken full night's sleep. I felt more relaxed mentally and physically. While on walks, I greatly appreciated the conversation and the fresh air. On my return, I resolve to increase my efforts to learn English, to take more exercise and to spend more time in meditation.

**Ken** (China): I am so grateful to God for the beauty I have seen over the past few days. It is like a glimpse of heaven and it has focused my mind on the things that are important in life. In our excursions, I



Meal with the Canonesses of St Augustine

was thrilled to be so near the lakes and the sea. I am grateful for the generosity of this community of sisters. For me their willingness to invite a stranger like myself is a sign of the resurrection. I loved sharing their joy of being in religious life and their strong faith in God.

**Sherine** (Congo): I enjoyed enormously the change from London. Having a bad leg, I am stuck at home without any certainty of staying in this country and am unable to fix a date for the operation the doctor sees as necessary. In the course of my prayer here, I found hope and a willingness to wait with patience. I really appreciated my own room here. I normally am expected to clean the house in which I am given a room. Here I had the peace and quiet that I love. I can return with courage and confidence.

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**(Kathleen Diamond):** For my part, I felt the privilege of accompanying these women and men from JRS and having time to relax with them and share on a more personal level. Their delight in what I often take for granted - the hills, sheep grazing in the fields, having a room and space of one's own, peace and quiet - was for them a precious gift.

They were amazed and moved that some of the sisters who had met them only briefly, called each of them by name. What an important tribute to them, when in so much of their lives as asylum seekers each one feels they are a number.

## MY MISSION IN CANADA **Francina Irudayanathan, Aylmer, Canada**

I left India to come to Quebec, the French-speaking Province of Canada, in September 2016. I want to tell you what I do in the town of Aylmer where I live.

I am a catechist for the second year in the English-speaking parish of St. Mark. I was given the task of preparing children for First Communion. This year there are twenty-seven children in the class. What is interesting is that most of these children are from different cultures – Africa, Canada, China, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Philippines etc.

Catechetics is taught very differently here from the way it was done in my own country. It is not done in school. It is taught in the parish at the request of parents. We have to help the children and their parents to know Jesus and the values of the Eucharist and our faith life. The preparation takes nine months with two meetings each month for the children and four for the parents.



Before beginning the meetings, I visit each family in their home. The parents are welcoming and speak very openly about the high and low points of their faith formation and their lifestyle. I think it

is these visits that help us to get to know one another better and to develop relationships of trust.

I would like to tell you about another ministry I am involved in. I noticed that there are a lot of care homes for elderly people in Quebec and many of these people are alone. Even though most of them are well off and in good health, many are very lonely and want very much to be listened to and loved.

Seeing this, I offered to spend some time with them once a week. During our time together they reminisce enthusiastically about the past. This helps to ease their loneliness and to share their experiences with someone. And not only does this help them but, at the same time, I learn a lot about the ways and customs of the Quebecois people. This is very enriching for me.

So, even though I am very far away from India and the culture, language and way of thinking of these people are different, they are very friendly, welcoming and understanding. They are always encouraging and they have the lovely quality of respecting one another. I found these attitudes very inspiring and I wanted to do something more. I have begun to learn the piano and I see that as being important for evangelisation too. After a few lessons I began to play for Mass in the Care Home and I was very happy to see the smiles on their faces.

## FINDING MY PERIPHERY IN CANADA Marie-Paul Balula, hfb Canada

Holidays are over and work has begun. The community is reorganising itself and everything is well planned so that we can start out again. However, there is something gnawing at my heart.

The beautiful apartment blocks, town houses and huge buildings which surround us are hiding something. How can we get in there to share our mission? The peripheries which Pope Francis speaks about are not far away from us because these enormous constructions are our peripheries.

Then I had the idea of joining some community organisations in the city. So on Tuesday, 17 September, Pauline Marcheterre came to visit The Gilles KEGLE House with me.

The Gilles KEGLE House is an initiative of Mr. Gilles Kegel, a district nurse in downtown Quebec. He told us about his mission: "When I began my humanitarian work on 28 May 1986, I started by looking after four elderly people so that they could remain in their own homes. Before long, I was looking after about a hundred ill people. I concentrated on the people who were the poorest, the most destitute, elderly and alone and I also concentrated on travellers." Unfortunately, many of them were caught in a spiral of loneliness, alcoholism, drug abuse etc. Gilles helped them to recover their dignity.

A tireless and devoted apostle, he cycles or walks to visit and care for ill people in all kinds of weather.

On 5 Septembre 1997, upset because

he found a person who had died alone, he asked for some volunteers to help him. These volunteers were called missionaries of peace. He chose the motto, Love, Serve and Allow the Almighty to act for this group.

The Gilles KEGLE House welcomes the most destitute people from Quebec and the surrounding towns. They receive various kinds of help – food, clothes, medicines, health care, a listening ear, house-keeping etc. Gilles knows the situation of each person but the most important thing for him is the call to serve a human being. He shows his respect for the people he cares for by respecting the story of each one, being discreet, simple, sensitive etc.



Gilles organises the funerals of people who die alone or whose bodies are not claimed from the hospital and pays for them himself. On 4 October, we had the funerals of twenty-six people.

Since I wanted to work with the poorest people of Quebec and to be closer to marginalised people in order to discover the dark side of this society, I said that I would like to become involved in this mission. I received a warm welcome, did not have an interview

and was not asked for a work permit. Gilles needs people to help him in this great mission. He gave us work immediately because there is a lot to do and he always needs people to help him.

Then, Gilles brought us to visit the sick and vulnerable people whom I will look after. These people all live in apartments; they are alone, sometimes ill and without family. Each person's suffering depends on his/her personal history: loneliness, illness, physical, psychological and social issues. All these sufferings can be alleviated if there is someone there to listen to, welcome and respect these people – in short someone with a loving heart.

I could hardly believe the precarious situations I found in these buildings. The apartments sometimes hide unimaginable suffering. I see the need of offering my hand and a listening ear or of just being there. I am impressed by the number of young people who are involved in community organisations dedicated to helping the poor in our society. For me, it is a way of living the universal brotherhood and sisterhood about which the Gospel speaks. These young people serve with joy and simplicity.

"The only reason to be of the mission is to infect others with the goodness and charity of Christ".

### **My Mission in l'Arche Etoile in Qubec**

I also thought of helping people with disability who are living in l'Arche Etoile. I

found people there who are ill but happy. They live in community. The staff and volunteers welcome them in the day centre and provide various activities for them. Every Friday they go out to share the word of God with some homeless people who are given the use of a house near the centre.

The centre organises various activities to cover their costs. At the moment, it is apple picking. Several disabled people, staff, volunteers and friends of l'Arche are involved in this. Everyone lends a hand to pick apples which will be sold to make money for the centre.

**Picking apples**



## UPLIFT THE GIRL CHILD VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

### Malawi Team

On 4 August, 17 young women from Benga Center joined the one-month program "Uplift the Girl Child". Benga Parish has five centres; one of them is Benga Centre, which includes 9 sub stations. Mr. Francis Kandodo, a leader of the Catechists, helped us to recruit these young women.

The Program was held at Mkhula Primary school with the support of the Headmaster Mr. Hendry. On the opening day, Sr. Matilda Lazarus welcomed the group with the blessings of Rev. Fr. Fernando Aguirre while Srs. Girly Perera, Sudarshani Fernando and Nishali Kurera led them in prayer.

With Christ as the center of our lives, our journey began by each girl placing in front of the Easter Candle, the symbol of a foot print.

Mkhula Primary school is in Kachere village, seven kilometers interior from Benga Parish with no public transport to reach the village or the school. Most of the people walk the distance.



Aware of the lack of health facilities especially for children, we included nursing care in our program. During week-

days we dealt with Self-Development, Sewing and handicraft, Health Education and Home Garden and caring for the sick during week- ends. Every morning meditation methods were introduced and later, self-development activities, conflict/time management, to improve their self-confidence and cognitive power.

It was interesting to watch the thirst and the growth of the girls, starting from scratch to commit themselves seriously to bring forth completed works - dresses, skirts etc. Creativity that had been blocked by a life of poverty bloomed with opportunity!

The session on Home Garden and New Food items awakened them to different self-employment possibilities, preparing various food items from maize flour and groundnuts as a way of uplifting themselves and their families.

Being an agricultural society, almost all Malawians own land but their cultivation is limited to Potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, onions, sweet potatoes, sometimes pumpkin and cucumber. Most of it is marketed while they consume the leaves of pumpkin, sweet potatoes and Mustard. Some live in hunger. With the experience of keeping our own home garden, we realized the fertility of the soil to produce anything.

As a team, we are glad to have this Vocational Training program in Mkhula Primary School, where the staff too got involved and we appreciate the Headmaster assuring us of its continuity to the younger generation.

## Awarding ceremony

8 September, with the blessings of Mother Mary, the Super 17 young women presented themselves. Smart in white blouses Chithengi (Lungi), and with their favorite hair styles, they shone with joy at their achievement.... It was their day....Full of life...The invitees were welcomed in a dancing procession:

Rev. Fr. Fernando Aguirre, General of the Missionary Community of St. Paul the Apostle, Mrs. Ann, the President of International Ladies of Malawi, Mrs. Debbi and the team. We are thankful to them and all the local leaders who supported us. We dreamt, but their moral, physical and financial support made it come true!

Addressing the crowd Fr. Fernando emphasized the importance of the role of women in the society of Malawi, the need to encourage them to stand on their own feet and for young men to understand and respect women which alone can bring about a change in society.

The climax was the distribution of certificates along with packets of vegetable



seeds. Later the invitees were led by the "Super 17 women" in dance to the exhibition hall and the Model Home Garden.

We Thank God for making us conscious of the work of the Spirit...every step was a surprise-filled experience. We thank all who stood by us physically and spiritually, encouraging us and supporting us in this journey.



## OUR OPEN DAY The Novitiate Community (D. R. Congo)

On June 30, the Novitiate community and all the Sisters of the Holy Family who work in Idiofa organised an Open Day linked to the preparation for the Bicentenary. We were very happy to welcome people who listened attentively to the history of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu NOAILLES.

Sr. Joséphine KANGWA and the Novice Léonie MATEBA, explained the aim of the day briefly. We divided the topic into three parts: the foundation, the organisation and the works.



In the section on the foundation, Sr. Estelle LADZOU spoke about Pierre Bienvenu NOAILLES's conversion, his life in the seminary, his priestly ministry and his charism. She also explained the Miraculous Benediction of 1822 which took place two years after the foundation. This aroused great interest and awe among the audience.

When speaking about the structure, we presented the five Vocations of the Family of P. B. NOAILLES. The Consecrated Secular, Marie Claire MUPENDE, explained the life of Holy Family Consecrated Seculars, comparing it to leaven in the dough.

Madame Annibelle MAFUTA, a Lay Member, explained how the Lay Members live the Charism in their homes, their



workplaces, their neighbourhoods etc. They are attentive to others' needs, they incarnate the life of the family of Nazareth and live complementarity in diversity. Sr. Sévérine KANDOLO, explained the mission of the Apostolic Sisters who continue the mission of Christ.

Srs. Rosette ASSEK, Rita KIEYELE and the Novice Romanie KIANDU, explained our Charism and our works: education, healthcare, development work, Caritas and catechetics. The different leaders of the Institute from the foundation to the present day were presented by the Novice, Thérèse MUYAMA. Finally, Sr. Suzanne ELI spoke about various *Holy Family* documents.

The visitors were interested in our style of life. They asked some questions to get to know our Family better. Some asked for books so that they could read about the *Holy Family*. Many expressed the desire to become members.

We were very happy to make our Family known and to share the richness of our Charism. It was an experience which strengthened our bonds of communion.

## THE NEED TO STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Vivian Fernando (National Coordinator Talitha Kum Philippines (TKP))**

Human trafficking is a reality “which affects the most vulnerable in society; women of all ages, children, the handicapped, the poorest, and those who come from broken families and from difficult situations in society. Human trafficking is a terrible abuse of the dignity and human rights of men and women, girls and boys”. (Pope Francis)



My journey in this field began in 2013 with an inter-congregational team working to end human trafficking and modern day slavery. This is under the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines. Here, every day was an opportunity for new learning, mostly shocking and disturbing. The testimonies and sharing of women trafficked but now escaped, gave us a deeper knowledge of the situation. It motivated our team to give priority to education and collaboration in view of saving our people from this terribly harmful situation.

Pope Francis said that the work of raising awareness must begin at home, with ourselves, because only then our communities can be made aware of the

situation which in turn will motivate them to commit themselves so that there be no more victims ever of human trafficking.

Our Mission is to empower, organize and mobilize Consecrated Persons in the Philippines to respond to and counter human trafficking, and modern day slavery especially of women and children.

Our Goal is to strengthen the network with the Major Religious Superiors throughout the region, to prioritize the issue of human trafficking and raise awareness in people, reaffirming their dignity and roles and the need to maintain values, in the spirit of the Gospel.

The litany of assaults on the dignity and integrity of the Filipino is endless. The newest form of evil is cybersex. The UNICEF stated that the Philippines has become the global epicenter of the live-stream sexual abuse trade, and many of the victims being children even at the age of 2. UNICEF in its report of 1917 on “the State of the World’s Children” mentions poverty as one of the driving forces behind cybersex exploitation. This is coupled with a general ignorance regarding the nature and vastness of this crime. Surprisingly, it is the neighbours or parents themselves, who being either operators or partners in this trade that force the children to participate in these “shows”.

Talitha kum Philippines (TKP) operates on the United nation’s “Four P” frame work;

Prevention, Protection, Prosecutions and Partnership and has added prayer as our essential work of anti-trafficking of persons (ATIP). We partner with other networks, Catholic organizations and Inter faith movements, a special government agency and international Justice Mission in order to collaborate, support and participate in coordinated activities to bring human trafficking to an end.

We continue networking, organizing awareness sessions and forums, including conferences and conventions for consecrated persons on prevention, protection and safe guarding children from Online Sexual Exploitation (OSEC). Our Mission partners help us achieve our goals becoming clear about our Mission as Team. Working with international, inter congregational members is always a joyful and challenging task.

Our Holy Family Corporate Commitment 2014 says; Within this Global world we encounter people who are obliged to be "on the move" in inhuman conditions: migrants, refugees and displaced persons, those who are marginalized, trafficked, deprived of their dignity, in search of meaning in their lives.... This reality commits us, too, to live in a "state of exodus", moving out of our comfort zones and feelings of powerlessness, to "be with" offering our gift of communion.

The above words urged me to commit myself fully, to this challenging ministry. Participating in national, international conferences, meeting the Holy Father and receiving His blessings accompanied by inspiring and challenging words energized me and reminded me of my duty to collaborate, coordinate and network.

"Particular concern must be shown for migrant children and their families, those who are victims of human trafficking rings, and those displaced due to conflicts, natural disasters and persecution. All of them hope that we will have the courage to tear down the wall of 'comfortable and silent complicity' that worsens their helplessness; they are waiting for us to show them concern, compassion and devotion.

(Pope Francis, International migrants 14th June 2018)



## TO CELEBRATE BICENTENARY WITH THE YOUTH (Ida Joseph Rizal Community – Philippines)

The Holy Family Community in Rizal, Sorsogon, Philippines organized a Two-Days' Program of Seminar and Workshop on **"Youth at the cross-road with the challenges of teenage pregnancy and mental health awareness"**. It was held in the Holy Family Hall in Rizal for 620 Students of the Rizal National Senior High School and Parents, from July 29th-30th, 2019.

The Objective of this Activity is to create awareness on the impacts of early Teen pregnancy and the danger of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children and to engage the Parents in the dialogue to better understand their children and their situations.

The Two-day activity had a positive impact on the Students, especially on their outlook in life. For the parents it was an eye-opener to realize that their children have a different outlook in life and they are different from the youth before, having the freedom to make their own decisions.

### **The huge realization was:**

- ◆ That sexuality is sacred and cannot be violated
- ◆ A sound mind and spirit would guide them to decide and to delimit their actions.
- ◆ Social Media has over-powered them beyond their awareness.
- ◆ The need for discipline in life to become responsible for their life and actions

- ◆ They are vulnerable and in need of guidance and help.
- ◆ The call for openness and transparency among the youth and parents.

The Students' participation was rated 100% where the Students and Parents had the freedom to express themselves fully, and clarified many aspects and doubts regarding Sexuality.



They were well informed of the Online Sexual Exploitation and the measures to safeguard themselves. Their debate program was even very successful that left the Teachers and Parents wonder at the kind of knowledge the youth of today have acquired on sexuality and what it means to them. The Parents were educated on the Rights of Children and at the same time, they acknowledged the lack of skills to cope with the problems of the youth and their lack of knowledge about Social Media, which is playing a bigger role to influence the Youth of today.

We are thankful to the "Talitha Kum" Organization and the members who

kindly obliged to conduct the seminar, tackling sensitive subjects with care and respect for the participants to get involved. We are thankful too for the Principal and the faculty members of Rizal National Senior



High School for their expressed need and the cooperation extended to us to make the program effective and successful. We have undertaken this as a Family program with the presence and active participation of the Lay Associates of Rizal – our Partners in Mission.

We are convinced that a healthy environ-

ment of spiritual, moral, cultural and social Values invested and nurtured consciously will bring forth a Future Generation of Youth believing in themselves and their potentialities to become "YOUTH FOR CHANGE" and in turn be true Citizens of the Country and will take pride in being called the "Children of God".

## SILVER JUBILEE AT RAMAKUPPAM SANTHIYA (INDIA)

Ramakuppam was our first Holy Family community in Andhra Pradesh, which is one of the biggest states in India. The people speak Telugu; the culture and the lives of the people are completely different from that of the Tamil speaking people. Knowing the situation of the people, language, culture and life style, our first four pioneers Srs. Marion, Milred, Josephine and Latha came forward to dedicate their life with enthusiasm. It was hard work learning a new language at that time.

On 29 June 1994, Fr. Susai Antony, the Episcopal Vicar of Chittoor, officially inaugurated and blessed our

Holy Family foundation. Sisters lived in a rented house owned by a Hindu lady for two and half years, and later we shifted a house in a colony. The first year our Sisters were learning the new language and knowing the life of the people,



culture, language etc... Sr. Josephine started to teach in the Telugu medium school, which was run by the Diocese of Cuddapah where we belong.



Continuing with what Sr. Josephine was doing from the 1995 onwards our sisters were engaged in non-formal education and awareness programs for women in ten villages with the help of CMSSS (Chittoor Multipurpose Social Service Society). We were also teaching tailoring and organizing Grihini programme for six months to the women of that area. It was a great opportunity for our Sisters to be with the people and helped them to come up in their day today life.

On 15 September 1996, we opened the house built for the Holy Family. We were able to extend our ministries, especially we started a hostel for girls who come from the poor and tribal areas. We continued this ministry for 20 years. We do not have the boarders anymore because the Government of Andhra Pradesh has begun a free education system for all.

At present, we are doing our ministry in different ways. We gather children for the evening coaching classes in ten villages. For each village there is one teacher appointed by the Holy Family and in a creative way, we organized this coaching class.

We are happy to say from the beginning we were forming Holy Family Lay Associates. Five families are committed and others are in formation, who will be committing in our Bicentenary year.

Pastoral ministry is also part of our program. Cuddapah Diocese is not a fully Catholic area. Catholics are very few, spread out in different villages. So also, Ramakuppam parish Christians are in a few different villages. We helped the parish priest to organize pastoral planning to all these villages. Sisters take great responsibility to visit all the families in these different substations.

We started celebrating the silver jubilee of our foundation on 29 June 2019 with a Holy Eucharist in a simple way with our Lay Associates and parishioners. After the Mass, we planted fruit trees in our campus and we distributed saplings to the people. God made use of us as His Instruments to live our life fully and give our life to Him and to His people.

At this juncture, we made an evaluation to see how we need to grow our presence and make our ministries more effective.

We thank God for the Sisters, past and present, who worked here in this land, for the people whom we serve and for the beautiful nature which surrounds us.



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