



Interconnections

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WALK TO THE HOUSE OF BETHLEHEM...



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The Charism is a gift to share, a gift for others. It must always remain open, in whatever form, to reach other people, in order to extend the movement of synergy. *“To share the Charism is to stand together around this fire to bring its warmth to the world and to our lives; to live with the other out of a common inspiration that makes us recognize each other as brothers and sisters in diversity, which creates communion in different states of life.”*

(Meeting Point 6)



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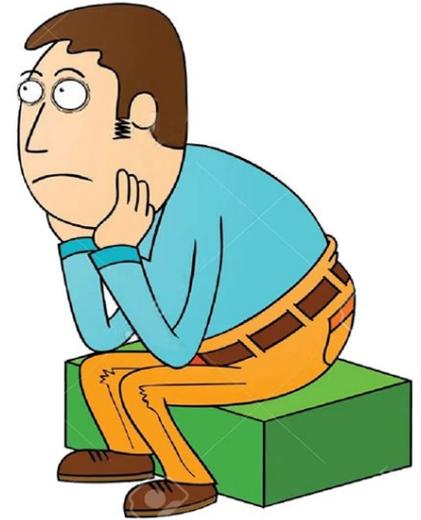
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EDITORIAL

"I WAIT FOR THE LORD, MY WHOLE BEING WAITS, AND IN HIS WORD I PUT MY HOPE." (PS:130.5)

No one likes to wait. But we spend a lot of time waiting. We wait in the traffic, wait for transportation, wait in the grocery shop, wait for someone, wait for the response, wait for a promotion, wait for a better future, wait for the season of life, etc. Waiting is not just something we have to do while we get what we want. Waiting is the process of becoming what God wants us to be.



Every creature has its own way of living its life cycle. The life cycle of a butterfly is truly amazing. It undergoes four stages: the egg, the larva (caterpillar), the pupa (chrysalis), and the adult butterfly. Each of the stages is unique to individual species of butterflies. It waits for the four stages in order to transform its purpose.

We are entering the new cycle of life, the new liturgical year, and the season of Advent, which invites us to deepen our understanding of the Incarnation. It is a season of waiting and promise, a time of longing and anticipation. This waiting gives us the joy to change our routine schedule in order to experience real happiness in our hearts. In our waiting, **let us travel with hope, love, faith, and peace to the house of Bethlehem.**



HERE IN ROME

GENERALATE

Sr. Barbara Sygitowicz from the Unit of Poland joined in the Generalate Local Community in September 2022. On 1st November, the General Council and Local Community gathered for a double celebration: All Saints Day, and the installation of Sr. Barbara as the community animator, in a special prayer service. We thank her for saying 'Yes' to this service at the heart of our common mission. Also, we extend our gratitude to Sr. Maria de Lourdes de la Fuente, who has been animating the community for the past years. Let us walk together, as companions on our common journey, daring to "cross to the other side" following the call to live our purpose in our third century.



LETTING GO IS WHAT IS IMPORTANT

We are in the year 2022 , the post-capitular period, so this is the favourable time for a "new beginning" of our consecrated life, and every new beginning has a special grace given by the Spirit of God.

Such a new beginning, however, requires a change of mindset, a sincere conversion to the life of God in us, allowing ourselves to be carried by God, trusting Him and also those who represent Him.

"Can we still live our reason for being as we begin our third century?"

Of course – because history moves on and we must leave behind what ties us down as persons, to welcome the new that today brings.

It is not always easy, because sometimes we must go against the current, that is, 'leave' things that have given us life for years and abandon ourselves to the new, which we do not always know fully, with child-like trust in the Spirit who guides our lives. God is present in our lives; sometimes we don't quite believe it, but God does not change.

Our recent history has been

sad because of what we have experienced during the pandemic that affected the whole world. Now with the Lord's help and the proper medicine, we are coming out of it. But we are much more fragile physically and psychologically. Greater mutual trust is needed - even in our communities! - to care for each other, as true sisters.

Pope Francis asks us to be serene, happy, and we can



live these realities if we have healthy relationships and if we abandon ourselves to God.

In recent months, we Europeans in particular have been living through a very sad and difficult time because of Russia's war in Ukraine, and we do not know how it will evolve in the future; it could draw in other neighbouring countries.

Peace is the desire of every heart. We believe in the peace that Jesus gives after his Resurrection, but it is a peace not of this world.

But what can we daughters and sons of the Holy Family of Bordeaux do to make our contribution to Peace in today's world?

First of all, live the process of personal, family and community conversion that leads us to be merciful like the Father, towards ourselves and towards others. Then to be creative in the face of difficult situations that arise when we come into contact with others in the workplace and in every expression of social life.

Jesus experienced many difficulties during his earthly life: both during his life in Nazareth and in the proclamation of the Kingdom. A life that led him to give his all for us, but on the Third Day he rose from the dead and this is what gives us hope. While he lived among us, he always manifested himself in humility, in true humanity.

We too must, each with our own possibilities, contribute to the building of peace. This is what God and humanity ask of us today. The Good

Father, when he founded our Family, looked around to see how to respond to the needs of humanity at that time. We, too, must trust and believe that if we are faithful to the Lord who calls each day, he himself will suggest how we can respond to the needs of the Church in today's world.

We often noted the relevance of the Charism and the need to live this gift on a personal and community level, in the Institute and as Family. Is now not the time

to listen again to God's call to recover the wonder of the beginning...? (cf. Post-Chapter Circular No. 321)

If we listen to God, we will be helped to understand what to do to go out to meet others. It will be a new re-founding of the Holy Family. It is not numbers that count today, but above all being at the service of others with one's whole self.

The world has become "one big village", we must participate with our hearts in what

is happening in the world. This opens us up to the needs of everyone, no matter how far away they are from us.

Let us accept the invitation of our Founder: **"Go forward"**. May he accompany us with his example of goodness so that all those we meet may recognise in us the traces of the kind pastor who cared for the sheep of Jesus, the true and gentle Shepherd of the flock to which we all belong.

Sr. Antonella Alessandro

Via dei Gracchi - Italy, Rome

SAVING EARTH

ACQUIRING JUSTICE FOR ALL

We live in an increasingly interdependent world. The paths of greed, individualism, consumerism and nationalism endanger our planet. Like dry rot or rising damp, they infiltrate what is good and beautiful and leave only a trail of destruction and despair.

But we have the power to change all that. Even at the eleventh hour, if we take positive action and work together, fired with the spirit of Pope Francis and his Patron Saint, we can bring beauty, healing and hope to our fractured world. We can make the impossible possible. Yes, we can!

Francis reminds us in 'Laudato Si' (LS) that the world is a gift, which we have freely received and must share with others. It is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. It belongs to those who will follow us. It is on loan to each generation. So what shape will it be in, when we hand it on to the next generation?



One wonders. Judging from current reports, "we may well be leaving debris, desolation and filth" (Ls: 161)

We humans are just one species in the vast web of life. ALL that lives is moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is the Holy one, our God. We do not go there alone. We go together. We are not the dominant species. We are one of bil-





rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive” (Catholic Bishops Conference New Zealand, Sept. 2006)

So, what can we do to bring about change of mindset in order to get justice for all and save planet Earth? Well, we

lions and billions of species. We humans are endowed with intelligence and love **“and are called to lead all creatures to their Creator”** (LS: 86). We are called to lead with gentleness, care and concern. Made in the image and likeness of our God and given dominion over the Earth does not justify absolute domination over other creatures. Dominion in the context in which it is used in Genesis must be understood as responsible stewardship (LS:67). We cannot bully and ride roughshod over all others. If we do, then we need to ask: where is the respect for the dignity of all that exists? Such action points to ‘rampant individualism’ and today’s self centred culture of instant gratification. It is morally wrong. We are told that “20% of the world’s population consumes resources at a

have a voice. We can speak out. We can take action in collaboration with so many others locally and worldwide through peaceful protests, for example. We can learn more about injustices in our world today by reading; we can write about it, pray about it; take action as community. All of us can do something and we must.

Our time is NOW! We cannot be passive. A 999 call will not save the Earth; neither will it put breakfast on the table for the homeless. The power to save the Earth and get justice for all is in our hands. We have the skills, the ability, and the creativity. We are not here to exploit the ‘gift’; we are here to develop it and eventually save it; to live in harmony with all that is, and acquire justice for all. This is perhaps the greatest challenge of the 21st century.

So, how are we the members of the PBN Family measuring up to the challenge?

Sr. Margaret Bradley
Britain & Ireland

"ARISE AND SHINE!" (IS 60, 1A).

From 22 to 25 September 2022, the **IV CONGRESS OF YOUNG CONSECRATED** took place at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Licheń, with 612 participants from more than 100 orders, congregations, institutes, associations and communities of consecrated life.

We, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, were also there. We went with a whole group of Sisters from the vocation ministry. The theme of the Congress was the words from the Book of Isaiah: "Arise and shine!" (Is 60:1a). In addition to common prayer - the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours and Adoration- Congress was a wonderful opportunity to meet in groups and to listen to many enriching conferences and testimonies.

For me, the youngest Sister in our SFB Province, it was a very rich experience of meeting beautiful diversity in unity. I met a lot of young consecrated persons - who, like me, have given their lives for Christ and want to make Him known to the whole world. Hence the theme of the congress was very close to my heart: 'To give witness to one's vocation and faith'. To shine with authenticity! Only if I am authentic in my vocation can I become a witness and the best 'advertisement' for my congregation.

This wealth of charisms in the Church, which I saw at the Congress, further enkindled in me the desire to share our charism with the world: In One Church, there is room for a myriad of different religious and lay institutes. But we were there, despite our diversity, ONE, that is, a COMMUNION IN CHRIST. And this communion, this building of Unity, is after all



our charism! It is definitely timeless and very universal.

Together with the Sisters, we were delighted to see so many young Religious. The Lord God has not stopped calling young people to serve Him. I firmly believe that He will continue to grant us new vocations, if only with tireless fidelity we will, first within the Institute and then outside, bear witness to UNITY in spite of diversity and FAMILY: which is always open to others.

I am also very happy that there were young Oblates at the meeting, with whom we share a common history and spiritual heritage. They remember this and - like us - want to cherish this spiritual friendship of our Founders.

Finally, I would like to thank the Provincial Sister who made it possible for our entire vocation team to participate in this congress and that she was present with us on the last day, when we all entrusted to God through the hands of Mary, our Congregations and Institutes.

Glory to God alone in Jesus Christ, through Mary and Saint Joseph!

Sr. Beata - Poland

SHARING OF THE UISG FORMATORS' PROGRAMME



A six-month programme for formators organized by the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) took place at the UISG headquarters in Rome from 24 January to 30 June 2022. Forty-five Religious from 23 countries, and 21 congregations participated in the course, which was an orientation toward methods for use in various stages of formation. Three of our Holy Family sisters Jacqueline Asseervatham – Unit Rwanda and Uganda, Salomi Reshma Ekka – Unit India and Liezel Esteves, – Unit Philippines, participated in this programme and they share their experiences with us. They express their gratitude to Sr. Ana Maria Alcalde and Council and to their Unit Leadership Teams for giving the opportunity to partake in this programme.

Jacqueline



It was a enriched an multi-cultural living experience with different nationalities. It was a time of personal growth, transformation and experience of integration as well as interior exploration, in order to experience the human giftedness of each

person as unique. Pope Francis says in his letter (Evangelii gaudium-45) ***“A missionary heart is aware of these limits and makes itself ‘week with week....everything for everyone”***(1Cor9;22).

All the inputs expanded my thinking, widened my realistic knowledge enkindled my sense of mission to build God’s Kingdom with conviction . It requires adjustment and adaptation on the part of community and the will to continue to grow in this way of reflecting, learning each

time and interacting with my brothers and sisters. I was challenged by a phrase of St. Benedict “ listen with the ear of your heart”. Here I understand that listening with the ear of the heart is more effective than listening with the ear of the head. The fact is that religious life is not simply a labour force in the church but it is a searching presence in contemporary society.

I experienced eight days of guided retreat in beautiful surroundings. To be immersed in natural beauty, which along with a long lake revealed the true might and beauty of God was an enriching experience. The atmosphere and the personal guide helped me to experience the richness of a looking into the world of Jesus, his contemplation, crises and his thirst for humanity ***“I am mission, doing Christ’s ministry as a missionary disciple”*** so let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus

Christ.

All the themes, integration days after every two months, group discussions, sharing congregational stories and mentoring helped me to deepen and personalize the inputs. In addition, from time to time we were refreshed and renewed our minds and hearts by cele-

brating cultural days and the birthdays of every sister, as well as visiting the historical places of Rome. The culmination of all experiences were inviting me now to rebuild in the shell of the old. It is time to realize and become an incarnational presence in the world.

Salomi



'How good it is to give thanks to the Lord.'

Yes I am glad to share about God's guidance and his unconditional love towards everyone who has been a part of my life and a part of this journey in Rome

UISG for past six months. It was a very balanced program with a wide range of topics and other opportunities. The richness of the participants coming from different countries was very valuable. I feel the program was very enriching, life giving, challenging, interesting, helpful and strengthening, especially for my own personal growth. I experienced a kind of transformation that was very satisfying. As we are preparing for the synod 2023 we learned not to compete with each other but to collaborate. The big challenge was to come out from the comfort zone and let go of myself so that others may be let in. It was a first thrilling experience for me to have this course with sisters from different countries. It enriched me a lot to learn from one another specially the formation program of the other congregations.

Formation is a life long journey. We are responsible for our own formation. The group activity made me have confidence in the group members and so all were free, enthusiastic and very open in our sharing's. It was an eye-opener for me to believe in saying – "Never stop learning and building up or reconstructing interpersonal relationship". We were reminded once again that we cannot give

what we do not have. Self-awareness and self-care help us to become our best self, build healthy boundaries which makes us better carers. The mission has a church, and we are partnering with God in his mission. So mission as a call to prophetic dialogue means being with people, listening, sharing, having thirst, passion and sacrifice for Mission. Formation for mission is to have **EPIC culture: *Experiential, participatory, image and connectedness.***

Mission is to enter into the pathos of people. I learnt to have connection with self, nature and God who has an answer for every problem that we encounter in prayer. Also we had directed retreat for 8 days in Nemi and it was a grace filled experience for me, besides meeting the retreat guide every day. Eucharistic celebration and an hour of silence adoration daily helped me to gaze at Jesus in different chapels. The environment helped me to connect with nature.

May 20th was remarkable day for each one of us. The theme of our cultural day was – **"Celebrating the Beauty of our Cultural Diversity in the Spirit of Synodality"**. The celebration was marked with different events in which 22 countries of the participants were represented. Each participant had two representatives from the communities. Sr. Pat Murray IBVM, the coordinators of the programme, Sr. Cynthia Reyes SRA and Sr. Toni Longo ASC graced the occasion. The day kicked off with the exhibition of the Artifacts from different countries, as well prepared solemn Eucharistic celebration which depicted the different traditions and customs of 22 countries. The variety of cultur-

al items presented by the different groups like dance steps, melodious voices added beauty to the day. Indeed it was a day of cultural diversity and a witnessing of what we have been learning for the past five months. It was one of the events started for the formation programme organized by the International Union of superiors General (UISG) 2022 participants. Beside our classes we had outings and visited many important churches and prayed for our congregation. Also we were very happy to meet the Holy Father and attended his Mass many times which was an amazing moment in my life.

I learned a lot and course itself was very knowledgeable and full of valuable information

to work in the formation. I really enjoyed it. It has enhanced my awareness. Thank you so much for being so helpful and concerned from the beginning till the end. Also I express my deep sentiment of gratitude for all the expenses for my study and accommodating with our sisters at Generalate community and Provincialate community with my fellow sisters. Srs. Jacqueline, Liezel who were the great support for me. As our Good Father says ***“Love God in everything he gives you to do, serve him lovingly and for himself alone, that is the way which leads to our true home”*** (ST. 219), I am happy to commit myself for the mission entrusted to me.

Liezel



Mary sings the Magnificat expressing her praise to God, I too rejoice for the grace given to me experiencing His Love for the journey I had in Rome. It is a joy and privilege to be part of the five-month pro-

gram preparing formators for our congregations. Thanking our sisters, participants, our UISG coordinators and team, presenters and mentors.

My journey of five months being in this program enriches me and opens my mind and heart to the invitation of religious life today. I am challenged and urged to learn, reflect and assimilate more on how to become vibrant and enthusiastic in my vocation and mission, to bring newness to us religious in our way of encountering, dealing and relating to all. It will help us remove our judgmental attitudes and mind set and our interpretation in action and reaction. It challenges us to become creative in using our senses, especially the ears. We are invited to listen, to give attentive listening before performing any action, activities or even preaching. The listening of the heart.

The journey of this formators program widened my perspective in understanding religious life. In order to become effective and live meaningfully I need to deepen my life in the aspect of Being. I need to be aware of my way of witnessing to others - a reminder for me to be fully Human which is caring and loving. We religious sometimes forget to be human as we give more importance to forming ourselves spiritually. We compartmentalize, we tend to hide or suppress the negative feelings. It's a reminder for me to allow myself to be truly who I am, and become aware of myself. Having new perspective in life on how to cope in this fast-changing world, I need to be awake to the commitment I made and be conscious on my connection to the reality and context.

The great memory that summarized my experienced of the program was the Cultural day. I experienced the beauty and richness of our diversity. Each participant presented who they are, which helped me to build up my openness and relate to them freely. Our personality, behaviour, culture our uniqueness combines talents and giftedness. Our process together owning it becomes a single journey which brought out who we are. I connect this to our way of living in community where each one's uniqueness forms a mosaic, and the contribu-

tion of each one brings beauty to the whole. Finally, this program helped me in practical ways to strengthen myself for the Mission. I gained new knowledge and experiences being

with other congregations and different cultures. Living inter-culturally strengthened and opened me to a wider view. The experienced was so rich, and being in Rome itself is a great privilege. I enjoyed and was energized.

TAKING ACTION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SKIN CANCER

We, the community of the Holy Family Novitiate in Idiofa, have undertaken the manual production of toilet soap made from the plants of Hyssop and Aloe Vera. This initiative is the fruit of our listening and closeness to our people, a response that we want to give to their cries and concerns. The idea was born out of the observation and reality that many people have destroyed the melanin substances in their skin and are prone to skin cancer as a result of using skin-lightening cosmetics. We are not indifferent to this situation. That is why we want to make our contribution to abolish this scourge: to guarantee the protection of the skin of the population of Idiofa in particular, but which we also wish to extend to other cities.

We felt invited to examine and adopt strategies that could help our brothers and sisters in need, to nourish their skin at a lower cost, in order to protect melanin substances.

With our research, in a rural area, Idiofa, we have experienced that soap made from plants: Hyssop and Aloe Vera is an answer to this concern.

The manufacture of this soap, offered at low cost, is for us a contribution to the fight against

one of the problems that plague Congolese society in general and that of Idiofa in particular.

Indeed, the research done tells us that hyssop is a sacred purification plant described in Psalm 51. The Bible calls it the herb of forgiveness. Soap made from the hyssop plant purifies and clears the skin of all impurities. Aloe Vera, known for its multiple properties, moisturises, heals and softens the skin. Its gel also relieves skin lesions.



The good use of some natural products allows us to share this experience of soap-making based on hyssop and aloe vera, so that all together, we can act for the protection of our skin based on plants offered to us freely by our environment, in order to reduce the risk of skin cancer to the as much as possible.

Dear brothers and sisters, your contribution to the continuation of this initiative, this mission will be welcome. However, we remain open to your suggestions. All together, let us be aware and act for the promotion of our low cost and easy to manage plant-based skin care products in order to reduce the risk of skin cancer. This is now our battle cry!

Sr. Solange BOMA

R.D.Congo/Burkina Faso

Lesotho

We had several seminars on the new worldview and the invitations from different sources, like the "Laudato Si" and "Our Vowed Life for Mission" to engage effectively in caring for our Common Home. In response to this plea as a community, we felt the need to contribute effectively to caring for Mother Earth and planned to set out a cleaning campaign at Ha Mafefoane to mark the celebration of World Environment Day, which was on June 5, 2022.

A few days before the celebration, we visited the village chief of Ha Mafefoane, notified him about our desire, and invited him and his people to participate in a cleaning campaign in his village. The chief was pleased with the idea and promised to inform his villagers. On the actual day, however, the turnout was poor due to a funeral service that was held in the village on the same day.

As part of preparation for the campaign, we visited St. Joseph hospital to seek advice and assistance on how we could safely dispose of the waste we were to collect. The hospital not only agreed to help us safely dispose of our collected waste but also donated refuse bags to use during the campaign. We also invited the students of St. Mary's High School to participate in the campaign as a way of

teaching them to know that the survival of our planet depends on the contribution of each one of us.

Before the commencement of our journey, one of the Sisters briefly explained to the people present the purpose of the day and the importance of caring for and keeping our Common Home clean, because we are related to and interconnected with Mother Earth

and all she has. The students were delighted to take part in the campaign.

We started cleaning from the area outside St. Mary's High School and made our way to Ha Mafefoane until we reached St. Joseph Hospital, our disposal area. People who passed by were very content and amazed at

what we did. From time to time, they gave words or signs of gratitude for the work well done. Arriving at the hospital, we found the security guards already waiting for us at the gate; they directed us to the place where we took our collected waste. The campaign helped us realize that it is in our hands to see to it that we create and make the world a better place. Every little effort we put into caring for our common home makes a difference.

'Every little effort we put into caring for our common home makes a difference.'



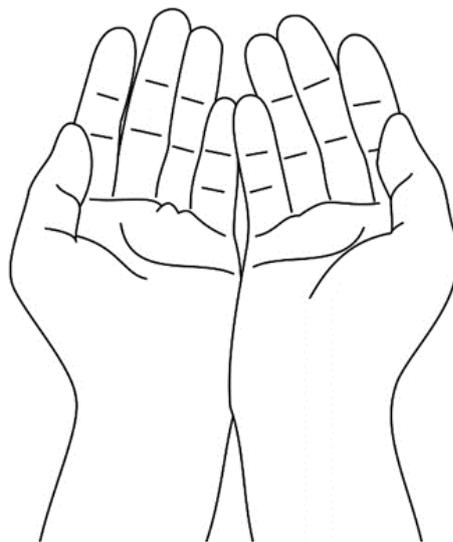
THE JOY OF MY PROFESSION...



started giving therapeutic massage at a very young age at the leprosarium in 1989, under the encouragement of Srs. Consuelo and Marie Paula, Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. They encouraged me to give myself to the leprosarium, in order to support my parents and my family. My parents were lepers, so this galvanised me to give more of myself to help and understand people with disabilities. I was lucky enough to participate and be trained by the group from the University of France who came to Africa to train people in this profession. It was much later that I opened my own centre, supported by the Sisters of the Holy Family, and by Don Justo De La Valee. It is a very noble profession, I do it with determination, to fight against disability. It is my passion, because for me, to re-

ceive a disabled person who cannot walk, and who after a time of care, massage and accompaniment manages to stand on his two feet and to take steps is a real miracle. Sometimes it is not easy, because this is a very sensitive, aggressive and demanding category; however, it requires us to receive them with a lot of gentleness, patience and calm in order to better accompany them and help them overcome their illness. It is in this that I find my joy, which is fortified in Christ, who gives me the strength to continually set my objectives on results and not on salary. Yes, lifting people up is what we humbly seek in our profession.

I know that it is not easy for parents with disabled children, especially in Africa where the evolution of this science is not yet known in its entirety, because in some families where we still find cases of a disabled child (Cerebral palsy, club foot...), the parents take him to river to drown him, saying that it is a sacrifice to the God of water ... but times have now changed. There is a need for a great deal of awareness-raising to be done at this



level, because people living with a disability also have their dignity. And it is our duty to accompany them from birth to old age.

My deepest wish is that the Lord will grant me and my team, and all the people who work in the background, the necessary strength to continue to accomplish this mission that he has entrusted to us.

Ndoukoua Yves

Lay Associate

Cameroon - Chad

THE EARTH IS OUR MOTHER - OUR COMMON HOME

Yes, indeed, the Earth is our Common Home. We are blessed and privileged to be surrounded by the beautiful "thousand hills" in Gikongoro, Rwanda. Every day we encounter the life-giving energy of God through fresh greenery and cooling clement weather. The people of our country are so connected and dependent on our mother Earth because our main livelihood and income is cultivation.

After the arrival of our new Unit Leader, Sr. Micheline Kenda, we are more aware and thirst to taste "Laudato Si" in a deeper way with the people around us. On September 21, 2022 with the support of the Gikongoro community, Sr. Micheline initiated the beginning of a "Laudato Si" group, which consists of some local people, especially our friends called Batwa, who are marginalized by our society, as well as our Holy Family Lay Associates, the Pre-Novices, and the Sisters. It has been continuing every Monday since we started to work together. The responses of the people are amazing, and we immensely admire and appreciate their interest. We were awed to see their active participation with the desire to know more about what Pope Francis teaches regarding **"Our Common Home."** They were really free to express their ideas and opinions, and they were wondering how we could implement these reflections of the Pope in our day-to-day lives. They are very happy to share with their friends and neighbours what they have learned



from here.

It is our urgent duty to educate our children to have a love for our common home and try to protect it. If we don't encourage them to safeguard our Mother Earth, we'll hand her over to our future generations when she is full of the tears of suffering and destruction. We also encourage others to plant as many trees as possible. As our country is on a strategy of zero tolerance to the use of plastic bags, we'll continue to support this policy by using



cloth and paper bags and encourage others to do so.

I truly feel convinced that it is my/our great responsibility to safeguard our marvelous creation; it is the favorable time to put into practice all the changes that I/we wish to see in our world today. Even the very little damage that we do to any species of nature harms us all. In the same way, our tiny acts of protection and love will lead to life

today and tomorrow. Everything is possible when we work together. This reflection of "Laudato si" awakens us more to deepen one of the calls of our General Chapter, which is "Care of our Mother Earth." In this way, being part of the "Laudato si" Action Plan is an act of hope for the future, which we are building together now. We commit ourselves to avoiding the destruction that we have been doing to our common home and to our brothers and sisters.

I am grateful to Sr. Micheline, who is facilitating this important awareness.

As a Unit, we have embarked seriously on the reflections that are presented in "Meeting Point 6. This is in response to the invitation of the International-Intervocation Formation Team. On September 20th, we had a Zoom Meeting which was facilitated by Sr. Winie, the coordinator of this international team. We gathered as two vocations; the Holy Family Lay Associates; the Youth and the Children of the Holy Family; and the Apostolic Sisters. Sr. Winie helped us to deepen many elements of the Meeting Point, which are responding to the "Three decisions of the 6th Council of the Family: The Charism, the Planet, and

Common Formation. Emphasizing on our participation in actions to save the Planet, she said it is our duty to raise awareness of the need to change our mentality. Another important element is the need to be responsible in a serious way for taking concrete actions. Our small group here in Gikongoro has started seriously. Inspired by Sr. Winie's rich presentation, all of us entered into a vibrant conversation trying to find valid proposals for action, and the young people were energetic and lively in their responses. We desire to continue in this spirit and to make a meaningful contribution to life in Gikongoro.

Sr. Mary Thanuja Venismerin

Rwanda/Uganda

SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

HOLY FAMILY SISTERS' PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

Unit India

The rapid growth in science and technology affects people's thinking, morality and especially their spirituality. There is a need to change the strategies of evangelisation according to the needs of the time. The Synod is one of those strategies. In 2015 Pope Francis spoke of a Synodal Church as a church which listens, more than simply hearing, it's a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. Walk-

ing together may bring more connectedness with the people of God.

We understand that synodality means a way, a path or a specific and particular style or method of being church as the people of God. It's a call for all of us to journey together, listen together, communicate together and do our mission together as one family of God's people in the Church.

The Synod on Synodality has

been a blessing for the Church in India as it has been the largest national exercise – the first of its kind. 129 out of 132 Latin Catholic dioceses across rural, urban and even remote areas of the country participated. The inaugural Eucharistic Celebrations in the dioceses were held in a solemn and elaborate way with some dioceses including leaders of other faiths and traditions. Preparation for the consultations included translation



creation, with nature. The climatic changes affect life on the earth in numerous ways. These changes are having various impacts on the ecosystem and ecology as the world is now warming faster than at any point in recorded history. As a response to this situation we as a community planted trees for any celebrations or any gatherings in the church and in the community. Though our area is known as perennially drought-prone, and dependent on the monsoon, we took as a challenge to take care of them and given awareness to the children, youth and people around us. Now we are happy to see the youth who always provide saplings to the people to plant them in their surroundings. This will bring bright future and bring changes in our district of Sivagangai.

Secondly it is a renewal for us to re-examine our relationship among us, in our communities and in our local church. After hearing of this synodality the church has taken the effort to invite the people from the laity, consecrated religious and secular members and explained the meaning of communion, participation and mission in the church. Time was given to the entire group to share their views and opinions about our participation and our role in the church. We were amazed to see the open

of the documents into 49 local languages. The synod logo and banner were displayed prominently across parishes and institutions and the synod prayer was recited in families and parishes.

Initial skepticism and resistance gave the synodal process a slow start in some dioceses. Paucity of time and the ongoing pandemic situation limited the training of coordinators and outreach to remote areas. While efforts were di-

rected at the more readily available faithful, many of those distanced from the Church could not be included. The organization and facilitation of consultations were led by clergy / religious in many dioceses where lay involvement has not yet come to the fore.

First and foremost this synodality invites us to have right relationship with the cosmic family. We try to re-examine our relationship with the entire

sharing of each one where we experienced the generative listening and creative participation that gives us hope to revitalize our church as people of God. We are aware that to promote more consensus-based decision-making in our communities, in our mission areas we are challenged to move from “command control” model to consensus model.

Thirdly we were inspired to develop more and more transparency in our decision-making, in financial management and in our mission field. It is a reminder for us to live our charism of communion in and around the community and to take steps for transformative action towards our life and mission. This synodality moved us to come out from the attitude of individualism

to communion.

Today in our world, there is increased awareness of freedom, autonomy, dignity, human rights etc. As St. Paul says, the church is a body in which all members are bound in a relationship of interdependency and equal dignity, but of course with different gifts and charisms. This journey together will call on us to renew our mentalities and our ecclesial structures in order to live out God’s call for the Church amid the present signs of the times. Listening to the entire people of God leads us to respect human dignity and give preference for the voiceless and the abandoned.

Our Founder Pierre Bienvenu cultivated the call to renew the Church of his time, to present to the world a God who was near and a Church with a

‘family face’, something for which the first Christian communities have left us a taste. Inspired by God he conceived the plan of a vast Society, something very new for his time. It would welcome within its fold women and men of all conditions and vocations.

All of us are called to live one vocation and that is the vocation to holiness - the baptized Eucharistic Christians. So the synodality discourse is going to change the way all of us participate in building of the church and that is the dream and vision of our founder’s desire - *“Have but one heart, one mind, one will – to make Our Lord loved and to win all hearts to him. Then, this good Master will dwell in your midst, and the Holy Family Association, faithful to its mission, will continue to do good upon the earth.”*



CALL TO REVEAL GOD’S MERCIFUL LOVE

Gojra Community

Pakistan

Nature is the sign of God’s presence. In Pakistan, we have many beautiful tourist places. In fact, the country is blessed with beauty and natural resources. We cherish it in abundance, and whenever we need relaxation, peace, stillness, and the desire to spend some time with ourselves, we all turn to somewhere like a park, riverbank, beach, woods, zoo, and so on. Everything is excellent when it’s in balance.

The world knows how the people of Pakistan have suffered the past few months due to floods and heavy rain in most parts of the country. 70% of the country was under water.



All four provinces—Sindh, Baluchistan, KPK, and Punjab—were affected very severely. People have lost their loved ones; animals and houses are wiped away; it is as though they

never existed. Crops were ready to be harvested when the land became infertile. The furious water took all the roads with it. People didn't have time to reach safety. Old people who were not able to walk were carried on the shoulders of their sons or on animals. People on the road were washed away into the drains with their vehicles; those on the streets were carried away by the heavy flow of water; children didn't have time to return from school, neither could parents go to take them to safe places. It was actually a pitiful and unbearable situation.

Seeing the needs of the people, our Sisters from Gojra Community collaborated with the parish priest, planned, shared with the Holy Family Sisters, collected many eatable and usable articles (clothes to wear stitched and unstitched, kitchen things, quilts, etc.) from generous people, and on 8 September went to be one with the victims. They travelled around eight hours and reached the interior of Dera Ghazi Khan, a place unknown to them. They could not communicate much because of the language barrier, but somehow our sisters, priests, and catechists managed to get to know the people through the signs. As soon as people saw the vehicle, hoping to get some aid, they all rushed towards them. They started fighting among themselves and with our group because they wanted things only for themselves. According to their words, three weeks had passed, but up to that time no help had reached them. Our group helped more than fifty families with food and other items. They were very grateful to receive the help.

The group said it was a great consolation and a source of peace to see smiles on their faces. At the same time, it was very painful to see the small children, old and sick people, and the pathetic situation of the pregnant women who were without any medical facilities.

It was a great support to have our Sr. Nasreen (on home-leave from the Unit of Britain and Ireland) with the group for the distribution.

Our other communities from 6/4L and Quetta also went to be with the victims, directly and indirectly, with different groups that had been formed. Our sisters also offered financial help to the needy through Caritas.

As a result of poverty, desperation, and frustration, people from one province are roaming all over the country in groups; first they began to kidnap children, and now no one is safe. After kidnapping, they remove the body organs, sell them and throw the body away. People are very alert and wary of strangers, keep their doors shut and avoid travelling late in the evening, especially from lonely places or roads. In some places, villagers have taken precautions and stopped baggers and hawkers from entering their villages.

Now, not only are the flood victims suffering due to a lack of basic things—sickness, insecurity—but the whole country is in fear and anxiety. Nobody knows what will happen next to them or their loved ones.

We all trust in God that one day the situation of the country will be better and people will live in peace, love and harmony.



WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT



“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (Jn 28 :29). This was the answer of the Risen Lord to Thomas, the apostle, when he made his profession of faith saying “My Lord and my God” after doubting. Jesus gives a gentle rebuke to Thomas for his insistence to “see” before he could “believe”. However, it is not so much a rebuke to Thomas as an encouragement to those who would come later.

The definition of faith, according to the Letter to the Hebrews is “Faith is the assurance of the things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). If we can perceive with our human mind and intellect what our future will be, then, we do not need faith. We long to see the light only when we walk in the dark. As Saint Cardinal Newman puts it “Lead kindly light amidst the encircling gloom”, the believer does not demand to see the entire route map of his journey with

God, but is satisfied saying “One step is enough for me”. The obedience of faith impels us move from one phase of our life to another, with absolute trust in God.

It is precisely this trust in God that made the whole people of God to obey as they took part in the Salvation history. In their trials and difficulties, they were able to believe in the promises of God. Their life was a real pilgrimage of faith. Mary, our Blessed Mother is a beautiful example of faith to us, her children. Throughout her life, she walked by faith and not by sight, according to the words of St. Paul in his second Letter to the Corinthians.

Each time in her life, which was a pilgrimage of faith, Mary walked in darkness with faith as her only light. She never ceased to believe in the fulfillment of God’s word.

For us too, faith is an obedient response to God as God reveals himself in our daily life. To obey God in a world set against him demands courage. Today, when we look at the situations in which we are living, we feel anxious, fearful and sad. We feel our life is burdensome with no strength to face it. We have only to believe in God who says to us “Fear not. I am with

you.” God has been repeating these words, assuring us of his presence with us always. *“Even though I walk through the dark valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me”* was the experience of the Psalmist (Ps. 23:4). The presence of God is what makes us walk in faith.

As we, members of the Holy Family of Bordeaux remember and celebrate with gratitude the bicentenary of the miraculous Eucharistic benediction. It calls us to renew our faith in the presence of God. God continues to tell us *“I AM WHO AM”*. Our Founder says “The Divine Master miraculously blessed our Association from its birth and, by manifesting in this way his divine Presence among our Foundresses, it seemed as if he wanted to tell us that he would be with us always (Selected Texts, No. 107). Yes, God is with us always. The Risen Christ said: *“Remember I am with you always to the end of the ages”* (Mt. 28: 20). So believing in the Presence of “the God with us”, the Risen Christ, we make the profession of faith with the apostle Thomas: *“My Lord and my God”*.

Sr.Celine Freeda Fernando
Contemplative
Nagoda, Sri Lanka

TEAM WORK FOR A DREAM WORK

Sri Lanka, Pearl of the Indian Ocean, well-endowed with natural resources, formerly self sufficient because of the fruits of its own rich soil, has now reached the peak of an economic crisis and is experiencing its highest poverty rate on record.

We Religious are questioning our presence, our voice in the midst of this hopeless and helpless situation .

We, a group of finally professed Sisters from 2013 -2021 started to meet via zoom during the pandemic. Our first meeting took place on Pentecost Sunday 2021. It was just to share our life experiences and our views on that situation.

In our discussion, our attention was brought to the burning issue of online education. As Holy Family Sisters, children are our major priority. Each of us met some teachers, parents and students of our areas and got their feedback regarding online education. This discussion led us to action. We chose 10 students from rural areas of Monaragala who were preparing for O/Level examination without school, without online sessions, but were capable of

passing the exam with some help. We were able to find funds needed and especially, model papers from our schools. We are still waiting



eagerly to see their results and better way of helping them in the future.

Thereafter we had a silent period as a group; but we all were engaged in different capacities in the people's protests against the economic hardships caused by the Government. . Very often we met on the roads as we carried our placards. The situation led us to meet again and discuss our feelings. There we wanted to see our presence in this criti-

cal situation through the eyes of our Good Father. We came up with the idea of sharing the Good Father's thoughts relevant to our context through our WhatsApp groups. As we do this activity, we see how our spirituality helps us and guides us to go forward finding our meaning as Religious in this prevailing situation.

As we proceeded, another new idea came up in the group: to go beyond our sharing life experiences to listen to people outside who are working with people and trying to live kingdom values. It was a great opportunity and we are looking forward to continue it.

Our next plan is to celebrate our Good Father's birthday. We are hoping to do a one-day programme for the Holy Family Youth of our local cells in order to exchange our talents and resources and finally to taste the art of team work.

Crisis !

Many Challenges

Uncertain tomorrow

Yet we have to move on

with no fear

to the other shore.

We want to

"Be the change and live our purpose ."

The theme song of the Chapter inspires us to find creative ways and means to proceed with no fear to the other shore. Having that in our hearts we are ready to move forward as the Spirit is leading us on our journey.

Sr. Charitha Thandalge

Colombo, Sri Lanka

TOWARDS A DRUGS-FREE SOCIETY

Sr. Shoba Vincent
Jaffna, Sri Lanka

From time to time, there emerges some evil which persecutes society, and especially the youth whom we know as the life of society and its future. Now the talk of the town, especially in the Northern part of Sri Lanka, is addiction to drugs and its consequences such as stealing, raping, murdering and committing suicide. Earlier the war took away many lives and property. Just today four or five lives have been lost in vain due to drug addiction.

Everyone is at the risk from this drugs menace. Regardless of the age, status and gender, this addiction has taken rooted in the

whole society. People are drawn to it very tactfully. Those who sell drugs to them provide free substance at the beginning by putting them into physical craving for it, thus making them addicted to drugs.

This menace is spreading so fast, bringing real chaos to the lives of people. Mission is also challenged by this social evil.

Considering the situation and to remedy it the District Secretariat and the medical professionals have dedicated themselves with various ongoing projects. By reading the signs of the time, we too, the Holy Family Sisters, have taken part in this mission.

Our mission can be briefly described as follows;

- ☞ At the beginning, participation in a brief training.
- ☞ We constantly meet the victims individually as well as their parents with their family members.
- ☞ Participation at the monthly valuations conducted by District Secretariat.
- ☞ We meet those who are under treatment at hospitals during their clinics, and their parents for dialogue and counselling.
- ☞ Conducting meditation sessions with victims at courts.
- ☞ Conducting awareness programs in schools in collaboration with other religious representatives.

As the Holy Father in invites us to go to the peripheries and to serve according to the needs of the time, under the guidance and leadership of our Provincial we are able to respond to this new mission positively. Let us promote our Charism “Communion” amidst the society to bring salvation to all in Jesus Christ.



RESPONDING TO THE CALLS IN OUR CONTEXT: THE PBN FAMILY IN ACTION...

PBN Family - Philippines

We, the Apostolic Sisters and Lay Associates of the Philippines move forward together in our journey of life and ministries, hand in hand we work together and walk together to bring the Good News to everyone. Even during Pandemic we served as frontliners being the “Prayer Warriors” who led the people in our communities to confide all our worries and fears to God. Until now we continue to pray and keep ourselves as Prayer Warriors, re-connecting the people who forgot how to pray because of their busy life. This helps us maintain our own prayer life as Consecrated and committed members of the Holy Family. We also invite the people to join us in our Gospel sharing, hour of Prayer and Adoration and introduce to them the PBN Family.

We are on Mission and are engaged in Pastoral and humanitarian ministries. We are leading the Program of Pastoral Care for Children, (PCC) - a program in which we take care of Families from the most vulnerable communities who belong to the poorest of the poor. This is the biggest program that we have as a Family, in place for more than

5 years now. It has given us the opportunity to reach out to those in the peripheries. The Program is one of Brazilian origin, introduced to us by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Carters. is a Holistic Pro-



gram to take care of the spiritual, physical and humanitarian needs of the whole family. On a Monthly basis, we are assigned to take care of 5 to 10 families - to weigh the children, monitor the pregnant women, monitor the health and nutrition status of the family specially the undernourished children. We also come together once a month to evaluate, to submit reports of the home visitation, discuss problems and other matters that concerns the PCC Families. We gather the PCC Families monthly for their Parents' On-going Formation, where we share the Word of God to strengthen them in their Faith, and conduct Catechism Classes for Children. Topics on

Evangelization, Education, Health and Nutrition, Values Education, Responsibilities as citizens towards Environment are given priority in the On-going Formation.

Home Visitation has been a great opportunity for us to be with the people to know them and their situations. Their simplicity touches us and we learn from them how to be patient, accommodative and smiling in spite of difficulties and family problems in their daily living.

We help in organizing the livelihood seminars in order for us to select members for the planned Livelihood Programs through the help of PBN Foundation and other sources. We were successful in initiating, training and assisting the beneficiaries with the needed funds and materials for programs such as Cosmetic Services, Food Stalls, Buy and Sell Products. The students from poor families in our neighborhood too were helped to complete their Education which was very much appreciated.

We organized several “Community Pantry” to help the people without means of livelihood during the Pandemic with groceries and milk supplements for the children. We



are grateful to all those who supported us with donations of goods. We also conduct Feeding Programs for the identified undernourished children in our communities where PCC is actively present, providing food-supplement made of corn-flour, rice-flour, milk powder, sugar, moringa-powder, monggo-flour and distributing it to the families with under-nourished children. We are grateful to the Diocesan Social Action Center headed by our Priest Associate Fr. George Fajardo for providing us with Vitamins received from Caritas to be distributed to the undernourished children in the indigent families. We, the Lay Associates are taking the responsibility to conduct the weekly program of Feeding – cooking nutritious food – 6 days a week to serve the under-nourished in Seven Areas in Bulan. In all these activities we are together experiencing Synodality and partnership in the mission and are mindful of our Option for the Poor, giving priority through our meaningful involvement and whole-hearted service. We are thank-

ful to God for the people and opportunities He sends us for the realization of “Being and Building Family” through all these programs.

We attend, participate and collaborate with the Local Government Office, Schools and Village Councils, in their initiatives for a “Cleaner and Greener” Community Awareness Programs.

The path of our journey of Life towards our mission is a challenge to remain faithful to our commitment and to strengthen our sense of belonging to the Family. Our “walking together” in all our differences and diversities, in times of joys and sorrows, difficulties and pains, in dark and light moments, in doubts and anxieties gives us strength beyond words to sustain us in living our Baptismal Consecration and our Vocation in the Holy Family to the full, and to show the Family Face of the Church, as the domestic church called to witness to Communion. Jesus Mary and Joseph are our Models, our light and our way to live a simple, joyful, witnessing life, leading us on the path to re-



main ever faithful to our Vocation as Members of the Holy Family. The hardships that we encounter in our journey never stop us carrying out our mission. We are strengthened in our weaknesses and limitations as we are journeying together as Companions on Mission, caring and loving one another and mindful of Mother Earth. We love our Membership in the Holy Family. We love what we do. It is our way of life, it is our mission, it is about who we are – the Children of God – brothers and sisters of one another. The mission is us, members of the PBN family, being sent to the world to bear witness to God's love and mercy, to proclaim that Communion is possible. And in everything we strive to give glory to God Alone. Together we work as a Family-Team. Our coming to prayer, reflection, study and celebration of Family Feasts and other occasions are great opportunities to grow in our sense of belonging to the Family of PBN which is a beautiful expression and experience that bonds us more to Be Family!