

# Interconnections

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Bicentenary Celebrations

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Live Communion, Celebrate Family

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## EDITORIAL

The Bicentennial preparation and celebrations (2018-2020) promised to be and truly have been significant for us and for all our members, friends and well-wishers. The official logo - "Live Communion, Celebrate Family" – enabled gathering together the joyful events and express our gratitude to our Founder, above all to our Loving God. In every part of the world where the Holy Family is present, many bicentennial events took place during these three years climaxing in those specially celebrated in 2020.

Our 200 years of history bears within it many sacrifices as well as surprises, joys and challenges, living testimonies and heroic vision and lives of the pioneers.

I would like to tell a story, which I'm sure will capture our hearts and inspire us as we enter our 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It is a true story.. It is about a "good soul", both humble and courageous, who lived in the 1950s. It is a testimony of our total dependence on God who calls us through our Founder to make our Charism alive through a life given for others, especially the neediest and the poor.

Sister Flavia from Craon, France, in her early 70s, was already hearing-impaired ... everyone knew her in Craon, she was a friend of everyone – of the mayor, the parish priest, the young and the old.

She was looked upon as a saint in that region, but if one would say that to her, her eyes would flash with anger. Yet the taxi driver would take her around in his car for three Hail Mary's; mothers called her in when their children were sick. In spite of her being 72 years of age, Sister Flavia was still young, fresh and alert. You would meet her everywhere – in the hospital, in the streets and along the rough country roads. Her radiant smile and extreme kindness accompanied her wherever she went – be it to a poor tumble-down cottage or the nearby big house, where she has free entry.

For many years, Sister Flavia had been deaf. A great trial.... even a cross? Oh no! Not for her; she considered it a blessing - "I cannot thank God enough" she would tell you, "for all the graces I have received through my deafness". Interior graces of peace and happiness ...that was her secret and her deafness seemed to work wonders for her poor.

She narrated an incident of how she was out begging once, for her poor old people. Hearing her request, the lady in the house had said all kinds of disagreeable things and showed her the door – at least that is what

others told her later. Believing that the lady was thanking her for the visit she said, "How kind of you Mrs X... I knew you would not refuse me. I shall say a rosary for your intentions and God will reward your charity." And a witness adds that the lady went grumbling towards the sideboard and drew out her handbag saying softly, "She is impossible."

### Meet her again on a farm

One morning we meet her again begging for her poor old people at the door of Mrs. Durand who, afraid that she might be robbed, hastened to ask if she would like the help in money or in kind. Sister Flavia chose to receive money, aware of the need for medicine and coal as the winter approached. A ten-franc note was quickly handed to her and then Sister was led back across the yard to the gate. But what happened on the way was quite interesting... typical of Sister Flavia!



They passed in front of the barn. Though deaf, Sr. Flavia's observing powers were unimaginable! She was a genius in getting what she wanted – not for herself, but for the poor. Enjoy the conversation that followed between them:

"I believe you have had a good harvest Mrs. Durand. How delighted I am. I suppose you would not have a sack of wheat left over."

"Oh, Sister Flavia I asked you if you would prefer food or money and you told me you preferred money."

“Yes, I know, but I am quite willing to take both ...” and a sack of flour escaped from the barn, as if by magic.

A little farther on, they came to the poultry yard; sister went into raptures over the ducks, rabbits and turkeys.

“If I could only have a goose ... just one Mrs. Durand...you would never miss one, amongst all others.”

“Oh Sister Flavia, you are going too far”, grumbled the poor woman, who at the same time took

hold of a goose and imprisoned it in the basket.

“Thank you very much indeed! Now I have six of them for the raffle.” Sister Flavia’s companion admitted that she felt a little ashamed, but Sister reassured her saying, “Oh don’t worry, they are very pleased to give, and they know that I always pray for them.”

You may wonder why such a long story about one individual, simple Sister. It is because this is just one touching example of the many,

who down the years, lived with a similar spirit, passing on the heritage of our Funder. God, our Founder and our people do not expect great things from us but simple, ordinary gestures of sensitivity, love and kindness, reaching out to the vulnerable. These heroic women throw light on our path and invite us to give ourselves generously and selflessly in the service of the poorest, beyond differences, beyond boundaries... and thus “live communion and celebrate Family”!

## HERE IN ROME

### An “extremely” special Year

Will the recurring numbers **2** and **0** – 200 years since our foundation; the year 2020; the 20<sup>th</sup> General Chapter with its planned opening on 20 May – live on in our memories as ghost numbers or will the descent into chaos prove to be the labour pains giving birth to a new world order and the beginning of a renewal as well as a KAIROS for the *Holy Family*?

The Covid-19 pandemic took us by surprise as we were making our Bicentenary preparations at the beginning of 2020. This was the third year of the triennium and was to be the year of celebration, of jubilee, of thanksgiving. We were coming out into the open and we intended to celebrate the Family in style.



In Rome, our experience of communion with other charismatic families enabled us to open up and to feel part of a larger Family with the other spiritualities in the Church. We were preparing to have an “Open Door Day”. Our invitation for 24 April 2020 was to be “Come and thank God with us”. The group of Italian Lay Members had arranged to have their annual meeting on that day so that we could celebrate as a much larger Family – a very big *Holy Family*. Suddenly everything was changed and turned upside down as the health situation became very uncertain.



Micheline KENDA

The “Open Door Day” had to be postponed and moved to Trinity Sunday. On that day, not only would the Italians be there but we would enjoy the presence of the Sisters from the various countries who had come for the General Chapter. We would also have members of all the *Holy Family* Vocations. The invitations were sent out, places were reserved, the menu decided on, some airline tickets paid for and the liturgy was being prepared. In the Generalate, music resounded in our ears and festive songs could be heard in the corridors in anticipation of being able to dance on 7 June.

A few days later, a total lockdown was declared and everything was cancelled. No more General Chapter, no more Bicentenary celebrations, no more Lay Members’ Annual Assembly, no more travelling... The year 2020 carried on regardless but we spent the days filled with anxiety about an enigma we couldn’t resolve.

Finally, the Jubilee celebration took place quietly on the eve of Trinity Sunday. The little “choir” of Rome was heard worldwide. We felt very connected with so many people through the mass media. It was a unique experience to pray in the same words, on the same day and more or less at the same time with the *Holy Family*, the other charismatic Families, our friends, our biological families, our acquaintances... The effect was unprecedented, magnificent.

Strangely enough, the Jubilee celebrations and the General Chapter gave the impression of being unfinished. So, in our third century we remain in a state of “already” and “not yet”. The new is being born in a



whirlwind. We seem to be in a vacuum. Everything has been turned upside-down. Has our reflection on the New Universe Story over the past few years enabled us to be better disposed to listen to and to welcome an evolving world? In our dismay at not being able to carry out our plans, I believe we are called to strengthen our deep sense of “Being *Holy Family*” at the present time. 2020

reminds us that we are citizens of a single interconnected world. We are Family because, as we know well, every being exists in relationship with the whole community of beings who make up the Universe. All of us are vulnerable, all of us are limited, all of us are searching for a refuge to save us from the real dangers which threaten us at the moment. In spite of racism,

oppression and violence, we go beyond individualism to a sense of togetherness.

So, for us, to celebrate a jubilee in the midst of a global health crisis means being able to recognise beauty at the very heart of darkness which comes not only from Covid-19, but from a global system that is built on selfishness, domination, possession at all costs

etc. Within the cry of distress, we hear the hymn of praise which rises from the sacred community of the Universe. We have seen the beauty of nature which has been given new life during the lockdown and the beauty in the hearts of so many people of goodwill who are ready to risk their lives. At the same time as violence is breaking out in various places, solidarity and the desire for peace and goodness are evident at the heart of the same world. Everything grows together. The Master is patient and allows the dandelion and the good grain to develop because he knows how to care for us. He waits for all to play their part in the building up of a new world. May the unforeseen shock of the virus convert our hearts and increase our love for the whole of Creation so that the reign of God may come in everything and for all.

## HERE IN ROME

KUMUDINIE DASSANAYAKE

Just outside the chapel after Mass, on October 27<sup>th</sup> morning, voices broke into joyful song ...

***Happy Birthday to you// Happy Birthday dear Good Father,  
Happy Birthday to you!***

Indeed, a Birthday is always an important day and when it is of someone you love, it is doubly special! 2020, being the Bicentenary year of our Foundation, the 227<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration of our Founder this year became all the more significant.

In the Generalate, we marked this memorable day with a Triduum of prayer (25 – 27) where we joined together as two communities, united with all members of our Big Family, to thank God for the gift of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles to his family, to our Family and to the whole Family of God. Creativity coloured our prayer moments adding meaning, beauty and life.



**“We remember our dear Founder, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles,  
Who brings us all together, to live for God Alone...”**

Yes, marveling at this great man, possessed by God’s gratuitous Love... who listened deeply to the voice of the people of his time... we pondered on God’s great Love poured on us in the gift of our Charism. The call to make alive the same spirit and values lived by our Founder reechoed, urging us to be people of Hope, of Peace, in a world that cries for healing and wholeness amidst great suffering,

separation and lack of love.

Moving into our Third Century, we implore Ven. Pierre Bienvenu Noailles to empower us to find our way forward through transitions, turmoil and chaos...always being a presence of compassion in our world.

As always, our community celebration climaxed with an “aperitif” and a festive lunch, which amplified our joy! This was certainly an experience of togetherness, of family, deepening our love for this man of God, our Founder and renewing our gratitude for being ‘Holy Family’!

### LIKE A SPREADING FIRE

### SPAIN

Throughout the whole of this year, we are celebrating the Bicentenary of the Association, sharing beautiful times which impel us to live more authentically and to continue to respond to challenges. We now bring you two beautiful testimonies from Navalmoral de la Mata (Cáceres) and the community of Las Flores with the Lay Members of Malaga. We also remember Coín, whose celebration was cancelled because of the coronavirus.

#### From Navalmoral de la Mata

At 5 o’clock on 25 January 2020, the Bicentenary was celebrated in Navalmoral de la Mata in the Church of the Agony with a solemn celebration of the Eucharist presided over by Bishop José Luis Retana of the diocese of Plasencia.

Our Priest Member, Fr. Félix Elez, and eleven other priests concelebrated with the bishop. The church was full of people who wanted to be with the Sisters for this very special event. It was very touching to see so many people from Navalmoral de la Mata there to give thanks and to recognise the work our Sisters had done in the town since they arrived on 23 January, 1928.

We experienced some beautiful, emotional moments when we realised the importance of sharing our spirituality with the people of Navalmoral.

It is a path of hope and openness to the People of God, giving them an awareness of the gifts which the Association treasures and has shared with the people of Navalmoral and the diocese of Plasencia, and which it will continue to share as long as a single member continues to live there.

Once again, we were fortunate to have four of the five Vocations present – Apostolic Sisters, Consecrated Seculars, Lay members and one Priest Member. It was a symbol of hope for which we thank the Spirit who wills it this way for a small town in Extremadura.

**Loly Manchado and the Family de Navalmoral**



**“Throughout the whole of this year, we are celebrating the Bicentenary of the Association, sharing beautiful times which impel us to live more authentically and to continue to respond to challenges.”**

## From the community of Las Flores

The Family continues to give thanks for the past 200 years. In Las Flores, Lay Members, Apostolic Sisters, the College of El Monte, friends and the people of the parish gathered in the Church of Our Lady of Flores to give thanks.



The church was full – as it rarely is. Many collaborated to make this solemn, yet simple, celebration possible. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate who run the parish facilitated everything. Nearby parishes, neighbours and friends also helped.

The celebration was happy and joyful with many taking an active part. We heard it said, “It is wonderful to see how you have achieved something so beautiful in such a simple way.” In fact, it was very solemn as well as being simple and intimate.

Fr. Ismael OMI, the Parish Priest, spoke of the life of the Holy Family which arrived in Malaga on 4 April, 1867. He expressed gratitude for their work, and their simple commitment over so many genera-

tions to the most needy – the sick, young people in school and people in disadvantaged areas. They wanted “to spread and strengthen the faith in all classes of society” as our Founder desired, without excluding anyone or ignoring any situation.

After the ceremony, we shared an agapé and chatted about the feelings, desires and hopes that we experienced during the celebration. It was a beautiful family occasion and strengthened our love and closeness as a united Family.

During this celebration, we felt that the tree of the Holy Family in Malaga was “greening” again and that our enthusiasm was renewed to contribute our grain of sand to the building of unity in a society which needs us as a Family. To have the value of “Being and creating Family” in the here and now is an important Charism for the world at the present time.

This meeting which was so solemn and simple sent us out to the world anew. Let us continue to spread communion and love insofar as we can and create an atmosphere of serenity, gentleness, simplicity and family.

And to help us in our vocation today, let us hear once again the profound invitation of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, “Go to Nazareth and contemplate”.

**The Family in Malaga.**

## CELEBRATING THE BICENTENARY

Anun Esteve hfb



The Bicentenary celebrations began in the chapel of the Loreto College in Madrid. Cardinal Carlos Osoro presided over the Eucharist which was concelebrated by Dominicans, Oblates, our only Priest Member in Spain and other priests of the diocese.

It was a very solemn and well-prepared celebration. The chapel was full of Sisters and Lay Members from other parts of Spain as well as religious of other congregations, the Board of Governors of the college and the Education Trust. After the Eucharist, we had a meal during which we shared and chatted.

We had intended to close the Bicentenary celebrations in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Almudena in Madrid with representatives of the whole FAMILY of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles present. But the Covid-19 pandemic prevented us from doing that.

So, what were we going to do?

Lola, a Lay Member from Alcalá la Real, offered to have the celebration in her parish and to transmit it by video. The Lay Members of Alcalá are very involved in the parish, in catechetics, liturgy, the choir etc. and the parish priest has a very good relationship with the Holy Family. He agreed to have the Bicentenary closing ceremony

in his parish.

The people of the town gathered with the Sisters and the Lay Members for the celebration. We had several symbols of the Founder on the altar. The songs, the Bicentenary hymn and everything else were very appropriate. The two Vocations participated very well in the celebration and my own personal experience which I want to share was:



“From this Parish Church, I was able to experience the great Cathedral which all the sisters and other people from various places formed as we connected with the Eucharist online.

Thank you very much Lola, for your initiative.”

## CLOSING THE BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOLY FAMILY

### THE FAMILY OF PBN IN ALCALÁ LA REAL

Bulletin 13 of *Familia en Misión* published in January 2017, announced the beginning of the preparation period for the bicentenary celebrations of the foundation and invited us to live it with joy and hope.

At that time, the Standing Committee of the Family wrote in a letter, “Celebrating this Bicentenary is not just remembering a date; it means giving more life to the Charism which God gave to Pierre Bienvenu. It means knowing how to re-read history today and gather the best fruits whose seeds were sown by all those who have gone before us and to transmit it as something living to future generations”.

The last three years have been filled with lots of activities celebrating “a mission of a Family in communion” over 200 years of

commitment and sharing. It has been a time of grace during which, among other things, we have felt the need to update our Charism, to reflect on our Roots and to revisit aspects of our spirituality in the light of the New Story of the Universe.

On June 6 of this year, the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles on four continents gathered for a prayer of praise in thanksgiving for the 200 years of our Foundation. We followed the beautiful prayer from Rome, filled with symbols and ritual, on YouTube. The use of three language (French, English and Spanish) showed how the Founder’s dream had spread to 27 countries.

With one voice we proclaimed:

We give thanks for our Charism of Communion



which leads us to realise our close connection to your fathomless Creation, to respect it and to care for it with love because, together, we form a single family.

We give thanks for our new understanding of the depth and beauty of the interconnectedness of the whole Universe. That impels us to make a commitment to the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised and to be attentive always to the needs of our times.

Our Association was born on 28 May, Trinity Sunday, 1820. This year, Trinity Sunday fell on 7 June and the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles in Spain celebrated the closure of the Bicentenary with a Mass of Thanksgiving from the parish of the Saviour in Alcalá la Real. The community of Apostolic Sisters, groups of Lay Members and the priest prepared the Mass and the prayer of the previous day with care and both were relayed on YouTube.

Once again, we wish to thank Javier, our Parish

Priest, for his availability to the Members of the Holy Family and for his deep and meaningful homily delivered from the heart.

The *Holy Family* of Alcalá would also like to express their gratitude for all the congratulations they received for preparing the Mass which ended with an enthusiastic act of thanksgiving:

**Celebrating these 200 years  
with happiness, we say:**

**Long Live Our Family!. May  
God always Lead us in  
Communion with all God's  
works and creatures!**

## CELEBRATING OUR BICENTENARY IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND



During our three-year preparation for the Bicentenary and General Chapter Year, as we reflected deeply, in prayer and sharing, on our spiritual Roots, we were led to dream the dream of our Founder anew. As he read the signs of his time in 1820 and saw the need for a New Society,

so it seemed to us that the events of this year, 2020, have demonstrated, more than we could ever have dreamed, how urgent is the need for something new, and were telling us we have a necessary role to play in creating this newness.

Being unable to come together as Holy Family for planned celebrations was our first challenge, one shared by all other Units. It was easily overcome as we learned to “Zoom” over land and sea, see-

ing one another, listening, sharing, and praying together, as we sat at home.

**BRINGING OUR THREADS TOGETHER**, we did this by means of special gatherings on the 2nd and 3rd June. A Presentation by the ULT led us on a

commemorative, reflective journey from 1820 to 2020.

First, we spent time in praise and thanksgiving to God for the charism granted to Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, and for those who have gone before us, having passed on this gift for two centuries, always adapting it to the needs of the time, .

Then, we looked at our own Unit, recalling the many foundations made in our four countries; remembering and giving thanks for all the women, men and children we have walked with over the years, remembering also with gratitude those in the other countries where our Holy Family is present with whom we have walked in person or in spirit.

Our Founder’s dream and projects were again brought before us, giving us time to pause as we asked for God’s help in our efforts to respond to them in the light of the emerging worldview.

This brought us to 2020, to our own time, a world so different in many ways from 1820, but with equally pressing problems, and desperately in need of prophets like Pierre Bienvenu.

A series of quotations from *Laudato Si'* spoke of the wonder and beauty of our common home, reminding us of its vulnerability and our duty to care for it.

In “online break out groups”, we shared on what had moved us. There was much.

We prayed:

May your Spirit open our hearts to listen to your word and to commit ourselves with enthusiasm and hope to the mission of COMMUNION closely united and enriched by the diversity of

our Vocations.

## RESPONSES

Each community had been asked to send a message they would like, as Holy Family, to share with the world for the Bicentenary.

Though expressed in different words, they all reflect a deep desire for that communion to which we are called. We finished with the Jubilee song, ever more conscious that, in the **words of Ana Maria, in her May 28 letter:**



**This is “the favorable time” for living our Charism/ Mission deeply and responsibly.**

**“I AM WHO AM AND IT IS ONLY I WHO AM”.**

**3 FEBRUARY 1822**

## THE BICENTENARY – PROVINCE OF POLAND

THE SISTERS OF THE PROVINCE OF POLAND

The Bicentenary of the *Holy Family* is a gift from God for the whole Family of P. B. Noailles. The existence of this Family for 200 years confirms the vitality of the Charism and God’s desire to enable us to serve the Church and the world today by means of this Charism. Every Jubilee evokes some history – beginnings and present reality. It is a time for thanksgiving, reparation for weakness and sin and praise of God for gifts received and the grace of God’s call.

In the Polish Province of the *Holy Family*, we had been looking forward to this Jubilee year with great joy. 2019 was a preparatory year for the Jubilee which began with a solemn Eucharist on 3 February. The Sisters along with the Lay Members and a Conse-

crated Secular, under the direction of Fr. Léon NIEŚCIOR, O.M.I., took part in the Eucharist followed by a talk on the biblical meaning of jubilee given by Wojciech KUZIOŁA, a Paulist Father. After the official part, we all sat at table to celebrate together and to thank God for the up-coming Jubilee. The Provincial Council prepared a programme for all the communities of the Province to deepen our spirituality.

Every two months we had meetings to deepen the virtues of the Holy Family, the writings of our Founder and the lives of our First Mothers. We also called to mind the Sisters who are still with us and who influenced our vocation and our decision to enter the *Holy Family*. We explored

the obedience and faith of St. Joseph, the humility and joy of Mary, the simplicity and faithfulness of our First Mothers, the gentleness and goodness of our Good Father and the love and truth of Jesus.

On 1 June 2019, we had a meeting for all the members and friends of the *Holy Family* in Poland, and Srs. Ana Maria AL-CALDE and Geni Dos Santos Camargo honoured us with their presence. About 120 people took part.

On 27 October 2019, 10 new people were admitted as *Holy Family* Lay Members.

We began the Jubilee Year on 8 February 2020 with a solemn Mass celebrated by Mgr Tadeusz PIKUS and Fr. Marek DOSZKO P.P. in the Provincial House in



Warsaw. We had a lovely talk from Fr. Léon NIEŚCIOR OMI on the history and the friendship between our Founders, the Servant of God P. B. Noailles and St. Eugene de Mazenod. We spent the rest of the day glorifying God with psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles and thanking God for the gift of the *Holy Family*. Unfortunately, the sudden arrival of the pandemic changed all our plans and the celebrations we had planned had to be cancelled. We tried to understand what the Lord was saying to us through this anxiety-filled Jubilee year when all our activities came to a complete halt. We felt that it was a call to us to go deep within ourselves. It was as though God was saying, “Stay with me. Stop and reflect on who I am for you and who you are for me. It is a time for conversion”. We could not have outside celebrations and we had to look at ourselves before the God who is Love and see that life and death belong to the Lord. I AM WHO AM alone is the source of joy and jubilee, of thanksgiving and praise. Because of the pandemic we had to stay with the God of Life. Perhaps the spiritual gifts which we received in this period of solitude are the most precious treasure given to us by the Jubilee.

After these reflections and reading the signs of the times, we managed to prepare a symbolic celebration of the Bicentenary:

We had two series of retreats based solely on the Founder’s writings and the Constitutions. These took place from 26 January to 1 February and from 1 to 9 July. All the Sisters of the Province took part.

On 23 May we had a meeting of the Sisters of the Province to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary at our house in Żabiczki. After Mass, we had a talk on the meaning of thanksgiving, reparation and praise in a Jubilee year. As Sisters of the Province of Poland, we dedicated the day to thanksgiving, reparation and

praise for the gift of the *Holy Family*. Each community received a tree as a symbol of life which we planted in our gardens. Then we had a meal and shared a Jubilee cake.

On 25, 26 and 27 May, each community – separately because of the pandemic – had a Jubilee Triduum to deepen the themes of thanksgiving, reparation and praise. In each community, the triduum ended with a solemn Mass.

On 26 and 27 September, a group of 18 Sisters and a delegation of 3 *Holy Family* Lay Members thanked God for the 200 years of our existence at the shrine of our Lady of Unity in Kodeń.

This Jubilee year is a gift for us. It is a special time prepared for us by God who seems to be saying “I AM”. May faith in this PRESENCE accompany us and lead us into the future. We unite ourselves spiritually to all the members of the *Holy Family* thanking God for our charism of communion and unity.

## THE UNIT OF CANADA CELEBRATES THE BICENTENARY OF THE HOLY FAMILY

### THE UNIT OF CANADA



What better day to begin our Bicentenary celebrations than the Feast of the Holy Family, which fell on the eve of the New Year 2020? Wasn't it Jesus, Mary and Joseph who called us to be part of the Holy Family in the first place?

The communities of Charlemagne and Aylmer joined Sr. Doreen and Carmel to celebrate the Bicentenary in the Tamil parish in Montreal. The parishioners, and especially the various groups of young people, expressed their sincere gratitude to the HOLY FAMILY calling them angels of light who guided them along the journey of life. This was done during the course of the Eucharist, which was followed by a wonderful celebratory meal.

The thanksgiving continued into the feast of 2 February in the French-speaking parish of Aylmer. Iresha, Marcelline and Francina gathered the Christian community together around their bishop, Mgr. Jean-Paul Durocher. This was also the day that Consecrated Life was celebrated in the diocese of Gatineau/Hull. All the consecrated women and men joined our Bi-

centenary celebrations seeing it as a Church event. There again, the parishioners gathered together for a family meal. Songs, videos and expressions of gratitude reflected something of the Holy Family presence in Alymer. We watched a power-point presentation, which showed all the commitments of our Sisters here long before the community was re-opened. This is a region where the Sisters and Lay Members of the Holy Family expressed their commitment to the most abandoned through the word of God and work.

On 16 February we had celebrations in the English-speaking parish of St. Mark as well as at Aylmer. This was a special time of ecclesial communion when we experienced the value of the diversity of vocations within the Church.

Nobody foresaw what was in store for our society and for every country in the world with the arrival of Covid-19 during this Jubilee Year. The whole world, including our Bicentenary cele-

brations, was put on pause.

Our fourth Bicentenary celebration took pace in the Polish parish of the Blessed Trinity in Montreal. Sr. Maria from the Charlemagne community in Montreal, decided to celebrate the great event on-line. The Charlemagne community joined with the Polish parish, and the Parish Priest celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving on-line.

The Covid virus was determined to stay on. After a lull, it came back with a vengeance and forced the community of Cadillac Street in Montreal to cancel the big Bicentenary celebration they had planned. This was to be a celebration for the young African, Tamil and Quebecois people who were to come together in the same parish. We now look forward to having this gathering for the Bicentenary of the Miracle in 2022.

THE UNIT OF CANADA...



What can we say about the great Family feast with all the Holy Family Vocations that was planned for the feast of our Founder on 29 June in Quebec and which we had to cancel for the same reason?

On Trinity Sunday, our Foundation Day, the community of Père Marquette held a big Bicentenary celebration in communion with the whole Holy Family around the world.

The community of our elderly Sisters in Sillery are still waiting to have a celebration. The Covid restrictions were felt very keenly in Care Homes. We hope to have a celebration before the end of 2020 if it possible to come together.

A Bicentenary is an invitation to set out again towards new horizons to which the Lord is sending us in the power and joy of the Spirit to spread and strengthen the faith everywhere.



## HOPE MEANS CATCHING A GLIMPSE OF THE LIGHT EVEN BEFORE THE DARKNESS HAS DISAPPEARED.

**Tere Beck. Argentina. Latin American Network**

Several years ago, we began to dream of celebrating the bicentenary of our Foundation. We remembered and thanked God for so many committed lives, gifts shared and graces received. All this deserved a celebration where others could share our joy and gratitude because shared joy is good for everybody.

But the pandemic came and we began to put out the candles and replace real celebrations with virtual ones which were marked by simplicity but also by the depth of their reflections and commitment as well as joy and gratitude.

The strength of love and of *Holy Family* bonds awakened our creativity in portraying and sharing the flame of our charism even when enormous black clouds were threatening us and creating a fear which sought to put a brake on all activity.

So that was how we had the humble celebration of our Bicentenary. And then we began to prepare for the Golden Jubilee of the arrival of the Charism in Argentina (which we will celebrate on 2 June 2021) while the social media continued to speak about statistics and the danger of opening doors and windows because openness is always a danger to any system which is not pro-life.

However, in the midst of this darkness, a positive movement was taking place – the emergence of human beings who are slowing down because they are learning to connect with the essence of who they are, with their deepest reality.



This will result in creativity which does not come down from above but rather comes out from within; we will try out new things in communion and interconnectedness with the whole of reality.

The prophetess Anna, with her 84 years of waiting, (Lk 2: 36-38) supports us in our hope and encourages us to see that what we hope for is already happening as we wait with trust.

On the one hand, the most dictatorial political systems are reinforcing one another in the positions they are taking which is a sign that they feel the ground moving under their feet. On the other hand, families are beginning

to talk to one another more; grandparents are telling stories to their grandchildren and writing stories for them; teachers are drawing on all their creativity to reach the hearts of their students and encourage further education. We also realise that we need to share love much more, to have more depth, more contemplation, more joy, more compassion and more communication even if this is by telephone. We no longer need material things, success or recognition.

The words and actions of the Pope are changing obsolete structures in the institutional Church which are preventing the Gospel from being visible.

Consecrated life puts forward a systemic, dialogal leadership which creates a space for acceptance and dialogue rather than for heroes who put out fires.

Nature is grateful to humanity for the small changes which enable her to stop groaning and appear in all her splendour.

But when the light begins to emerge, those who love the darkness sharpen their weapons of destruction and start fires which destroy life mercilessly without any conscience. There is an increase in femicide, the sale of drugs, extreme political ideologies, dictatorships and indoctrination. But I believe, and I hope I am correct, that they are just the last gasps of those who know that their time has come to an end and a new humanity is emerging. The new

humanity will be one that knows how to dialogue, is contemplative, prayerful, inclusive, aware of being part of the universe, knowing that that we can achieve our aim only by mutual co-operation. It will be an open-minded humanity that allows life to come in and dances with it. It will be more silent, more fraternal/sororal, more joyful. It will say “and” rather than “or” – not this **or** that but this **and** that. Differences will be accepted without fuss; cultures and religions will be seen as complementary; resources will be shared because we realise that it is only by working together that we can save the boat of life.



We are part of humanity with our Charism of Communion. Because of the option we make at personal, community, Institute and Family levels, we will be a gift for a changing world. I see something emerging which includes us all, and commits us all. Hopefully, we will have new vocations, new projects and new dreams. If we want to make them our own and make them fruitful we must be awake, attentive and available!

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## WHEN A MOUNTAIN BURNS, A PART OF YOU BURNS ALONG WITH IT

### SELVA ENCINA ÑEMBY - PARAGUAY



I read this sentence these days and I feel that it expresses what we have experienced during part of October in Paraguay. We had almost 3000 wildfires. The suffocating heat, the drought and the wind made the situation even worse.

The losses were numerous, including livestock, housing, even part of the botanical gardens and an area of Asunción: Cateura. For those who do not know it, this is the poverty belt of the country. Added to this are the ongoing

consequences of the pandemic, with hospitals overwhelmed and the economy in decline. The volunteer firefighters worked tirelessly, with a true spirit of service even in the face of a shortage of protective gear.. One of them lost his life. The population also joined in the work of putting out the fires.

Just as the pandemic made various vulnerabilities more visible, we can also say that signs of hope, solidarity and life emerged. The people also contributed financially to fund the firefighters. Another sign of hope is that the Upper House of the Parliament has given its approval to an initiative presented which modifies the article '*...which regulates the Organization of the Volunteer Fire Brigades of Paraguay*, in favour of exempting the voluntary firemen from any economic or work- related loss due to absence or late arrival incurred while providing the emergency service, as long as that absence is duly justified with a certificate issued by the person in charge of the unit or the fire service it belongs to.

These situations invite us to rethink our lifestyle, our way of being in the world and the way we relate to other human beings and to all the living creatures that inhabit our common home, to review our responsible commitment, and the way we care for life and our brotherhood and sisterhood with all creation.

We are all interdependent, and we need each other. What affects one affects all.

With St. Paul, we feel that “creation is groaning in the act of giving birth”. More than ever the Pope's



words in Laudato Si resound: "Concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and inner peace are inseparable". We know that the crisis can be an opportunity for growth, for a change of mentality, for reinvention and for updating our responses to a sick, needy and wounded humanity. On our small daily actions depend our capacity to change, so that when the pandemic passes, when we "get over" the crises, nothing will return to "normal", but rather, we will have learned something from all that we have experienced. I live in this common home but it also lives in me. Let's learn that when a forest burns down something of mine - yours - ours burns down too.

**The fires are increasing to 500 per day**

**The firemen are exhausted.**

### THREE OF MANY THREADS OF A “POST-COVID-19” HOLY FAMILY RESPONSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Colleen Moore - South Africa



**Our communication**, now less in chatty local gatherings and more by means of the worldwide web is giving us face, space and sound contact all over the globe.

Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook etc. and our broadening and deepening spiritual life is opening us to more and more of our struggling world. The dreadful gap between rich and poor as well as the often wilfully chosen denial of climate change are exposed as never before. The cry of the earth continues to reach those who are listening. Chapter work amidst all the ups and downs of “locked-down

community life” is offering us new ‘windows and doors’ into our broader Holy Family 2020 reality. In this sense this is surely our “Go Forward” Bicentenary Celebration.

#### **Communication → Collaboration**

With the Sisters who were in Auckland Park Community now settled in Rose Village, Auckland Park sold and Vosloorus now the hub of Unit administration, a communication-outreach for the youth in the township and from one of the many informal settle-

ments here, presented itself. A communication centre has been set up in the St. Albert's parish, Vosloorus, with four computers from our Unit. Skills development, access to internet for employment seeking or educational needs is now possible for some.



Communication Centre



Food parcels for 'state-less' elderly people in a local informal settlement - with Holy Family support.

**Inter-Congregational collaboration:**

What is the future of Catholic Education in South Africa?

The impact of Covid-19 is taking its toll. A joint effort is being made by the "owners" of the Catholic Schools – Religious Congregational Leaders and Bishops - to work towards broader collaboration.

Opening of minds and hearts has started. Will we stay in the process when the going gets tougher? Will we move to the essential open will and take the necessary inspired collective action?

The enormous gap is exposed between what is provided for those who can afford private education and what is provided by the government for the vast majority of our people.

Let's pray that the Spirit, always "doing a new thing" to "renew the face of the Earth", might enable Catholic Education to broaden and deepen collaboration way beyond what exists now to something that is always in the process of becoming more and more inclusive.

**Communication + Collaboration + Contemplation = Communion**

**Contemplation** as 'resting-in-the-Mystery of Life and Love'. We have all experienced being drawn more deeply into ourselves as part of the wider "community of all things visible and invisible".

This seems to be a hidden Covid-gift for all, recognised or not; a gradual evolution of our relationships in Christ. This gift allows us to see new depths in us beyond our capacity to act as we have always done. Can we welcome the invitation to rest from thought, from 'small self' ideas or expectations and to really entrust our true Selves to LOVE?



Communion is possible as we seek the other and share who we are and what we have, for the benefit of all that lives and breathes through Mother Earth.

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**WELCOME TO ROSE VILLAGE**

**KATHLEEN MITCHELL**

Our move from Auckland Park to Rose Village, Methodist Retirement Centre, took a long time to become a reality. In fact, we (Shelagh Mary, Melanie, Kathleen and Joy) wondered whether it would happen at all. Once our house in Auckland Park was sold, we were due to move out by the end of May. However, "lockdown" happened and we all know what that meant! - Stay at Home. This was humorously illustrated for us by the video clip of a cat trying to keep a little mouse in a shoe and telling it to - Stay at Home.

Well, we stayed at home. Deeds Office was closed, Municipal Offices were closed, the transfer could not happen and we were advised to stay where we were! Winter arrived with its bitterly cold weather and where were our winter woollies? Packed of course! However, we found enough of what we needed to keep relatively warm.

We have all experienced the packing up of a house, but I'm sure Auckland Park took the cake! We had inherited so much from other houses that had been closed. What to do with books, furniture, pictures, bed linen and more was an enormous headache!

As we reflect back on our move, we are it amazed that a home was found for everything. Finally, we moved out on the 31st July. During our final two to three weeks in Auckland Park, we spent time in Rose Village hanging curtains and transporting furniture to our 2 cottages.

Much time was given to preparing Auckland Park for the new owners. Washing curtains, cleaning carpets and cupboards and much more had to be done. We are most grateful to Sr. Priscilla who stayed with us and was a tremendous help in our packing up and cleaning. Mrs. Lenah Ngozi who had worked for the Sisters for about 35 years in Parktown, Yeoville, Escombe Ave. and Auckland Park was sadly missed during that time as she, like everyone else, was in lockdown. Our deep gratitude to Zeph Dube (our gardener) and Lenah for their loyal and

trustworthy service of us at all times. Amidst all the hustle and bustle, there was a deep sadness in the heart of each one. Auckland Park had been home to so many of us since 2003 and a place of healing for many of our Sisters who came for medical care from DR Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Botswana and Cameroon.

We received a very warm welcome from residents and neighbours when we finally arrived in Rose Village. Unpacking took much time and energy but we finally managed to settle down and now feel 'at home' in our new environment.

Spring is upon us and the gardens have blossomed and come to life. It is no wonder that this village is called Rose Village when one sees the beautiful roses blooming all around us.

We are truly reminded that we are celebrating Creation and God's many gifts to us. We are blessed to experience this beauty all around us.

Thank you, Creator God, for the beauty and giftedness of Mother Earth which we experience in gardens and the colour and variety of the birds and flowers here in Rose Village".



We are truly reminded that we are celebrating Creation and God's many gifts to us. We are blessed to experience this beauty all around us.



Delightful garden outside our north-facing door

## MY DESIRE TO SET PEOPLE FREE FROM ALL THAT BIND THEM

JACQUILINE ASEERWATHAM  
BUHARA COMMUNITY KABALE, UGANDA



Since I started my journey with the inmates of the Ndorwa prison of Kabale in 2018 October, I have been feeling that they are the children of God, neglected by their own families and marginalized by society. They live in a very limited space with minimum facilities with regard to food, sleeping and other basic necessities. Some are fortunate to be visited by their families but many are left to themselves. I thank God for the opportunity I have to visit them, listen to them and pray with them. Together we reflect on Gospel values which help them to uplift their lives.

However since the lockdown was introduced due to Corona pandemic the prison authorities followed the restrictions very seriously, so as not to leave the least possibility of spreading the sickness in the prison. As result I had to keep away from the prison. I was helpless. I could not continue my ministry when it was most needed. From time to time I was able to deliver medicine, soap, children's food etc. When so many people were falling sick and dying in the world I did not

want to stay at home to save my own life. I was feeling restless within me and seeking God's guidance.

At this time I got a request from the Regional Health Unit that provides medicine for all the prisons of Kigezi region. They were experiencing a shortage of medicine. I remembered, last year when I attended the district health meeting, a great need was expressed for medicine for the prison inmates. Even though there is a health unit in every prison, supply of medicine is very limited even under normal circumstances. I immediately contacted the coordinator of the prison project in the Barcelo Foundation in Spain. The person in charge of the health unit in Ndorwa Prison helped me to gather the necessary information. In August we were able to obtain the necessary medicine and on the 18th, 20th and 24th I had the possibility of visiting all the seven prisons of Kigezi region and distributing the medicine they needed. The regional health coordinator provided transport and accompanied me.

Reaching out to the people of the periphery and helping the needy at the right time was a sig-

nificant experience for me. While visiting the seven prisons I came across two small prisons that resembled homes. There were 24 and 29 inmates in each. The buildings were small, there were no huge walls. The compound was surrounded by a short fence and they had a family atmosphere even though the facilities were at a minimum. The officers were friendly with the inmates and hoped that they will not escape. I was touched by their gentle way of relating to the inmates. They even gave me a chance to talk to the Prisoners for a short time respecting the corona restrictions. By being with the prisoners I understood their situation better. My desire is to remind them that they are still loved by God, and they can leave behind the past and walk to a new future. This is a commitment that gives me the strength to get out of bed every morning. I will continue this journey to the seven prisons once in every three months even though they are far away and need to go through difficult roads.

I pray to Jesus, the divine physician, who freed people not only from physical ailments but also from all sorts of bonds that kept them enslaved.

## BICENTENARY CELEBRATION

## UNIT OF RWANDA AND UGANDA

“Glory to God Alone!” Our long days of waiting for our dream to come true ended on the eve of 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2020. As the Family of Pierre Bienvenu in Uganda/Rwanda, we feel privileged and blessed to witness the completion of 200 years since the foundation of our Family. This Bicentenary celebration renewed our zeal, vigor, enthusiasm and our “Yes” to God who has been faithful to us over the years. It enabled us to be more rooted in God, to be committed women in today’s world, embracing and living wholeness, oneness, unity and Communion.

On 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2020, the sisters and the pre-novices from Gikongoro and Rushaki communities gathered in Rushaki, the first community in Rwanda, for our joyful bicentenary thanksgiving family celebration. We united ourselves with our dear sisters Theopiste and Maria Oteiza who were part of Rushaki community and who now rest in God. The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by the two bishops of Gikongoro and Byumba along with 20 priests from both dioceses, a few religious and some parishioners from Rushaki. Participation had to be limited to respect the restrictions in place for social distancing. The choir made up of the young formees, added solemnity and beauty to the occasion.

The Unit had appointed a

Bicentenary team, with Sr. Weronika as its co-ordinator. Till the time she returned to Poland, her country of origin, she worked hard with the whole team and was active in animating the communities with monthly reflections to which all responded creatively, listening to what the Spirit was saying to us. As a Jubilee souvenir, T-shirts were printed and distributed among the Holy Family Lay Associates, sisters as well as the young members in formation.

Our joy was doubled, for the Perpetual Profession of Sr. Anualite Businge took place on the same day. It was a symbol of our presence in Rwanda. With the Covid situation, we were concerned as to how the day would turn out, but to our surprise, all went well. We experienced our God’s way of intervening. With a view to making our Family known, we had the collaboration of Radio Maria Rwanda and Pacis T.V of Rwanda, who interviewed some of our Sisters; the celebration was telecast and posted on YouTube. As a sign of her joyful commitment, Sr. Anualite offered a plant

These two photos from Rwanda



These two photos from Uganda



during the Holy Eucharist, which was later planted in the church compound with the help of the two bishops, our Unit leader and the Parish Priest of Rushaki.

The day was an immense blessing! Nature graced us with a bright day and no disturbances. The thanksgiving celebration was followed by a simple family meal enjoyed by everyone. It indeed was a family celebration with the cooperation of the parish priest, the parishioners and the youth. We truly experienced the presence of the earthly Trinity - Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Two days prior to this celebration, children and youth of Rushaki parish came to express their gratitude to the Sisters for their great service and also to

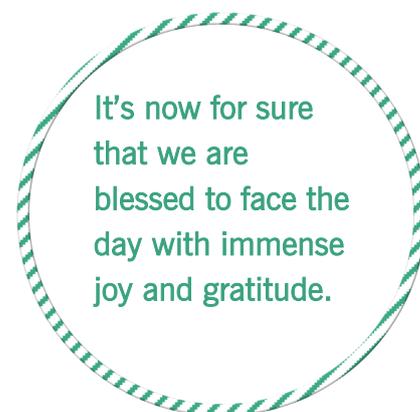
present their wishes to Sr. Anulite. Their entertainment with song and dance was appreciated by all.

We sadly missed the presence of our sisters from Uganda who were unable to join us due to the closure of the frontier. However Uganda too organized its own celebration in the novitiate compound with the participation of the Sisters, Novices and Holy Family Lay Associates in formation, the priests of the two parishes and a few Sisters representing the religious communities close to us.

The well-prepared Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Ndyomugabe Balthazar and other priests was the main feature of the day. It was followed by an entertainment program conducted by the Novices and

the Lay Associates. Fr. Alfred, who received the Sisters in Buhara on their first arrival, related some humorous stories about the early days of Holy Family in Uganda. After sharing a delicious meal everyone went off with a sense of joy and gratitude for the beautiful day that was spent together. All along the celebration we were united in heart and mind with what was going on in Rwanda on the other side of the frontier.

“Let’s be deeply rooted in God in order to be deeply connected to the whole universe”



## BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

## LESOTHO

On the 5th September 2020, the Unit of Lesotho celebrated the Bicentenary of the Holy Family. The celebrations were digital via Radio Maria Lesotho as the country is still on lockdown and the Family celebrations could not take place. We had Sr. Augustina Lekeba as the coordinator between the radio and the members of the Family who were to give talks on that day. The celebration began with Mass that had been recorded at our Provincialate chapel with Fr. Letsoela OMI presiding. In his homily, he emphasised that the time of jubilee is the time to be grateful to God as we look at the past with gratitude and step into the future with hope. He added that for the Holy Family to have reached this far it is not because of sheer luck but because God has a purpose for us as a Family. After Mass, we had in the studios, Sr. Augustina and Sr. Rene Khiba who was there to present the Holy Family Association, its humble beginnings which included the Miraculous Benediction. She also presented the Founder, his youth years and how he founded the Association.



Our Lay Associate, Mrs Mary Mohlomi continued via telephone to talk about the five groups of the Holy Family. When Mrs. Mohlomi had completed her talk, we had Martin our Holy Family youth representative give a brief talk on how they as the youth of the Association have become the salt in their homes, villages and among their peers. He said



age and made us understand that we go through some of the Stations if not all in our daily living. She encouraged us to keep focused like Jesus, Mary and Joseph and not give up even when we face trails.

A representative of the Major superiors, Sr. Anacletta of the Sisters of St. Joseph congratulated the Holy Family for this big milestone, she promised us the prayers and support from all religious congregations in Lesotho. Lastly, the Archbishop His Grace Gerard Lerotholi OMI also through telephone congratulated the Family of PBN, he acknowledged the work done by all of us in Lesotho and prayed for the continuation of the Association

that, living the Holy Family Charism has helped them build relationships and mend broken ones in their workplaces as well as at school, he also said that they live as witness that communion is possible in our divided world.

Fr. Mosoeu, a Priest Associate in formation from the Diocese of Leribe, gave a talk on the Trinity and the Holy Family; he said that the two are the perfect models of unity in diversity. He added that meditating on the Trinity and the Holy Family will help us to understand deeply what we should witness to as members of the Association. Finally we had Mrs. Mafusi Tsanyane also a Holy Family Associate giving a talk on the Holy Family Pilgrimage, she walked with the listeners through the pilgrim-

The talks were graced by the songs, psalms and hymns that had been composed by the late Sr. Molelle HFB.

When all was complete, the Maseru Community brought in lunch at the studios of Radio Maria which we shared with the presenters and the Director of the station, Fr. Charles MATSOSO OMI.

The celebration allowed people from different parts of the world to engage in the celebrations, pray with the whole family, and wish us well as we embark into the future.

We are grateful to Radio Maria for giving us the opportunity to celebrate, it was a very unique celebration but it helped us to embrace the digital world in which we live and be a part of it.

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## THE JOY OF BEING A MEMBER OF THE BIG FAMILY OF P. B. N.

### D. R. CONGO

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice.”

We are delighted to be able to share with you the great joy that overwhelmed our hearts on the day that we said our first “Yes” to the Lord in imitation of Our Lady. October 1, the date of our First Vows, was very important in our personal history because on that day, we experienced the marvels of God and God’s infinite love for us. This great event was a time of thanksgiving after the period of upheaval caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Lord had

### SRS. LÉONIE, ROMANIE ANDTHÉRÈSE

protected us and we were able to breathe a sigh of relief.

In fact, a lot of things had been disturbed by the pandemic, including our novitiate formation. We accepted the prolongation of our novitiate with perseverance and patience and this helped us to celebrate this great day. We had our annual retreat with Fr. PAOLO, O.M.I. before we made our vows. This retreat helped us to be more aware of living our consecration consciously. The theme we reflected on was, “Go out into the deep: he chose me because he loved me”. We also contemplated Pe-

ter's experience with Jesus.

We were invited to respond to failure not with resignation but with courageous confidence in the Lord; to listen and to be obedient with humility because those who listen to one another love one another and those who love one another find it easy to listen. We were also invited to grow in self-knowledge as that will make us more responsible.

Fr. Adélin KANZENZE celebrated the Eucharist. In his homily, he emphasised respect in community for the sake of communion. He also encouraged us to create harmony and to be humble enough to learn from the older Sisters. He spoke too about the demands of religious life.

He also encouraged us to be a breath of fresh air in our respective communities and not to be still-born.

We received many graces and blessings in this bicentenary year. We are very happy and grateful for the care and encouragement our Sisters gave us.



On this date when the Church celebrates the feast of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus as patroness of the missions, we received the call to serve the Lord by being faithful in little things. We count on your prayers because the road is long. May Our Lady teach us how to love her son and may she intercede for us.

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## GET UP, TAKE UP YOUR BED AND WALK



On 13 September, the 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in ordinary time, Mgr. José MOKO, the bishop of Idiofa, opened the pastoral year 2020-2021 which has the theme "GET UP, TAKE UP YOUR BED AND WALK". (Jn 5:8)

Inspired by the words of Jesus addressed to the sick man, the bishop urged the Christians to wake up and to get up and walk like the paralysed man. This theme invites us to move out, to be renewed, to live a new life full of enthusiasm after the long period of lockdown when almost everything had

slowed down. As a result of the

## SR. ALPHONSINE MFWANKAMA CONGO

Covid-19 health crisis, many Christians had lost hope, trust and faith in God.

Jesus healed the paralysed man and told him walk so that he could free himself from his poverty and dependence. We too who have been in lockdown because of Covid-19 are called to move on constantly, to wake out of our sleep, out of our irresponsibility, out of our lack of faith, trust and active participation in order to be an acceptable and joyful gift for the Church. We are also called to give new life to our pastoral work and to bear witness to the living Christ, who is ever-active in human life, through our words and actions in order to affirm the faith of the faithful.

As Members of the Family of P. B. NOAILLES, we are invited to cross the threshold of the Bicentenary into our third century,

GET UP, TAKE UP ... ↓

renewing our inner drive and our generosity and opening ourselves more to the various realities of the world in order to witness to our Charism of communion and, above all, to tighten the bonds of fraternity/sorority; to commit ourselves actively to continue the history of the *Holy Family* in the third century.

## THE CELEBRATION OF THE BICENTENARY OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF BORDEAUX

INFORMATION SERVICE, CAMEROON-CHAD



The week of 31 August to 5 September 2020, was a week marked by activities in preparation for the celebration of the Bicentenary of the Holy Family of Bordeaux.

Sunday, 5 September was a rather unusual Sunday in the parish of Mokolo-Mboua because of the celebration of the Bicentenary of the Association of the Holy Family in the Province of Cameroon Chad. The closing Mass for this bicentenary week was presided over by the Vicar General Mgr. Gilbert DAMBA WANA in the presence of Mgr. André MADI, the Vicar General of the archdiocese of Garoua. During this celebration, Fr. Pascal DJEUMEGUED, Moïse and Josiane PALOUMA, Henry and Rosette WASSOUO and Mrs Carmen KOGNE made their commitments as Priest and Lay Members of the large Family of the Association of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles in the presence of Sr. Delphine NGUEZIA, the Delegate of Cameroon Chad and the representative the Superior General.

the earth and the light of the world". Monseigneur also congratulated the members of the Congregation of the Holy Family of Bordeaux on their various works in the diocese and encouraged them to continue to go further in the service of charity and the care of the poor. This ceremony was special because several priests and religious women and men took part as well as people from various parishes of the diocese. It concluded with a glass of wine.



During his homily, the main celebrant invited the old and new members to live according to the Charism of the Association by practising the evangelical virtues. He also mentioned being close to their sisters and brothers as "the salt of

With long, intensive preparation and excitement, we the PBN Family in the Philippines awaited the day to celebrate the great Bicentenary - our journey in the footsteps of our Venerable Founder Pierre Bienvenu NOAILLES. It was considered a special event, an opportunity to own our sense of belonging, to make visible the Association of the Holy Family founded 200 years ago with the great intuition, inspiration and invitation of God to our Founder; a chance to recall our humble beginnings: three young women with only three francs, the first gifts that blossomed into a Big Tree with Five Vocations, spread through the world over the span of 200 years. We expected that May 28, 2020 would be a remarkable day for all the Members of the Family of PBN to give our thanks to God for the 200 hundred years of Blessings.

The great Covid 19 pandemic shattered our plans to erect a Memorable “MARKER” in Rizal, to have mugs, fans and T’Shirts printed with the Logo of the Bicentenary to promote the Association of the Holy Family, and an inclusive Family gathering and agape. All our planned Activities in view of the Bicentenary Celebration were put on hold as Covid 19 over-powered us unexpectedly. As we heard the loud cry of the sick, the dying and the poor going hungry, we had no choice but to let go of everything that was planned. As a Unit we reflected, prayed and decided to mark the Bicentenary with a low-key celebration in all simplicity in the places where we are, but with the same spirit of thanksgiving and joy for the blessings received.

We, the Apostolic Sisters in the three Communities remembered the Blessings of 200 Years in our Communities with a thanksgiving Prayer Service creatively and meaningfully prepared, to unite ourselves with the entire PBN Family. While the Churches remained closed with strict observance of Lockdown, we initiated the Family Celebration with the Lay and Priest Associates keeping to the protocols, celebrating our Thanksgiving Eucharist and following the Early Christians in their form of fellowship-agape.

Each Community found a creative way of remembering the event of the Bicentenary on Trinity Sunday in its own special way.

We, in **RIZAL COMMUNITY** had the opportunity coordinate the following Bicentenary Activities involving the Three Vocations present in the Diocese of Sorsogon namely:

200 Tree Planting

200 Recruited Carbon Free Families

200 Beneficiaries for Medical Mission



We had the joy of celebrating the thanksgiving Eucharist with the three Vocations – the Apostolic Sisters, the Lay and the Priest Associates. Fr. Benedicto Furo, our Priest Associate was the Mass Presider, and the opportunity to introduce the Holy Family to the visitors who were present for the occasion in view of promoting Vocations.

The Community decided to honour the Lay Associates – the first Holy Family Vocation in the Philippines on this special day. The Apostolic Sisters expressed their gratitude for the life of Commitment of the Lay Associates and their valuable partnership in the Mission. They are increasing as the Founder said in numbers and in virtues. As our expression of gratitude, they were presented with relief- goods and it was very much appreciated. It was followed by fellowship-agape.

**MANILA COMMUNITY** was graced by the Parish Priest Fr. Robert Reyes to celebrate the thanksgiving Eucharist. During the homily he invited each one of them to share their life and experiences of being in the big family of PBN. After the Eucharistic celebration, there was a short video presentation to introduce our Family to him. As a community we expressed our gratitude to God by sharing some food packs to the poor families who are affected by the pandemic. Though we were unable to celebrate together as PBN Family, we found a way with the new technology to entertain our PBN Family Members in a creative way with our short-time program through WhatsApp. Dances, songs,



comic plays and the inter-action of our Sisters with songs and friendly chats made our day memorable with our sense of belonging to the Family.

On the feast of the Holy Trinity, the Manila Community gathered a small group of voluntary workers of the Parish who selflessly gave themselves serving the poor and hungry members of the Parish during the pandemic. They took this opportunity to introduce our World-wide Family with the particular Charism, Spirituality, Vocations and Ministries through a short video presentation. They distributed some books and booklets on the life of our Good Father and together they shared in a simple serving of snacks.

**We, the COMMUNITY IN BULAN** at the peak of our Anniversary day though it was still when the churches were closed to the public, were able to have a simple celebration in our Parish respecting the protocol. We the Apostolic Sisters, our Lay Associates (ten of them) and Daughters of Charity Sisters were present for the Festive Eucharistic Celebration presided by Fr. Rowan Gramonte, our Parish Priest. We gave thanks to God for our dear Founder for the gift he has left for us in the Charism of Being Family.

Our gesture of appreciation for the numerous Blessings of 200 Years was to unite ourselves as a Family with the Poor. As a token of gratitude we prepared 200

Packs of Relief Goods to be distributed to 200 Indigent Families in our Parish. We saw the dire need of the vulnerable people in this situation and we are thankful to God for the inspiration to renew our commitment for Option for the Poor to be at the heart of our apostolic choices.

God Alone – the I AM WHO AM was truly present in all our simple but joyful celebration of our Bicentenary. We cannot fathom the designs of God but to surrender wholeheartedly to follow the path traced out for us, imitating the life of the Holy Family of Nazareth who loved, sought, desired, only God Alone.

## CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE BI-CENTENARY JUBILEE YEAR

COLOMBO - SRI LANKA

After three years of preparation, the PBN family in Sri Lanka both Colombo and Jaffna Units had a full plan in hand to declare the Jubilee year open ceremoniously and meaningfully in May 2019. Unfortunately, the Easter bomb attack shattered all our dreams. The members had to be satisfied with a simple event at community level. However, it led us to pray more fervently for peace and harmony in Sri Lanka: daily, at the same time, a special lamp was lit, and together we raised our voices in our prayer for peace..

Our next plan was to celebrate the closure of the Jubilee year with the participation of all five vocations of Jaffna and Colombo Units at the shrine of Our Lady of Madhu on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The





National Inter-vocational team met several times to organize the event. But the Covid -19 pandemic disappointed us once again. However, we didn't give up hope. The members got together in very small numbers in the communities and celebrated the Bicentenary Jubilee on 28<sup>th</sup> May and on Trinity Sunday.

Thank God, the pandemic situation of the country gradually declined. When the country was awakening to the 'New normal' life, we too rekindled our hope waiting patiently but reorganizing ourselves if we were permitted, to have the closure of the jubilee in a simpler manner and with less numbers. We received the Green Light! The feast of the shrine highly venerated by Catholics was celebrated on 15<sup>th</sup> August amidst more than three hundred thousand devotees.

With the permission and assurance of the Priest-in-charge, Fr. Peppi Sosai who fortunately happened to be one of our Priest members, we geared up for our goal within less than a month. We scrapped the opening ceremony. It was decided to have only the procession and the Eucharistic celebration. The number of participants was restricted to five hundred from each Unit. It was a hard decision as most of the members had been anticipating this day.

The evening of 18<sup>th</sup> September was a busy time for the organizing team at Madhu, after a long journey. But each member at-



tended to his/her duty. Some were decorating the church, some were practising hymns in both languages, while another group was seeing to the preparations of the procession and refreshments for the following day etc.

On 19<sup>th</sup> morning, everything was ready for the day. Two teams were at the given bus terminals to welcome the participants with refreshments, a cap and a flag.

The sight of the vast gathering of more than 1200, was overwhelming; all age groups, different vocations, different cultures, yet rallied under one flag: "The Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux". To symbolize that unity all were wearing the jubilee cap sponsored by the Inter Past Pupils' Association of Holy Family Schools-Colombo unit, who also represented their group. From a distance, it was like a sea of white floating through the lush greenery. This crowd was only a representation. My imagination wandered, if all the Sri Lankan members were present, how would it have been...

The solemn procession commenced at 11.30 a.m. Madhu shrine is situated to the North West in a dry Zone. But the weather was not a barrier for the long procession in the middle of the day.

The Bishop of the Diocese of Mannar Rgt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando together with the Provincial Superior of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate Jaffna, Rev. Fr. Edwin Vasundaraja OMI and the Holy Family Priests concelebrated the Mass. As in the Good Father's dream the choir sang the same hymns in two languages, directed once again by one of our Holy Family Priests, Fr. Micheal Saundranayagam.

The Bicentenary gift to our Founder!! Two hundred newly committed Lay Associates were blessed by the bishop with a special prayer.

Then came the grand moment, the closing ceremony of the Bicentenary jubilee year. Sr. Rishmala Michael, a Contemplative Sister, declared the closure of the Jubilee year and handed the scroll to the Provincial Superiors of the Apostolic group, Srs.

Jesmin Fernando and Theophane Croos, symbolizing the event. The two National Leaders of the Lay Associates, in the presence of the representatives of five vocations, lowered the Jubilee flag, folded and handed over to the Provincial Superiors amidst joyful music and a round of applause from the participants.

The packed lunch provided by the two Units and organized by the two Bursars and the national Lay Associates was very welcome after the four-hour

ceremony. After long hard work and team effort, all returned in the evening with joyful and hearts grateful for the continuous blessings of our Lord who allowed us to see the successful ending of our Jubilee amidst the deadly threat of Covid -19, and for the multiple experiences of divine providence through the generosity and good will of many who supported us in various ways.

**Glory be to God alone!**

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## 'MY DAUGHTERS, THERE IS NOTHING NOW THAT CAN CHECK YOUR COURSE'

INFO-COMMUNICATION, JAFFNA - SRI LANKA

**“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed” (2.Cor.4:8-)**

The Word of God is our hope; we accept our powerlessness and vulnerabilities in our situation and surrender ourselves to the power of Almighty God. We have a strong feeling that we belong to humanity; its pain and pleasure are ours. We also never forget our Founder’s words ‘in devoting yourselves to the work of the Association, you have not separated from those who live under the common law. As companions of their good Angels, you follow them in the valley of tears, and to bring them back or to keep them for Jesus Christ you share with them, as far you can, all the fatigues the trials and dangers of the journey’. In Pope Francis words: “A sense of deep commitment with the rest of nature cannot be real, if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. (LS.91)

The guidance given to strengthen our life by the General Leadership Team and the Unit Leadership Team through letters, on-line annual Retreat and WhatsApp messages are a sign and proof of our interconnectedness and living communion, making us realise that we are not alone; we are a collective force, we are ONE. A sense of gratitude runs through our minds and hearts for the Providential care, and has deepened the rootedness in the spirit of God Alone during these days of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Trusting in God Alone and surrendering ourselves into the powerful hands of Our God, we go through these events and carry on our activities in our Unit, which were already scheduled; some were planned just in a month, and some we had to change.

All the Sisters in the Unit experienced greater solidarity at Global level through communication, even though we were still in a somewhat lockdown situation – we felt close to one another and especially to the suffering people in our context.

New technology was used as a means to make our Bicentenary Annual Retreat 2020 on-line, and to keep in touch with the PBN Family. Bicentenary and COVID-19 gardens were created in many of our Convents – a place for everyone to get in touch with the healing qualities of Mother Earth.

The Unit Leadership Team set aside quality time to visit the communities, to study and discuss the Questionnaire 2020 on the financial impact on our Apostolate and our day to day living.

During the lock-down, a medical camp was organized with the help of Medical Sector to be of service to the Elderly and sick Sisters in the Convent; dry rations were distributed to the poor and needy especially to the people affected by leprosy.

‘Anyone who keeps learning stays young’ - The Unit Leadership prepared programs empowering and encouraging the groups of our Unit to benefit through the programs of ‘The Art of Gracefully Growing and Integration of life,’ for senior Sisters and ‘Inner Journey for Integration of Life’ for mid-age Sisters.

One of the great events in the history of the life of our Association is the celebration of 200<sup>th</sup> year jubilee. God has given us the opportunity to remember the past with gratitude by celebrating our Bicentenary. We, all vocations of Holy Family except the Contemplatives joined as one family to participate in the thanksgiving Jubilee celebration on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

Rt,Rev,Dr.Justin Gnanapragasam the Bishop of Jaffna, Rev.Fr.Jebaradnam Vicar General (Priest Associate) and Rev.Fr.Edwin Vasantharaj the provincial of the Oblate celebrated the Eucharistic Mass at 7.00 a.m. at Jaffna Convent Chapel. Mrs.P.M.S.Charles the Governor of Northern Province, Mr.Valan Anantharajah the Judge of the Supreme Court Mallakam, Jaffna



and Mr.E.Arnold the Mayor of Jaffna Town also participated in the Mass and graced the occasion. After Mass Documentation books were presented to the main celebrants by the Unit Leader Sr.Theophane Croos. After breakfast Mrs.P.M.S.Charles the Governor of Northern Province opened the Exhibition and Sale. A digital presentation of the collection of our History and other events in our Unit were exhibited. Our Sisters contributed their talents and energy and prepared many varieties of edible things, hand works, sewing, etc. etc. put them up for sale – surely it was a way of sharing their talents and energy. They were in full swing the whole day. Everything was done with the Blessing of God.

Closure of the ‘Bicentenary Jubilee Year of Holy Family Association 1820 – 2020 - though there is prevalence of COVID 19, yet not that much restriction as it was in the beginning. Thus, on 19<sup>th</sup> September we, both Units of Jaffna and Colombo with 5 Vocations had a grand celebration at the closure of the 200<sup>th</sup> Bicentenary Jubilee Year at the Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu, Mannar with a minimum one thousand participants. All of us gathered

with grateful hearts being fully aware of our great responsibility towards protecting, self-guarding and promoting the welfare of our Common Home – Our Mother Earth. Members from the 5 vocations had the banners depicting our logos, all the participants waved small Jubilee flags with different colours, singing Marian Hymns and went in procession to the Church, leading by the Papal Flag, the Jubilee Flag and the Holy Family Flag carried by the representatives.

We thank God for His Grace to remember the past with gratitude by celebrating 200 years of our lived experiences in our Family as we enter our third Century. Our Good Father’s ardent love and devotion to our Blessed Mother brought the two Units of Jaffna-Colombo, and other vocations together to the Shrine of Our Lady as ONE FAMILY. With hearts full of gratitude, we continue to count our blessings as they reveal to us what marvels the Lord has done, in and through the Holy Family.

**“Glory to God Alone all through Mary and Joseph”**



Every celebration brings happiness within oneself and others. To make any celebration in a meaningful way, it needs lot of visioning and planning. Same way the celebration of our Bicentenary made us to plan and organize more and helped us to enter into this preparation in a higher way.

A story from Sufi wisdom goes like this.

‘Representatives of all the various kinds of birds decided to find out which species was able to fly highest. They found a council to judge, and experiments were started. One by one they dropped out, until only the Eagle was left. He continued his upward flight higher and higher until, when he was at his maximum, he exclaimed: ‘See, I have reached the highest point, leaving everyone else behind!’

At that moment a tiny sparrow, which had been riding on his back, leapt off his wing and flew even higher, because he had conserved his strength.

The council met to decide the winner. ‘The Sparrow’, they declared, ‘gets a prize for being the cleverest, but the recognition for attainment must still go to the Eagle. And in addition, he gets a prize for endurance, for he out-

did all the other competitors with the Sparrow on his back.’”

It is the endurance, the upright way, looking for higher purpose of life that we have lived as Holy family which make our celebration a real celebration. Our life in the Holy Family- in India we have forty two years of history (1978- 2020). All the creativity our Sisters lived, expanding amidst ups and downs, struggles, failures ... still we want to go forward. Our vocations fragile, sturdy, strong, happy, keep going. all together we made our life. Adding to the 200 years of life of the Holy Family we join and make it a celebration of life. And so it is the celebration of life together with the whole Holy Family. We carry each other and endure for a higher purpose, this is our celebration.

The ULT, Bicentenary team and spirituality team well organized the program and helped us to go into this process in a significant way. As PBN family we had a three-year preparation to enter into the mood and became aware of the Bicentenary. It enabled us to look at ourselves as persons, community, Unit and as a Whole. Every Monday we had special prayer and adoration for the Bicentenary year. This made us deepen our love towards our Holy Family and be grateful to

God for all that he has done for our dear Founder and Early Mothers. In the same way, the monthly recollections were based on the virtues of the Holy Family, prepared and shared by each community in turn. Finally, all the communities celebrated the

Bicentenary in a variety of ways at the parish level with the people. The history of our Association was depicted through exhibition, PowerPoint and documentary film. Everyone appreciated the dream of our Founder and were interested to know the richness of our Big Family and his writings.. Many volunteered themselves to join our Big Family as Lay Associates, Youth and Children of the Holy Family.

The communities helped the poor children for their education. In remembrance of the 200 years, 200 poor families were chosen and provided with dry rations and other basic necessities. Our Lay Associates from Chennai helped needy people to start small businesses and stand on their own feet through some mini-projects: providing goats, equipment for food preparation, schooling, a tricycle for a disabled person. We thank our Priest Associates who composed Jubilee songs in English and Tamil which made us feel happy and excited in our hearts. Sisters and our Priest associates prepared a documentary film for Facebook.

We thank Sr. Mary and her Council who begun this preparatory work and we appreciate Sr. Jeya Mary our Unit Leader who encouraged all the Sisters to write

an article on the theme of our Bicentenary “*Live Communion and Celebrate Family*” which will become our souvenir. Our Sisters took much interest to write this article from different angles. To mark this bicentenary year we had decided to celebrate at a national level and release the book on the final day. But everything turned in different way due to Covid 19 and all our programs were cancelled till now because of the daily increase in virus cases. We hope to publish this book as

soon as it becomes possible. The special edition of ‘Bicentenary Geeth’ (our Unit bulletin) brought joy and contentment about our service and life with the people.

We are entering into our third century; we feel that all our excitement and happiness will not go away due to Covid 19. There is time for everything under heaven and everything will pass away soon. The Lord who began his good work in us will continue to walk with us as he walked along with our ancestors. Let us strive

and hope to achieve many things in the coming days and years. Let the flame of our Founder continue to burn in us. Let the voice of our Founder echo in our hearts and minds as we move in every corner of the world to spread the kingdom of God.

## THE BICENTENARY CELEBRATION IN PAKISTAN

SR. RAZA, GOJRA COMMUNITY



As the whole world was experiencing the Covid-19, our country too had to face lockdown, social distance etc. In spite of all the measures we needed to take to safeguard ourselves, we as a Unit in Pakistan decided to celebrate the 200 years of service given by our Institute.

I would like to share my experiences of the celebration, which took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2020. Due to the Pandemic in the country, three of our nearby communities – Rangpur, Okara and Chak 6/4L – were invited to celebrate this beautiful day. Thanking and praising the Lord for all His unending blessings showered upon us in each and every step of our lives, from the foundation of our Association till now.

The spirit of God Alone is guiding and directing us throughout our life journey, in the direction of our Charism of Communion. The introduction to the

Mass consisted of the story of our Institute, and its beginning with three Sisters, and the tremendous blessings received down the years.

Carrying flowers, candles, our Constitutions, the flags of both countries (Sri Lanka & Pakistan) and images of the Holy Family and the Good Father, the Sisters and the people living in our compound came with the priest in procession and

entered the church, while singing the psalm “Cry out with joy to the Lord all the earth”. Before starting the Holy Mass, a candle was lighted as a sign of our 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. With hearts full of joy and gratitude, other candles were placed before the Altar, representing the continents Asia, Africa, America and Europe. It was a ceremony full of symbols, uniting us with the whole world to celebrate this enjoyable day in spite of the pandemic. At the end of the Mass, the Delegation Leader Sr. Densilla James expressed the words of thanks to the priest and to all the Sisters. As a symbolic sign of the celebration of 200 years of services, she handed over the picture of the Good Father to the animators of each community. The picture was beautifully painted, depicting the Aim of the Association, our Spirituality, and our Motto. The meal shared after the Liturgy brought the celebration to an enjoyable and happy conclusion.