

INTERCONNECTIONS

Suore della Santa Famiglia di Bordeaux, Via dei Casali Santovetti 58, 00165 Roma, Italia

October 2015
No: 44

"I am a mission on this earth; that is why I am here on this earth". My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just part of my life, it is something that I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self.

(Opening address of Ana Maria ALCALDE - Council of the family 18-22 Sept, 2015)



"Always look on the commitments you have made as Sacred" (Selected Texts No.18)

IN THIS ISSUE

Contents Page

EUROPE

Editorial	03
Here in Rome	04
Solidarity with Refugees – Britain & Ireland	05
A tribute for the hermitage of the blessed trinity, Arre	06

AFRICA

Personal conviction	07
The joy of life	07
Vision – Mission	08
Exodus to the novitiate	08

AMERICA

Young people: mission, prophetic	09
Something about our Life	11

ASIA

Dare to be different	13
We too...exchange	14
Family Team Meeting	17
A Vision for Mission	19
A Mission, A Journey in search	20
Simple but very powerful	21

Editors: Maristella Annie Anthonipillai
Christine Fene Fene
Graciela Barrios

Translators: Aine Hayde (Britain & Ireland)
M. Carmen Leach (Spain)
Monika Kopacz (Rome)

Web site : www.saintefamillebordeaux

Facebook: Sainte-Famille Bordeaux



**Interconnections is published by the Holy Family of Bordeaux
International Communications Service.**

Editorial...



October is the month in which our Father/Mother gave Pierre Bienvenu Noailles to the world. He knew how to allow the Spirit to work in him like soft clay, and to mould in him the heart of a prophet able to see, with a deep and broad gaze, the wounds of the universe which needed healing, and the shoots of life, opening up to hope, which needed care and loving attention. Celebrating his birthday commits us to set out on his path and, like him in the face of paralysing fears, to choose the boldness which trust in the Spirit's action brings. In the face of the enormity of what still needs to be done. Let us choose to have a positive outlook on life, which flows through so many people who risk their lives for the cause of love and peace. In the face of the ever-present temptation to look at reality through Social Media, let us choose the joy of experiencing life directly in the "Tondu neighbourhoods" (the neighbourhood where our Founder worked) which today are waiting for a word of hope, an embrace of communion, human gratitude, a shared struggle...

A few months ago, Pope Francis enriched the Church and the world with his encyclical "*Laudato si*" which is not only an ecological encyclical but a new proposal for organising the world in such a way that integral human development and social inclusion would be guaranteed.

The encyclical is directed to all of us in general, to each one in particular and to international politics. It gives a path of ecological conversion to which we are all called. It gives a new impulse to us to continue with the option of the General Chapter to **"welcome and offer the gift of communion with the urgency that this time requires."** It is yet another call to open our hearts and minds to the global reality and to go out to "people who are obliged to be on the move in inhuman conditions", (C.C.). It is an encyclical, which commits us to put what it says into practice in all the situations in which we find ourselves, because we all bear part of the responsibility for this other possible universe.

A short time ago, new Teams of Participation were formed with the aim of enabling life to flow in everybody and enabling us to continue along the path we are already on, always going forward even when we are tired. On the level of ideas, many things are becoming clearer for us: participative and prophetic leadership; "exodus" communities which are not focused on themselves; listening to others from where they are and not making them conform to our way of thinking... However, we see in ourselves the distance between head and heart, between what we say and what we do... But we are on the way and if we continue to be open, we will be enlightened by the light of reality, of our sisters and brothers and even of some enemies we may have because the Spirit is always at work and "let those who have ears listen to what the Spirit is

saying" (Rev 2:7). So **"Nothing can now hold us back"**... Nothing can stop the circles of communion that are growing and flourishing in our multi-coloured life; in a cared-for earth; in new vocations; in healthy hearts; in the new ideas and new dreams that we welcome.

Sr. Tere Beck (Network of Latin America)



The Council of the Family took place in the Generalate, from 18 – 22 September 2015. Our house began to be filled with noise, laughter and chatter as members from different parts of the world started coming in, some renewing old familiarities others building new friendships where language or anything else seemed unable to block these encounters!

The participants, totalling 24, were the members of the Intercontinental Committee of the Lay Associates, the Coordinating Committee of the Priest Associates and the three General Leadership Teams of Consecrated Life (Consecrated Seculars, Contemplatives and Apostolics) – all being responsible for the Whole.

Focused on the theme, *“Family of P. B. Noailles, are you Mission in today’s World?”* this encounter was a rich experience of Family. In her Opening address, Ana Maria Alcalde, our Superior General, reminded the group that they are “an inter-vocational group with responsibility, as equals, for the present and the future life of the Family of P. B. Noailles”. It was a time of deep reflection, sharing, listening, conversation, questioning, challenging

and seeking together a way forward as Family on Mission in today’s world. Looking back at the lived experience of each Vocation since the Congress of the Family 2012, we listened together to the calls coming to us from global and local situations and, once more, were deeply conscious that we share the same Charism and Mission and the urgency of living and being the Gift we are, in our world today. Throughout this meeting, the 2012 Congress calls were reiterated and a serious commitment to carry out implementing them was expressed.

Apart from these moments of serious reflection and decision making, there were also times of relaxing as a group when all creative energies of the old, not-so-old and the young blended together in song and dance! We are very grateful to all of you, for the fraternal messages and wishes that reached us from all corners of the Holy Family world assuring us of your closeness and concern as Family.

Wait in hope for Meeting Point V, to enjoy the real kernel of this experience!

Solidarity with Refugees – Britain & Ireland

In Britain and Ireland, large numbers of people have come out in support of the thousands of refugees seeking asylum in Europe. At rallies in the capitals of both countries, there was a Holy Family Presence. Up to 1,000 people gathered in Dublin on 4 September to express solidarity with people seeking refuge in Europe. Protesters heard calls for the Government to increase the numbers of refugees allowed into Ireland.



“I have never been back to my home. I miss my family, I miss my friends, I miss the soil, the stone and the trees of my home. If my homeland had been safe I would not have risked my life in the Sahara and on the Mediterranean.”

The chosen site, the Famine Memorial, was most appropriate as speakers evoked the suffering of the Irish people who had to flee their country to avoid starvation in the famine that halved the population.

A Syrian refugee, who has been in Ireland for 18 months, said he wanted to thank everyone who would welcome Syrian people to Ireland. His words are vividly expressed in the poem *Home*, by Somali poet Warsan Shire, read by a representative of the Migrant Rights Centre. *(You will find the poem in the Resources Folder on our website.)*

Tens of thousands of people marched through the streets of London for a rally in support of refugees, as similar events took place in other European capitals. It is thought to be the biggest national show of support for refugees in living memory, with a number of refugees leading the march to Parliament Square.

Members of the public joined a coalition of NGOs on Dublin’s Sandymount Strand on Sunday, 13 September in a solidarity event to welcome refugees to Ireland.



Dublin



London

Holy Family Sisters Marie Power, Carmel Bateson, Gemma Corbett, Bridget Davis, Kathleen Diamond, Evelyn Hanley, Bernadette Deegan, Claire McGrath, Lil Meagher and Síle McGowan were among the crowd.

A tribute for the Hermitage of the Blessed Trinity, Arre

M^a. Pilar Echábarri and Pilar Elvira, Contemplatives



In the morning, we had to go to Arre, where people were waiting to pay tribute to us for the eighteen years that we spent in the HERMITAGE OF THE TRINITY there.

The event had been prepared during the previous days by the Board of the Confraternity and we realised that it would be good for us to be there. Two of us went to represent the community. At the end of the solemn Mass, a tribute was read out and souvenirs were presented to M^a. Pilar Echábarri, to the President of the Confraternity and to the Marists who replaced us when we came to Oteiza.

The plaque, which you can see, says:

*Our mission in the Diocese was and is **TO BE A PRAYERFUL PRESENCE** through our contemplative life, which is open to welcome young people, seminarians, priests and all who want to meet God and one another. This is the mission we have had here for twenty two years.*

To our surprise, the person who spoke named all the *Holy Family* houses in Navarre. It would have been an ideal time to make ourselves better known but we were not given the opportunity. We were very happy there and, though we do not want to make the comparison, we are much happier here with a single MISSION: TO BE AND TO CREATE FAMILY through our simple life, which bears witness to the Church at prayer. Our contemplative life is much appreciated in the diocese and in Spain as well since we come from several different places.

Affection and good wishes to each one from the community.

Take a moment to be in touch with your context, where you live, and the people you live among... What stirs in you as you think of making your own contribution to the life of our world?



- Document "Choosing Life" -

I have just finished secondary school and got my final exams. I was at home with my parents on Thursday, 2 July when I had the inspiration to compose this poem that I am going to share with you.

Faith, the foundation of a vocation,
Faith is a free gift,
A gift from God
Which is offered to all.

It is an expectation,
A creation.
It begins with conversion
Belief, conviction,
And leads to witnessing.

Yes, it is the beginning of an adventure
A journey in hope
A path which leads to love.

My knowledge of the truth,
My adherence to the truth
My knowledge of God and God's love
All come from my faith.

Thanks to faith
The world is illuminated
It reassures us
And takes away fear.

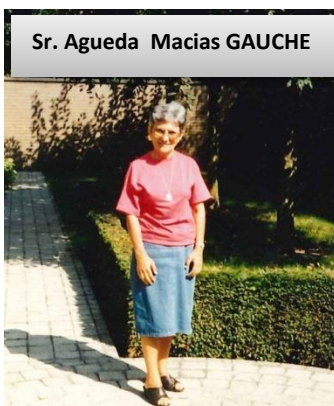
Because of my faith
I am free,
I listen.
I respond
I commit myself
And I bear witness.

Faith is a life,
A life of searching,
A life of openness,
A life of welcome!

The joy of a life given for others: a testimony – D.R CONGO

Sr. Christine Fene-Fene

Sr. Agueda Macias GAUCHE, who died in Spain in August 2015, left her mark on the history of the *Holy Family* in D. R. Congo. She left us a good inheritance of respect for every creature.



Sr. Agueda Macias GAUCHE

Sr. Agueda was a joyful woman who cared for the poor and orphans. We thank God for the witness of her life of service. **Her total self-giving to the Lord** for the mission led her to spend most of her missionary life in Africa. Forty six of her seventy six years of life were spent as a missionary in Africa, forty of these in D. R. Congo (twenty of which were spent giving young Congolese people a comprehensive formation) and six in Rwanda. Sr. Agueda was a **gift**. Thank you, Sr. Agueda for your example of *Holy Family* life, which formed us and developed our own personal conviction in following Christ. We now rely on your intercession.

I would like to share with you an experience that I had in Bamenda in Cameroon in August during the second part of the Leadership meeting of SIDI (Sisters' Leadership and Development Initiative), organised by ASEC (African Sisters Collaborating in Education). Twenty Sisters from different congregations – mainly English-speaking – took part.

Every week, resource people from PAIDWA (The Pan-African Institute for Development – West Africa) spoke on different topics with a view to improving community leadership: how to develop strategies to deal with inevitable changes.



The result was **Strategic Planning**:

- A sustained effort to make decisions and embark on basic actions, and also to get to know what an organization is; what it does and how it does it...
- A single hammer does not make a cupboard. Analysis or Strategic planning decision methods cannot do organizational work. They just support intuition, reasonable competence and people's good judgment.

All of that leads us to question ourselves continually and to ask ourselves:

- **Are we getting things right?**
- **Are our mission and activities in line with our vision?**

- It is time to change -

Exodus to the Novitiate

The Novices of the Holy Family of Bordeaux

Sr. Dolcita KALEMA, has done two mandates as Novice Mistress from 11 September 2009 to 11 September 2015 (in Idiofa in D. R. Congo).

It is a new beginning for Sr. Estelle LADZOU who succeeds her.

The assembled community gathered with the two Sisters in prayer during which the Ordinance was read. It was a time of thanksgiving in total abandonment and trust in God.

We had a social evening. We gave suitable symbols to the two Sisters, expressing what we felt in our hearts.

- **A Vase (an image used by the Good Father):** Signifying the many graces, we receive at Baptism and which the Holy Spirit pours out on Christians. (Spiritual Guide p. 14). They are a sign of all the graces that those you have formed have received from the Lord though you, as well as of all the graces you will bring wherever you are.



- **The candle:** Sr. Georgine showed us this candle during the prayer as a light, which enlightens human life. May this candle make you a woman of light whom the Lord will use to guide and enlighten us.

- **A Palm:** the sign of richness, life, joy, love and unity. May your life be like this palm.



- **A Staff:** at the end we gave her a staff which had two meanings: When the shepherd pastures his flock, he uses a staff to protect himself in dangerous situations and sometimes to gather his flock.

Then we invited Sr. Dolcita, the out-going Mistress, to give the staff to Sr. Estelle who is now taking on the task of pasturing the flock.

Young people: mission, prophetism and young people

Sr. Vanda, Latin American Network

This was the theme of the Regional Assembly of the Conference of Religious of Brazil which took place in São Paulo on 8 August, 2015.

Carmem Lucia, a laywoman, addressed the topic. She spoke knowledgeably and, as a layperson speaking to religious, gave us an outsider's view of consecrated religious life. Carmem is a teacher of sociology. She began by saying that a vocation is a choice, a decision, and that there is no prophetism without mysticism and no mysticism without prophetism.



Taking Pope Francis's encyclical "On Care for our Common Home" (*Laudato si*), she emphasised that mission is everyone's task and not just the concern of a few people or a group. All religious women must form a group with a plan of action for the Pastoral Care

of Vocations. They must re-think community life as shared formation. Young people are looking for something that will give meaning to their lives.



Carmem showed us a video to let us see the socio-political and economic situation before continuing her talk and helping the assembly to understand and be aware of the differences between the social classes where wealth is in the hands of a few while the great majority have nothing. It is in the latter class that we find young people.

We need to identify “the margins” where the Consecrated Religious Life is called to be at the service of transformation. Very often, the pastoral care of vocations is more concerned with getting vocations for an Institute than with the transformation of society. Transformation requires us to go forth, to go out to the margins where young people are. This presupposes that we lose our fear of young people and move out.

How do we get close to young people? By using our preconceptions and acquired structured mind-sets? Or by looking at things from the point of view of young people and their needs? Is our work for vocations focused on transforming society or on looking for vocations in order to maintain our institutions? Are we looking at young

people from the stance of the communications media or from the stance of the Gospel?

Some ideas never change. Where have we heard similar opinions to the following?

“Present-day adolescents love luxury. They are bad mannered, have no respect for authority and spend their time on the streets. They often offend their parents and monopolise the conversation when they are with older people. They gobble up their food and tyrannise their teachers. (Socrates, 500 B. C.)

“I see no hope for our people if we are depending on today’s frivolous young people and all young people today are definitely frivolous...When I was a child, we were taught to be quiet and to respect our elders. But today’s young people know everything and will not tolerate any constraints.” (Hesiod, 800 B. C.)

Getting more vocations is a slow process, taking three to five years. It requires continuity and the accompaniment of young people. We need to know the world we are living in and how we wish to be of service to that world. We must review our structures. That’s what Jesus did.

We live in an “adultcentric” world. Sometimes we are afraid of young people’s questions because when young people ask questions they want to know what is best for themselves. If we wish to transform and form thinking young people, we must change our mind-set, move out of our frameworks, see things from their point of view, overcome fear and preconceived ideas and have a plan of action.

Elements necessary for a plan of action

- Listening to young people in order to make the necessary changes
- Forming groups of young people
- Knowing who young people are today
- Taking young people seriously
- Letting them see what we have to offer
- Being clear about our objectives.

Something about our life over the past few months...



The Contemplative Sisters, The Monastery – Posadas, Argentina

It is said that no two days are alike. The reason is that God is the Author of each one of them and never repeats anything. So each day is a new gift and is to be lived as a new way of loving God, our sisters and brothers and the whole of creation. And the most important news is “Every day is new because it is a gift from our Creator.”

We will pick out some special events over the past few months:

✿ We were fortunate to have some spiritual accompaniment from Fr. Osvaldo Donnici, Abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Santa María de Los Toldos, Argentina. He gave us a retreat and also taught us some songs since he is a musician too. We were happy and grateful to be able to share with him what we have in common, such as our monastic vocation and our desire that this vocation would take root in this

beautiful region of Misiones, as well as in the rest of Latin America.

✿ After the Finance Formation meeting in Asunción with Srs. Marian and Geni, we had a visit from Sr. Ursula from Jimbe, Peru. All the sharing broadened our horizons and hearts and is part of the “circulation of life which helps the communion” which we wish to live.

- ✿ Another visit which we appreciated was that of Diana from Peru who was on her way from Brazil where she is at the moment – the freshness of youth and of First Commitment in the *Holy Family*. All of us are on the path of service for the Mission of Christ who urges us to give everything to him at all times.
- ✿ From 17 to 19 July, three of us took part in the Family Meeting in Resistencia. In May the Family Team came to our monastery to prepare the meeting. Afterwards, they shared with the community and we played our part in the preparation by offering our support. It is said that there is strength in union. We live that day by day in our humble everyday life which is the lot of most of us.
- ✿ On 25 July, we were united with Sr. Ana María who made her Final Profession in Quitilipi. We didn't witness it with our own eyes but we were with her with all our mind and all our soul. What is lived by one member has repercussions on the whole body. Many congratulations and long life to her in the Lord's vineyard.
- ✿ In July we welcomed our Sisters Mary, Nilda, Adela, first-time Councillors for network Latin America.. They were to have stayed several days with us. However, the serious illness of Elza Santana of Brazil (R.I.P.) changed their plans

completely. Humanly speaking, it was a severe blow. God Alone knows why such things happen. We entrust Elza to God's mercy and pray for comfort and hope for the Sisters and her family.

- ✿ An informal meeting with some of our Lay Associates from Posadas enabled us to get in touch a bit more with our surroundings. We feel the desire to live the spirit of God Alone in this context with its joys and difficulties, its worries and hopes. That was the way the Holy Family of Nazareth lived, *the home where the most perfect communion was lived with the Father and the whole of humanity*.
- ✿ From this "home of Nazareth," this ardent fire of love for God and for our sisters and brothers, we hold in our hearts the situations of anguish which are being lived by so many people throughout the world: immigrants, human trafficking, all kinds of addictions, discrimination against women, lack of appreciation for life from its beginning to its end... and so many things we know nothing about God is present in everything and awaits our humble, poor and real collaboration. We say again that there is strength in union – union in faith, hope and love. God desires union much more than we do. But God's desire is not a substitute for ours. We must unite ours to God's so that the Reign of justice, peace and community may become more of a reality.

We Move as part of humanity towards a choice for life discerning the calls of the Spirit in the signs of times, times now that hold at once "great peril and great promise". – Earth Charter –



“It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick.” (Mt. 9.12)



I would like to share with you about all about healing ministry among the poor. I got my transfer from Kombuthooki to Managalankombu in January 2014 and started my healing ministry in our First Aid Center. Everyday more than 30 patients come. During this ministry I have experienced God’s healing power which is working within me and through me to the sick in this remote village.

In the Acts (3:6), Peter **said “I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ, walk”**. Once a tribal mother with her relatives brought a two year baby Gowri to me. They were crying very badly to save the life of the child because she was not giving any response. I called the name Gowri but no response came and I went on checking for any stimuli. I was frightened and prayed to God to give me the wisdom to identify the cause. Suddenly I got an inspiration to give a particular injection. I gave that injection and the baby vomited worms which were choking her. After that the baby opened her eyes and she was alive and active. All were happy and thank the Lord.

Luke (7:50) **“Woman your faith has saved you; go in peace”**. Mrs Mathi a 27 yrs old woman came with the complaint of wound in her big toe. The nail was hanging and smelling badly. I removed the nail and poured hydrogen peroxide to the wound which had more than seventy worms. The worms started coming out and I was removing them though I was feeling dizziness and vomiting but I did not give up. I was praying and continued the work. After dressing the wound I gave an injection and tablets for five days. The dressing was done on second and third day. One fine day I got an inspiration to do a medication which would heal the wound faster and permanently. The worms stopped and the wound got healed. It was an unforgettable experience. Ps 75:1 **“We give thanks to thee, O God, we give thanks, we call on thy name and recount thy wondrous deeds.”**

Mrs Vigitha, a 29 yrs old woman came with the complaint of ear pain. She was shouting and was not able to sit or stand. We were trying many ways to find the cause for the pain but in vain. We thought of examining her one more time. We told her husband that if this attempt also did not work out then he would have to take her to a faraway hospital. As I was examining her ear I saw some black thing inside it. With the help of the artery forceps, I removed it. It was a cockroach and after removing it the woman found relief from the pain.

Ps 31:14 ***“But I trust in thee, O Lord, I say, thou art my God.”***

These experiences confirmed me to be firm in my faith and deeply committed to the ministry. They also increased my faith in God and gave me a push to go little further to give my time and energy to the ministry. The outcomes of these experiences are the free medical camps for the poor people.

We have arranged 2 free medical camps: a free eye camp for a whole day and a free general medical camp for two days. Jesus said in Mt 6:22 *“the eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light.”* The Eye camp was conducted on 12th March 2015 in collaboration with Theni Aravind Hospital and Lions Club, KK Nagar, Madurai. 238 patients were examined and according to their eye problems, they received spectacles, eye drops and medication. 29 patients were taken to Theni Aravind hospital for cataract surgery. All the operated patients have sight and are able to see God’s creation. It helps them to stand on their feet. We thank our collaborators.



We had a free general medical camp on 1st and 2nd May 2015. It was conducted by Dr. Selvaraj’s team from Chennai. We had 5 doctors, 5 nurses, 1 physiotherapist, one priest, 6 social workers and volunteers for registration. Altogether 774 patients were benefited. Panchayat President, elders of the village, teachers and people were impressed by our service and cooperated with us for the success of these medical camps. Through the camps people came to know about our First Aid Center and our service to the poor. It renewed our energy to reach out to many more poor and helpless people. Mt 25:40: **“and the King will answer: in truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”**

We tooExchange (Sri Lanka)

The Ark family, Uduvil

The ARK –it is our home at Uduvil. Started in 1978, this home cares for the children with special needs. At present, there are forty-four children between the ages of 07-14, among whom thirty are accommodated in the hostel. Others are brought by their parents /guardians in the morning and leave in the evening. We have program of studies and activities according to their abilities.



This year the Sunera Foundation that helps children with special needs in Sri Lanka proposed a program called 'Beyond Borders' that would be an initial step to exchange the life and activities of these children in our land. The Ark also is connected to Sunera Foundation through the co-ordination of the Centre for Performing Arts in Jaffna. The proposal came from the President of Sunera Foundation Ms. Sunethra Bandaranayeke and we too happily consented.

It was planned to start with the members of the Ark in Jaffna and the group from Anuradhapura which is the closest district to Jaffna. It was organized and funded by Sunera Foundation for three weeks in Jaffna and three weeks in Anuradhapura.

The first group comprising three trainers and eight members of special needs from Anuradhapura arrived at The Ark on 31.05.2015. They were about twenty years of age from different places in Anuradhapura district. From the Ark three trainers including one of our sisters and eight children (4 girls & 4 boys) participated in it.



It started with a moderate welcome to the coordinators, trainers and participants and the program went on for three weeks at The Ark. It was residential. On free days, they went together to visit some places in Jaffna. It was altogether a mixed group of Buddhists, speaking Sinhala language and Catholics and Hindus speaking Tamil language. Some trainers had already met before. The medium of language, we could saywas love. They really proved they were differently able.

Daily they had their activities, therapies, music, dance, drama, games etc that provided opportunities to communicate to each other and be one. The children were very naughty at times but the trainers were very gently handling them and giving them guidance through translation when needed. They enjoyed Jaffna dishes well and were quite free. At the end of the third week, they performed a program at the Centre for Performing Arts for the public. Both the cultures were exhibited. It was very much appreciated by all including parents, students, seminarians, priests and nuns. Some newspapers gave publicity to it. Next day was a free day

for them to cook and enjoy together. Then came the final day to wish good-bye, they left each other in tears with the hope that they would meet again in Anuradhapura.

After a gap of one week, our group of eleven went to Anuradhapura and both the groups met again. They were accommodated at Sarvodaya building. They went

through the same training and activities daily. They were taken out to see some places. All were very well looked after and their life experiences were rich. Towards the end they had the same program staged at Co-op city Auditorium in the town for the parents, well-wishers and those who were really interested in their welfare. Our honorable Chief Guest was Ms. Sunethra Bandaranayake who is the President of this Foundation. The program was well applauded and we could see some in tears looking at their children, young boys and girls on the stage participating in dances and drama. Among them some on their wheel chairs, some cannot speak including the main actor in the drama and some cannot walk or speak properly. But their expressions and gestures were more powerful than words. The trainers devoted themselves fully to work with them. Love energy was the life wire connecting them all. Parting was terribly difficult. Even the parents, trainers, care-takers and visitors too were very much touched. It was a loving farewell.

On the whole, the living and sharing together in both the places gave them an opportunity of being human in a different way. Even though they belong to different religions and cultures, the Morning Prayer and assembly was common to all. They became quite aware and sensitive to the needs of others and responded warmly without words. They brought out their hidden talents beautifully. Some were able to come out of their shyness and came forward with self-confidence on the stage. There was no difference. All felt accepted.

In a land which is shattered by violence and war, they proved the ultimate energy is Love who is God.

They tell the world that they too ...can exchange.

Our gratitude goes to Sunera Foundation and its dedicated members not only for their financial assistance but above all for their initiative, interest, encouragement and concern towards these children.

Glory to God Alone

“It is in you, in you alone that one finds this life of the soul which is immortality, this life of the heart which is an immense love...you are the way, You alone are the truth, you alone are life and happiness.***”***

Pierre Bienvenu Noailles - (Seminary notes - 1817)



Family Team Meeting (Sri Lanka - Nagoda)

The Sixth **FAMILY TEAM** Meeting of the Unit of Colombo, Sri Lanka, was held on 12th September 2015 in the Contemplative house, in Nagoda, where except for the consecrated seculars, 8 members from the other 4 vocations gathered together with great zeal and love.

Everyone was interested in forming this team to work effectively towards the purpose of strengthening our Family bonds and promoting unity, respecting the uniqueness of each vocation. With great enthusiasm the participants studied together the pages 10-11 from the document "**Guidelines for the Council of the Family-2011**" interspersed with personal sharing.

Points highlighted:

- ✿ *The Council of the Family guarantees unity and Spirit of the Family. It is the only body which can speak and decide for the Family as a whole.*
- ✿ *It explores ways of promoting and evaluating communication and information within the Family.*
- ✿ *The functions of the President of the Council were brought to light, in the course of the meeting.*

Sr. Euphrasia Rodrigo accepted to be the president of the Family Team- Colombo Unit with Sr. Rishmala, as the Secretary. As a way forward, certain decisions were made mainly focusing on having an

annual Family meeting; sharing of news with Family through news flash; Common formation - set up a common Library for the Family; share experiences of favours received through mediation of Founder in view of the Cause (beatification), moving towards 200 years of Holy family Foundation; need for in depth commitment and quality interpersonal relationships than having meetings.

A desire was expressed to celebrate as Family, the Feast of the Miraculous Benediction on the 3rd February in the Contemplative House of Nagoda.

Sharing news about the Family

- Sr. Helen Fernando informed the team about the Family get together organized by the Jaffna Unit from 30th - 31st October 2015, at Madhu and that active participation from the South Unit is desired.
- The Lay Associates shared how through the Clusters they make effort to protect and safeguard God's creation and thus unity is maintained among the members of the 22 Clusters.
- Sr. Rishmala, then shared her experiences of the Family meeting in relation to "Pastoral Care of Vocations; based on the theme - "Go and Share the gift you have received." This had been in Martillac with representatives of all five vocations, from the Europe and Canada.

There, they had come to a clear understanding of **Pastoral Care of Vocations** not only as concerning Priestly and Religious vocations, but having a broader sense of accompanying anyone - the young and not so young, but who are searching for meaning wanting to make a choice in life and those already on a spiritual journey...

They also have reflected on how we live our charism of communion; the need to become more aware of our responsibility as members of the Family and to sensitize ourselves with regard to the urgency of transmitting our charism.

Further, aware of the reality of our world today with its richness and vulnerability they allowed the inspiring words of Pope Francis to challenge them: "Where there is injustice; we have the possibility of living justice, where there is no communion, the possibility of promoting communion..." This had made them realize the possibility of

witnessing to Holy Family Charism of Communion through actual living it.

They also deepened their understanding of "Being a MEMBER" as taking God's call seriously to live the mission and Charism of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. In relation to this was underlined, the call to a new and deeper understanding of our identity as **ONE FAMILY** which requires a radical change of mindset. **Each member and each vocation is responsible for the whole**, and for making our Charism known and visible, witnessing to hope and joy in our world" (Declaration of the 4th Congress of the Family).

The participants reflected on the kind of Membership each lives and identified our roots as the Trinity, the Holy Family, the 1st Christians and the FAMILY (Association) founded by Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. Today we hear the urgency to tell the story of our charism and live it with passion - to **"Be a fire that kindles other fires."**

"Humanity still has the ability to work together to build our common home, I urgently appeal.... For a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet."



- Pope Francis - (Laudato Si)



When I was in the novitiate, Wennappuwa, a new sister came to the Novitiate. I was so happy to see this young sister and thought, “I would like to be a missionary and go out to work with the poor”. I went to the Chapel and prayed. When we had our day of reflection again this thought came to my mind. I was disturbed the whole day. Anyway, I tried my best to overcome my roaming imagination...

After my Novitiate, I did my teacher training and started the teaching apostolate in a poor village, Mattakouwa, with Class two children. Three months I was there and then I was asked to go to Wennappuwa, Holy Family English Medium School. I was in this school from 1956 – 1975. I was happy with my teaching apostolate. At the same time I felt a call to be a missionary and I applied for this.

Srs. Benedicta Pathinather, Tharsilla Bastien Pillai from Jaffna Province, Murine Fernando and myself from Colombo Province came together to Katunayeka airport on February 4th, 1975. When we entered there, the nonstop greeting voices of our sisters came to our ears like an echo. At last, we came to Karachi and went to

(Lyalpur) Faisalabad airport from where we collected our luggage and waited, because there was no one to welcome us. A few minutes later a gentle man came and asked us “Are you from Sri Lanka? I came to take you.” So we came to Bishop’s house, had our lunch with the Bishop and stayed in St. Raphael’s Hospital FMM Sisters) that day. Next day we were taken to Renala Khurd to the Franciscan Convent as our house was not ready. Every week we went to Chak 6/ 4- L by bus to Okara and from there sometimes we walked to Chak 6 as there was no regular bus service that time.

In Chak 6/ 4 -L our house was a mud house. Three congregations had previously worked there but they could not stay. Unfortunately one priest was poisoned and no priest wanted to stay there. Priests would come to offer Mass on Sundays from close by parishes. This type of mission was our first foundation. We too had difficulties at the start. Even we did not have a wall around our house. When we came out of the house, the people sent dogs after us. Anyway the Providence of God helped us in every way, to be strong in faith and to have love for the mission. Our Founder’s words, “Go forward” urged us on.

Over the past forty years, our Holy Family Sisters in Pakistan have spread to all the Dioceses, so we are very happy to praise and thank our God for His loving care and protection. The people now welcome us with hope and love. We thank God for our sisters who have served these people and have now gone back to their own countries or have been called to eternal life.

A MISSION: A JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF SELF AND GOD

Fr. George Fajardo (Priest Associate), Philippines



Priesthood is a gift and a call to minister to God's People in every situation: seasons, races and cultures. It is a life in service to God and his people. And in this gift of priesthood is a process of being and becoming, there is a need to discover and re-discover oneself in the immense and beautiful world of ministry and

service. In the reflection I made during my fifth anniversary, I have noted and told myself that **"Five Years will tell you that Ministry is not yours but God's and Priesthood is never yours but Christ's."** Indeed, as priests we only participate in the priesthood of Christ and our ministry is also a participation in the ministry of God walking amidst God's people.

A JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF SELF AND GOD

Being in ministry for twenty one years, I became aware and was affirmed that the life of a priest is "walking with God's people" where one can learn more the beauty of one's vocation amidst the so many vocations in the vineyard of the Lord.

It is a time when you can be yourself learning the pains and joys of your friends and companions and at times discovering that their pains and joys are also yours. It is to the degree that you have walked with the people, that you will be accepted as one of them on the way. And it is then that you become for them a priest of Jesus Christ.



This journey will also present you with new realities in life as human persons and as ministers. When bogged down by the heavy schedules of involvements and activities in life, one can be blinded to the deep realities of life, which may lead to seek, pursue and even fight for the "comforts" in life. But seeking for our own comfort zones is detrimental to mission.

Our life is MISSION, and God in Jesus Christ, has entrusted us to be witnesses of God’s Love and Goodness. This was reiterated by my priest friend – my Mentor, when I was planning and choosing from among the options available for my ministry. He urged me to weigh the pros and cons and make a good discernment before taking a decision. He wanted me to make sure that whatever choice is made, I’m not running away from my *present*.”

It has been one year that I am a missionary priest here in Dodge City Diocese in Kansas, USA. Indeed this has been a whole new world for me, a world where you do not have your “comforts” and begin again your life in a totally new context. The only things I hold into are: my voluntary choice, the fact of doing something for our Diocese of Sorsogon, (Philippines) and knowing that I follow the Will of God.

Going to mission is more than just doing things or involved in ministry for the people, rather, it is the “unloading” of your experience with God and sharing them with people you meet.

During this year, I have realized that ministry is not about seeking our own comforts but more so in following the Will of God for me. I have always hold to my realization that ministry is God’s, we are called to present God to all the people we meet. Being able to present Jesus to people in the beauty and joy of priesthood!

Simple but very powerful **Sr. Bernie De Silva. Bulan, Philippines.**

“In 1987, a 74-year old rickshaw puller by the name of Bai Fangli came back to his hometown planning to retire from his backbreaking job. There, he saw children working in the fields, because they were too poor to afford school fees. Bai returned to Tianjin and went back to work as a rickshaw puller, taking a modest accommodation next to the railway station. He waited for clients 24 hours a day, ate simple food and wore discarded second-hand clothes he found. He gave all of his hard-earned earnings to support children who could not afford education. In 2001, he drove his rickshaw to Tianjin Yao Hua Middle School, to deliver his last instalment of money. Nearly 90 years old, he told the students that he couldn't work anymore. All of the students and teachers were



moved to tears. In total, Bai had donated a total of 350,000 Yuan to help more than 300 poor students continue with their studies. In 2005, Bai passed away leaving behind an inspiring legacy. If a rickshaw-puller who wore used clothes and had no education can support 300 children to go to school, imagine what you and I can do with the resources we have to bring about positive change in our world!”

“Always look on the commitments you have made as Sacred” (Selected Texts No.18)



Holy Family of Bordeaux
Communications / Information Service
Rome
www.saintefamillebordeaux.org

“Always look on the commitments you have made as Sacred” (Selected Texts No.18)