



INTERCONNECTIONS

*“Hear
the word of God
and do it”
(Lk. 11:28)*



December 2013
N°: 39



Communication Service – HOLY FAMILY OF BORDEAUX – N° 39



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

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This edition of Interconnections comes during the time of Advent-Christmas. It is a time of purification, waiting, availability to receive the definitive, creative Word. A Word that has no limits of time, space, culture, ideologies is heard, speaks and will speak down the centuries.

We live this expectation in union with nature that is sleeping in the northern hemisphere the renewing sleep of winter and that, in the southern hemisphere, is preparing to welcome the new life that is coming – the sleep and rebirth that create new life in living things and renews everything. A new birth in the womb of an apparent death hides a powerful life that we do not see because it is both small and large.

It is a law of life that we must die to be born again. It is thus that we can interpret the revolt of tired nature: floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions speak to us of the destruction of the old and of a new birth, a simple life beginning, one without manipulation.

We live this time of hope:

With humanity, whose movements, protests, demands, even revolutions and wars, express aspirations for peace, security, fidelity and compassion. Ultimately, we need to listen to that Word that “has become one of us”.

With the Church, who wishes to offer the world an open, inclusive, renewed, compassionate, welcoming community, a Mother-Church, with a weakness for her poor, lost, excluded children.

As a family, we have lived the last two years as a prolonged Advent that materialised in stages of birth that caused something new to spring from the most intimate place of our “being Family”.

In the Congress

We hear the call to a new and deeper understanding of our identity as ONE FAMILY. We have ongoing communication among us in order to promote COMMUNION through a quality of PRESENCE as Family within the Universe Family. We hear the call for a COMMON FORMATION. We open ourselves to the new story of the universe and its core values – diversity, interiority and communion. We hear the call as Family to COLLABORATE in creative ways FOR MISSION. This invites us to go beyond boundaries and move out of our comfort zones.

(Declaration of the Fourth Congress of the Family)

And just as in a Family, what one part experiences has repercussions on the whole, during this year of preparation for the General Chapter of the Institute, we also hear renewed calls, the responses to which will be different according to the various states of life and the different contexts.

In the light of the sharing that took place it was evident that we are at a critical moment in our journey. We could see that changes in our way of living need to follow the changes in our way of thinking, if we are to live our Charism in a renewed and relevant way for today. There was the conviction that we really need to give new responses to the new era in which we live. The urgent need to hear that cry of the earth and the cry of the poor is inherent in all that is being said. We feel the sense of urgency was clear and the need for responsible membership for mission was strong. Today there seems to be a call to renew the spirit of 'God Alone' in a way that is relevant for our time. When this spirit is strong we are more contemplative and discerning, more motivated towards self-giving, more connected to the struggles of people and of Earth, more available and able to make a difference in our world.

We recognise how important it was for our Founder that we adapt and change to meet new needs. We remember that he also said that the responses made in one century are rarely relevant for a new one. For him change was a necessary fact in order to be true to the gift of the Charism and that change could take whatever form was required as long as we remained faithful to the spirit and mission of the Institute/Family: faithful to our roots.

We know also, from our experience of the Congress journey, that the desire to live the Founder's dream of being ONE Family, living the one mission, is alive and growing among us and that we need to continue to find ways to develop it as the expression of who we are and as that gift we have to offer to the world.

We feel there is a need to focus on the most significant point emerging from the evaluation (being sent for mission) and to keep before us the sense of urgency with regard to this.

(Circular no. 317 – Rome, 12 June 2013)

That is our Advent. When it becomes a reality, a new birth will have taken place. As we wait, let us live in hope.

HERE IN ROME**JOURNEYS, VISITS, THE
CHARACTERISTIC COMINGS AND
GOINGS OF THE GENERAL HOUSE**

From 6 to 14 December we joyfully welcomed the three members of the Chapter Preparatory Commission who worked hard all that time. As you know, the Commission is made up of:

Kumudini DASANYAKE
 Michelina KENDA
 Monica ALEXANDER
 Malinie JAYAMANNE
 Geni DOS SANTOS
 Annette SUWARIS

What was their work? To familiarise themselves with the documents sent by each unit and to prepare a summary of their different points: evaluations processes and issues, to present to the Chapter.

“The Saint Martin Foundation, to Marian Murcia, in recognition of her collaboration for so many years. Santander, 30 November 2013”

This inscription appears at the foot of a small bronze statue of Saint Martin that Marian received as a reward for her collaboration in the work for several years.

The Saint Martin Foundation is a private, non-profit social entity open to the needs of society that welcomes and assists persons whatever their needs and provides individual responses to specific problems. It was started in 1942 by Don Daniel Gonzalez, a diocesan priest who, faced with existing social problems, created educational school-canteens to accommodate marginalised



youth, with no other recourse, to provide them with education and food, though it was insufficient at the time.

- At present, the Foundation's activities are focussed on two areas: **young people at risk and disabled people**.

Over the years the Saint Martin Foundation was characterised by its ability to provide answers to queries of the moment, showing a capacity to innovate and provide solutions to social problems that arise at every moment.

In the Foundation, the person is at the centre of every activity. All those who work there have one aim, to promote the autonomy of the person, to make the person **achieve self-determination and an independent life**. Thus, the person is considered an active subject, with rights and responsibilities.

It was there that Marian worked and was Director of the Work from 2001 to 2008

The Saint Martin Foundation will this year establish the project, "The right to have a future in Jaffna". It consists in the creation of a special education hall for children and youth with mental and intellectual disabilities in Jaffna (Sri Lanka).

It will be carried out in collaboration with the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux who manage the "Mirusuvil" Home in which 40 children and young people with mental illness and intellectual disabilities live. It is an area in which there are serious socio-economic constraints after enduring 26 years of civil war and being directly hit by the tsunami in 2004.



GLOBAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS "WELCOME THE OTHER"

The 9th World Assembly of Religions for Peace Will Bring Religious Leaders Together to Collaborate for Peace

On November 20th, the 9th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* will convene in Vienna, Austria. The 9th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* will bring together over 600 religious leaders, representing all historic faith traditions and every region of the world, to address rising hostility toward the "other" worldwide.

Assembly delegates come from the *Religions for Peace* network of ninety national inter-religious councils and groups, five regional councils, one world council and global networks of religious women and religious youth. Assembly delegates include Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Shinto, and Zoroastrian religious leaders.

**"WELCOMING
THE OTHER;
ACTION FOR
HUMAN DIGNITY,
CITIZENSHIP AND
SHARED WELL-
BEING"**

"Each of our diverse faith traditions calls for people of faith to 'welcome the other,'" said Dr. William Vendley, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*. "This Assembly is an opportunity for diverse religious communities to work together to confront rising social hostility toward the 'other,' which takes the form of intolerance, and too often violence."

Since 1970, *Religions for Peace* World Assemblies have addressed common threats to Peace and advanced multi-religious cooperation. At the 9th World Assembly, *Religions for Peace* will identify ways religious communities can "welcome the other" by advancing human dignity, shared well-being, and a more robust notion of citizenship.



PAKISTAN

CHANCE OF A LIFE TIME...

Shiela Griffiths, who is a missionary in Pakistan from Britain and Ireland was sent to the Philippines to help the Joint Novitiate Formation, is sharing her experience with us.

(This article is taken from 'Kapatid' bulletin of the Philippines.)

How did I come to be in the Philippines for two months? This question often comes to me as I ponder over my experience there. From September 2012 to May 2013 I had been accompanying the Pre-Novices here in Pakistan. The General Leadership Team had finally set the date for the commencement of the Joint Novitiate Formation with the Philippines as the venue. When I heard I was to accompany our 3 Pre-Novices, Rashida Yousaf, Toshiba Gulzar and Tahira Sarwar to the Philippines at the beginning of May and remain there with them for two months to help them adjust to the new situation, I was a little overawed but yet excited at the prospect.

I was of the opinion that the Philippines belonged to the developed world but I realised as I travelled from the airport that this was not so. Although the influence of the Spaniards,

Japanese and Americans was very much present, still this country has a great deal to offer of its own culture. I learned more of this after attending one of the Modular Classes for the Novices on the situation of the Philippines. This session was given by a member of the group EHEMPLO. The rich and the poor... very poor. One speaker brought out the root cause of poverty.

We do not see GOD in others

Transferring from one house to another seems to have been one of my experiences over the past year. I started with the Pre-Novices in Gojra, September 2012, and then after 4 months went to Lahore, January 2013. When I arrived in the Philippines, May 6th 2013, I was stationed in the Formation House, Sauyo, but when we heard that 3 Pre-Novices from Sri Lanka were to join us, we transferred to the house in Matatag Street, on June 6th 2013. This was then the Administration house so it was afterwards installed as the formation House.

However I believe that the Lord was telling me not to get too "settled" but like the hymn says:

*So every day,
we're on our way,
for we are the travelling,
Wandering race,
we're the people of God.....*

I, too, need to be ready to move on. I also felt like Abraham, who in his old age, was asked to leave Haran and go to the land the Lord would show him. At my age of 75, I asked what use I would be in a new situation. It has been a learning experience, a journey of faith.

The first month I spent in Sauyo, meeting the people of the Parish, taking classes for our Pre-Novices and one Filipino Novice, Maralou, as well as inserting into the Formation Community which was surely multi-cultural: Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani and British. The humidity of the climate was difficult to adjust to at the outset but my body soon acclimatised to it, as well as to the food.

I was honoured to attend some of the MODULAR classes for the Novices at Inter-Congregational level. These classes take place twice a month for two consecutive days, usually in the first and third week of the month. Each session deals with a different topic. I first attended the Orientation Programme where over 90 1st year Novices and 20 Formators graced the day. The exposure, through Power point, to the Noviceship Process was humorously but effectively presented. It is good that these classes are held only 4 days a month as it gives the Formators time to prepare the Novices for the class beforehand and integrate and evaluate the work done. She also has time to do work on our own Spirituality and interiorise it.

June 15th was another rich experience when we welcomed 3 Pre-Novices from Sri Lanka: Oshani, Jeewika and Jenistalla. Like our 3 Pakistani Pre-Novices they had also done work experience before coming to the

All too soon the visit came to an end and I spent my last day in the Philippines packing.

These two months have been for me a wonderful God experience. I am very thankful to the Lord for giving me a chance to visit this Asian country and witness the great spirit of the Holy Family Sisters.

Philippines. They too had to get used to the climate, food, new surroundings and insertion into a new Community. They only had 4 days before attending the MODULAR Classes, 19th - 20th June.

Our Holy Family Sisters were in the Philippines at the start of the new mission in 1984 and again Pakistan was involved at the start of the International Novitiate Programme. On June 24th I was greatly privileged to be present for the happy occasion when our 6 Pre-Novices were admitted to the Novitiate, and handed over into the very capable hands of Sr. Sesumary. Now the Novitiate Community comprises 11 members, 4 Community sisters, one second year Novice and 6 first year Novices. Although I had been requested to stay longer, I felt the Lord calling me to LET GO and hand over to the new Novice Mistress. This day confirmed me in my decision to return to Pakistan on July 3rd.

However I was given the golden opportunity to visit the Province of Sorsogon, where our sisters are living in Rizal and Bulan. Now these places are no longer names in a book but have become a reality. On June 25th Sr. Aquinas kindly took me there, enduring the 12 hour coach ride from Manila. I was so happy to see the insertion of our sisters with the people of the area and to experience their life for a few days. I also had the opportunity to meet some of the Associate members as well as the three Priest Associates. I was given the wonderful chance to bathe in the hot Springs, a therapeutic event which has had good results on my back!!!

*Sr. Shiela Griffiths
(Pakistan)*

SRI LANKA



IN THE PROCESS OF RECLAIMING OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE

We the TP sisters of Sri Lanka with a sister from Pakistan gathered at Bandarawala from 20th-22nd. Srs. Jesmin, and Shanthi, animated and empowered us for a renewal of life by finding the appropriate niche in the community, institute, church and in the universe.

We entered into the session with an awareness walk which helped us enter into the spirit of the programme. Following that, we were blessed with a chance to share our experiences with our novitiate groups which mutually enriched and challenged us. The collected experiences with ups and downs

shared in the big group reminded us where we are in religious life today. Following a beautiful presentation in the evening about the ancient love of God, the inputs helped us to rediscover our desires and to see whether the Mission of Communion has any connection with our desires. Looking back on our journey in search of God, we realise that our personal desires, dreams, passions and feelings are blended together with the mission of communion.

On the 2nd day, we discussed in groups how the understanding of the vows evolves from the very beginning of the religious life and we had a sharing in the big group about how to



live our vowed life for mission in a new way; counter culturally in our daily life. For example, becoming spiritual mothers as our pope says, allowing our image of God to

evolve, being in touch with the context around the world in order to prevent us becoming outdated religious.

The 3rd day inputs helped us to recreate a **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound PERSONAL PROJECT** with a renewed spirit. Yes, we reset our goals with a broader mind towards our Vision – common Mission. We committed ourselves to its ‘demands’. Here are some of our experiences...

(Without naming the Sisters we give you some experiences from what we received – *Information Service, Rome*)

- *I felt a new energy spring up from each one of us to support each other in our religious journey.*
- *I realise that my desire has a close connection with the mission of communion. My openness to the universe is very important to my growth.*
- *It was an opportunity for mutual challenging. It was a time to find out where I am with the help of the new insights.*
- *The session renewed my desire, hope and energised me to be aware of my commitment and respond to it fully.*
- *I am a woman disciple of Jesus who loves the earth community and who has the responsibility to protect the earth for the future.*
- *I felt the belongingness of my family especially that we are Sri Lankan Holy Family Sisters, part of a big family. The session was freely followed and deep enough to challenge my life.*
- *The mutual understanding has bonded us in this big family. Without any fear, we shared our inner selves with other. God bless my family.*
- *This meeting was different from the past. Our sharing and the guidance of our sisters helped me to deepen my life.*
- *I realised that everything in the world is genetically related to me. I received support and strength from my companions.*
- *I am convinced I have to work for an ‘integrated whole’ within and around me. I feel that it is the mission of communion.*
- *The session was enriching because all the sisters from Sri Lanka were there. I understood that I am a part of this awesome web of life.*



- *Relationship with God and living in community are the great strengths to my religious journey. Unity is my strength.*
- *Started from where we are, we are guided towards a clear goal in order to take courageous steps forward.*

We conclude with the word –

“The heart of the matter is a desire to dedicate oneself and all one’s life-energies to God through active ministry in the service of the Reign of God and to do so within a Community which supports and encourage that lifestyle.”

*Sr. Sebo
Sri Lanka - Jaffna*



SRI LANKA - COLOMBO

“BEHOLD I AM ABOUT TO DO GOOD THINGS. NOW SHALL IT SPRING FORTH” (Is. 43: 19)

Each day holds a surprise. But only if we expect it we can see, here, or feel it when it comes to us. Let us not be afraid to receive each day's surprise whether it comes to us as joy or sorrow, big or small. It will open a new place in our hearts; a place where we can welcome new friends and celebrate more fully our shared humanity.

Recently, I came across an article in the New Leader written by Joe Anthony SJ. It carried the story by Oscar Wilde which impressed me a lot. It fits well with the beauty of our interconnectedness of our creation; but if we are disconnected due to selfishness the whole creation suffers.

Every afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the giant's garden. It was a large lovely garden with soft green grass. The birds sat on the tree and sang sweetly. The garden belongs to giant who was away. He returned after seven years and so the little children playing in the garden. "What are you doing here?" He cried in a gruff voice and the children ran away. He built a high wall around it and put up a notice board that said "trespasser will be punished." The Spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds – only in the garden of the selfish giant it was still Winter. One morning the giant was lying awake in bed. He heard some lovely music. He jumped out of bed and looked out. What

did he see? Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept and they were sitting on the branches of the trees. In furthest corner there was a small boy who could not reach up to the branches. The tree said "climb up the tree and bent its branches down but the little boy could not climb up. The giant's heart melted as he looked up. "How selfish I had been?" he said and now I know why the Spring would come not here. The giant crept downstairs went to the garden. The children were afraid, all ran away and the garden became Winter again. The little boy did not see the giant coming. The giant stole up behind him and took the child gently and put it up on tree. The other children saw that the giant was not wicked any longer, come running back and with them came the Spring. The giant took an axe and knocked down the wall. The little boy whom the giant loved was never seen again. Years later when he was old and feeble he saw the little boy. He was shocked to see the prints of two nails on the child's palms and feet. "Who has wounded you" cried the giant. The child answered "these are the wounds of love".

Are we all not selfish giants? Only the degree varies. When we break the walls, and let others in and our love touches we resemble Christ. Jesus stands at the door and knocks to be let into our hearts. (Rev. 3:20) We do not let Him in because our selfishness makes us slaves and not free children of God.

Sr. Euphrasia Rodrigo – Colombo Province

INDIA

SILENCE ...

A JOURNEY WITHIN

Modern people seem to be afraid of silence. A person's life can be deepened tremendously by periods of silence used in the constructive ways of meditation and prayer. We all know that great personalities have spent much time in silence of life.

Silence is also used as total communication, in reference to nonverbal communication and spiritual connection. Silence can be positive or negative. It has a strange power. When we ask the fruit bearing trees, "why do you not make any noise?" The trees reply 'our fruits are sufficient advertisement for us.'

A brother asked an old man, is it better to speak or be silent?" The old man said to him one who speaks for God's sake does well; but one who is silent for God's sake also does well. Silence does not mean not to speak or to keep quiet. It actually frees ourselves from unwanted and wasteful thoughts. It enriches us with constructive thoughts. When the unwanted and wasteful thoughts are cleared from our mind, one meets the real One inside. Mother Teresa beautifully said, "We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature: trees, flowers, grass grow in

silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence. We need silence to be able to touch souls."

Silence is the most creative means to make conversation real. It liberates, gives colour, beauty and depth to the word, creates harmony in listening and gives unity interior

and exterior to the speech. Silence is ascetic in the sense that purifies the word and mystic in the sense that creates communion. One who is listening in silence is capable of communicating with others. As Swami Vivekananda has said "It is our own mental attitude which makes the world what it is for us. Our thoughts make things beautiful or ugly. Everything in the world is good, is holy and beautiful. If you see something evil, think that you do not understand it in right light".



Silence shows the way to journey inward. It is a spiritual pilgrimage to the divine centre of one's own true self in union with the divine –

able to understand who I am. It is a kind of entering into the cave of our heart. St. Augustine calls this as our **'inner eye'**. (Luke 11:34-36). The journey inward is a joyful experience of a person becoming **conscious of one's own full potential, self-acceptance and self-realization**. Jesus said "A good person brings good out of the treasure of good things in her heart; a bad person brings bad out of her treasure of bad things" (Lk 6: 45)

A farmer paid a visit to a monk who was living in a lonely place. He asked what you learn from your life of silence. The monk was drawing water from the well. He said to the farmer, look what do you see in the well? The man looked and said "I see nothing". Then the monk waited for the water to clear up and then said look now. What do you see? "Now I see myself." The monk concluded you see, when I put down the bucket the water is clear. This is the experience of silence. In silence one easily sees and knows oneself. Silence is necessary to let things grow within and help to regain relaxation of body and mind.

We cannot perceive God's presence, understand his will, listen to his whispering in the midst of noise - noise without or noise within. We must let ourselves down into the relaxed peaceful silence of God so that we recognize his whispering. Our Good Father said "When you have some moments of quiet,

go deep within yourself to communicate with God; you know that God's gentle voice can only be heard in silence. So if you LISTEN attentively, God will speak gently in the depths of your heart, words of love... After an encounter with your God you will have a greater desire to grow in holiness and goodness. (To Sr. St. Augustin Lugas, 27 February 1855)

Silence helps to have a closer look into where we are going. It is an opportunity to get a better relationships with others; to grow closer to God. It is a privilege moment to take a closer look at ourselves. The longest journey is the journey inward, perhaps the toughest journey. So silence of the eyes, Silence of the ears, Silence of the lips, Silence of the mind, Silence of the sentiments help us to grow in God's wisdom and understanding of oneself and others. As Mahatma Gandhi has rightly said, "In the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light. Our life is a long and arduous quest after Truth". We cannot always be in joy, but we can always be at peace. For there is always – A new journey ahead... So do good works silently; Love people silently; Do our duty silently; accept God's will silently; conceal another's faults silently; wish and desire secretly and silently; sacrifice and resign ourselves silently; attain virtue silently; persevere in life silently.

Sr. Punitha – Chennai

**Jesus tells us: "God into the entire world! Go!
Bear witness to the Gospel!" Mk 16:15**

CANADA

A WINDOW ON LIFE

We have just had a wonderful experience at a summer camp with young people from different parishes, aged 11-16, who had made their confirmation.

The excursion, that was actually a very good time of relaxation for them, fitted into one of the apostolic aims of our community. For this, Jolanta and I were an integral part of the group by our presence and our contribution to some pastoral activities with the youth.

We would like to say that this pastoral action was organised by Fr. Pierre Labossiere, curate of the parish of St. Charles, in which we are committed.

In all, 22 young girls and boys took a joyous and active part in this camp, accompanied by 7 monitors of whom three were men and four women.



Three main facts attracted me and I would like to share my opinion on them.

1. *The initiative came from the desire of Fr. Pierre, an elderly but active man, to bring together young people from different backgrounds so that they could have an experience of living together without complexes. As the Apostle Paul said, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, black or white, rich or poor, because all are sons and daughters of the same Father in heaven.*
2. *The openness of our young people and their monitors, in an atmosphere of mutual trust, was a visible sign of the joy of living together. That was noticeable by the integration of newcomers into the group, but also by their listening to the Spirit during the times of prayer to grow in trust in themselves and others.*
3. *The life testimony of someone from Quebec, a catechist in her parish, for whom this time was one of mutual exchange, total freedom and discovery of God's active presence and God's mercy and forgiveness that is always with us. But she especially appreciated our life witness, given by the others, and expressed a desire to continue to meet us to speak of our life in the following of Christ.*

My final observation is that we are a multitude seeking God and living God's life, and also the certainty that, in Jesus, communion and collaboration are possible.

To conclude, I can affirm my satisfaction and joy at having been able to participate in this first pastoral experience and I trust that, with Jesus and a common will to move forward, we can live and be his witnesses in the Quebec.

Aldégonde MBALANDA, Montréal Quesnel, Canada

PARAGUAY

NATIONAL AWARD OF "COMMUNARDS" WAS AWARDED TO SR. MERCEDES CALLE DIAZ

The Order of Merit "Comuneros" was awarded to Sr. Mercedes Calle Diaz of the Congregation of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, for her dedication to the education the indigenous people of Chaco for 30 years. She struggled to build and improve school buildings and adapt curricula and personalise the schooling of the aborigines.

A photo history. Mercedes Calle Diaz © with primary school pupils of "Santa Teresita » in 1988



Santa Teresita, Chaco (Marvin Duerksen, Special Envoy).

Mercedes Calle Diaz (66) said she was surprised to receive this distinction. "I did not expect the State of Paraguay or the parliament to know about my work," she told us. She received this decoration on 30 October 2013 in the National Congress.



This religious arrived from Spain as a missionary to Paraguay in 1984 to work with the Guarani and Nivacle people of Santa Teresita, a community situated near the city of Mariscal Estigarriba, to replace Sr. Dolores Paniagua who had died.

Santa Teresita was the first mission of the Holy Family Sisters, who arrived in the country in 1965.



LATIN AMERICA

SECOND MEETING OF THE HOLY FAMILY CONSECRATED SECULARS OF LATIN AMERICA

We arrived from our countries in joyful expectation of this meeting:

From Peru came Susa and Elizabeth
From Brazil, Antonina, Terezina and Sister Aurea
From Paraguay, Mirtha;
From Argentina, Gloria, Tere, Rosa and Gladys.

On the first day we were delighted to communicate with Maria Dolores Pérez Ple, our General Leader, by Skype. She encouraged us and missioned us to participate fully in this Second Latin-American Meeting.

Maria Dolores opened the way for us to deepen our consecrated secular life starting from Faith and the testament of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, sending us to realise our mission in a changing world.

*“In the Family of Pierre
Bienvenu Noailles, we
are Consecrated
Seculars on mission
in a changing world”*



We thanked God for this sisterly meeting, ready to share our life, our realities and culture in the presence of Jesus, Mary and Joseph our Models, and of the Good Father who left us this “being Family”

Our prayer, guided by Mirtha, was addressed to Mary who, by her ‘YES’ to God’s will, made the *Holy Family*, seed of the Kingdom, possible.

First Day: Our heritage

We took a moment to share:

What are the “inherited” values that inspire our daily life?

Echoes from the sharing

- ✚ Caring for Life - Respect - Love of Mary - Certainty - Humility - Simplicity - Seeing God in nature - Celebrating Life - Responsibility - Strength to go forward - Love and union in the family of PBN - example of faith and hope.

- ✚ Interconnection of all creation - God, creative energy, present in the whole universe – the infinite universe invites us to be attentive in an attitude of discovery.



- ✚ Faith keeps us strong, makes us able to contemplate all that God has created, God’s creation.

- ✚ Awareness of being the image of God, capable of creating, transforming and understanding the universe (the Good Father’s ‘new society’)

Continuing our task, in the afternoon we reflected on this point:

Taking into account the values named, **what are the needs to which we are responding?**

Some aspects of the answer

- ✚ Transmitting the love of God to the young through Mary.
- ✚ Committing ourselves to care for the environment: recycling.
- ✚ Being a strength for the family faced with difficulties.
- ✚ Reaching out to others – bringing God’s love to students with love and charity.
- ✚ Accepting people as they are – not abandoning them when difficulties arise.
- ✚ Living the joy of being united, nourished by the same spirituality and charism, each one in the reality and culture in which she finds herself.
- ✚ God Alone in the unity of the whole universe in movement.
- ✚ The universe is interconnected, everything is included in it.
- ✚ Faced with egoism and isolation: charism of inclusion, universal charity, dynamic new relationships.
- ✚ Faced with indifference: responsibility of our charism of life in the whole world, in the universe.

In the evening, we ‘made Saint Joseph present’. He accepted the will of God by his docile response and by his obedience, to build a family with Jesus and Mary.

At the end of the day we participated in the Eucharist.

Second Day

We proposed **rethinking our identity**: as persons, as consecrated seculars and members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.

We watched the video on ‘The three principles of the universe: diversity, subjectivity, communion’

Gloria guided us during the day, starting with the question: **What identifies us in the first place?**

We had a brainstorming session, then she told us: it’s our name!

A new question directed the group work:

What values do we want to recover from our ancestors?

The work was rich and the sharing intense. Here are some aspects:

- ✚ Recover our identity, our past, the values of the family.
- ✚ Listening, contemplation, commitment, take time for communication – Holy Love – respect for nature and respect for life, love of neighbour – family structure.
- ✚ Family identity, acceptance of differences, wonder before nature, deep relationships, listening attitude.
- ✚ Too much time is spent on technology and personal relationships are neglected.

In the afternoon we continued with the aim of:



‘Searching for new ways that respond to the call of the Spirit for the good of humanity and to present challenges’.

We looked at the video ‘Integral Ecology’, by Leonardo Boff. Faced with the immense grandeur of God, we asked ourselves:

As Consecrated Seculars in Latin America, what are the needs to which we respond in a changing world?

This led us to intense sharing.

- ✚ Join movements, organisations, associations that work in favour of ecology and Life.
- ✚ Set ourselves achievable goals – communicate them – be aware of the results obtained.
- ✚ Offer our Gift as Family to the world.
- ✚ See that others become aware of their participation in the universe.
- ✚ Accompaniment of children and youth – life consistency – Our Mission to celebrate joy, praise – Sacrifice ourselves for others with love, listening.

Before the Blessed Sacrament, with the Word of God and a text of the Good Father, we ended our day in thanksgiving to God’

Third Day

In the Morning Prayer, we rediscovered our Good Father, his way of responding to the call of God and how he gave himself totally to God’s Work.

Something new is coming into being, the prophet Isaiah tells us. From the Word, it emerges that the walk always leaves traces. So, we prayed to the Lord that these traces might be followed by others who feel drawn by the Holy Family Charism.

The aim of the day guided by Gladys, was:

‘The Good News Today. Seculars sent as Gift to the World’

The task was to respond to three questions:

What response should we give to ourselves, to the world?

For what end?

With whom?

With what had been done on the preceding days, we concentrated our attention on the directions we would like to take in the joy of knowing ourselves sent.

- ✚ **To ourselves** – to our family – to children and youth – to the sick – to those around us.
- ✚ **To the world**, the nearest (work, home, friends), by communication, formation.
- ✚ **To transmit** the Good News in simplicity, service and listening – relationships - a new society.
- ✚ Make others aware of their values, that they may be able to choose their life – abandon antiquated structures to take risks towards the future, towards those who have need of us.
- ✚ **WITH WHOM:** With Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
- ✚ With the family of Pierre bienvenu Noailles.
- ✚ With our Secular Group
- ✚ With the Church, associations, movements.
- ✚ Our Family – join associations or organisations committed to ecology, etc.
- ✚ Use the means of communication (Internet, social media, etc.)



In conclusion, WE DECLARE...

We, **Consecrated Seculars of Latin America, members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles**, in deepening the faith of our heritage, in attention to and defence of life, bearers of divine energy to our brothers and sisters, **affirm** from the depths of our being **that we are seculars on mission in a changing world. That is why we feel ourselves sent to:**

offer our gift as family to the world, to whoever is near to us (in the workplace, the home, etc.), involved with our people in everything that can happen to them, in their joys and sorrows, putting all our senses at their service, in listening and celebrating, becoming aware of being part of the universe, tracing new paths to announce the good news in simplicity and listening... We verify our relationships with all beings to lay aside antiquated structures, to collaborate in the creation of a new society. We want to strengthen links with our families, draw near to those who need us, collaborate with organisations, associations and with our local church, in the defence of life and ecology.

- For this, we consider it necessary to use the means of communication and social networks to be more present and to attain our goals.

By this DECLARATION, we praise and glorify God Alone in Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

*BRITAIN AND IRELAND***CAFOD RALLY AND "IF"
PROGRAM**

A crowd of three hundred and fifty thousand gathered in Westminster Central Hall in London for an Ecumenical Service to mark the beginning of a walk of Witness and a Rally in Hyde Park. Coaches, buses and cars descended on the Capital from all parts of the United Kingdom bringing demonstrators registering their concern for the plight of the world's poor and the hungry. It was the "IF" Campaign, organised by Cafod, and incorporating over two hundred organisations joined together to campaign for action by the G8 – on the issue of global hunger. The G8 Summit – the meeting of the world's leaders was being held in London, and like the "Make Poverty History" Campaign of 2005, it was an ideal opportunity to alert these leaders to the facts of world poverty. Some of our Holy Family Sisters, Lay Associates, Parishioners and Religious from local areas were part of that Walk of Witness and the following Rally. We even sported our own Banner!



The aims of the march was to highlight the plight of eight hundred and seventy million children – one in eight who go to bed hungry every night, without the basic necessities of life. Also to alert the G8 to 'land-grabbing' by the multi-national companies who steal the land from the poorer nations, and who are also locked into dodgy-deals in tax-free havens where the emergent nations have no quota or any rights whatever, to secure a viable income from their own land. It was referred to as lack of transparency!

It was difficult to define the type of people coming to the service. Some carried backpacks and had travelled far, with families, communities, parishes and local groups to register their commitment to the "IF" Campaign – enough food for everyone – 'if we work and pray.' We were led in praise by an Afro – Caribbean group, and then a father and daughter duet. Below us, in the auditorium, were our Holy Family Sisters and Lay Associates listening to Archbishops Nicholls and Welby emphasising the call to justice and the sharing of resources:

- *“Our world and our global family were not made so that some could feast while others hungered. Everyone has a right to his/her daily bread”*
- *“These are our brothers and sisters, and their suffering is ours also” (Archbishop Nicholls)*
- *“We have assembled to show we refuse a world where people’s futures are blighted by lack of food. We must make 2013, a year we start to solve the hunger crisis”. (Archbishop Nicholls)*

An African lady, Aimee Manimani, was interviewed about her experiences of hunger, while intercessions were offered for its eradication through our efforts and the changing of our attitudes.

Ten days of action by the charities concerned were being planned while the G8 were meeting in Enniskillen, near Belfast, Northern Ireland, and were hosted there by David Cameron. *“Nutrition for Growth”* was the title of the Summit.

After the gathering, many sisters and Lay Associates processed to Hyde Park, where we heard Bill Gates, Archbishop Rowan Williams, film director Danny Boyle and Cafod ambassador David Harewood speak of the need for action to alleviate hunger. The daily amount of food wasted in this country alone could easily feed our starving people abroad. Other celebrities including David Beckham, and Natasha Kaplinski who had filmed refugees on her visits abroad, and the singer Angelique, all addressed the crowd of over forty five thousand, who had assembled to listen and demonstrate. Texts messages were sent to Prime Minister



David Cameron to demand action, and many young people were visibly moved by the information and the experiences which were shared by the speakers. A commitment was made by all the participants to share and subscribe to the program of reform. It was announced that there had been a response from Downing Street, saying that Britain would share tax information with poorer countries. This would help deal with hunger and malnutrition.

Our Banners proclaiming the messages – “Live Simply so that others many simply live” and “Fair Trade for All” were carried by young and old. The sun shone splendidly and the whole scene in Hyde Park reminded me of the Pope’s visit in 2010. Despite the serious topic, there was almost a carnival atmosphere in the crowd. Various desks were sharing information and selling scores of fair-trade products. Many of us had already planted paper flowers symbolising the millions of children who experienced hunger globally. From an aerial view the pink/lilac fluttering flowers made the word “IF”. The future Summit in Ireland was really going to make a difference for the world’s needy, and many felt that we representing our Holy Family had helped.

Sandra Harrington

BELGIUM

THE SPIRIT OF ASSISI BLEW IN BRUSSELS

*"Searching for
religious harmony
in a broken world."*

As part of the global week of interfaith harmony, representatives of the three major monotheistic religions met in Belgium.

Around an informal breakfast, representatives of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian world experienced a time of friendly sharing with the aim of getting to know one another better, the better to understand each other and dialogue in friendship to promote a peaceful interfaith life.

Ms. Turtelboom, Minister for Justice in charge of Worship, opened the debate; she encouraged dialogue and praised Belgium as a land of religious freedom and one which demonstrates that a country can develop in tolerance.

The Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Athanasius Chatzopoulos, referring to the crisis situation in his country highlighted the importance of trust for the welfare of the population.

Bishop Lemmens and the Apostolic Nuncio recalled the words of John Paul II: "Dialogue is recognition of the inalienable dignity of human beings." This dialogue should not be "a false diplomacy". "Bishop Berloco quoted Benedict XVI: "Without education, there is no harmony, no dialogue."

The Muslim theologian, Jacob Mahi, said: "We need to discuss our differences and go beyond the tensions that hamper dialogue" Mohamed Achaibi acknowledged the opportunity to evolve in a multicultural society but, unfortunately, the media often give a bad image of Islam.

The representative of the Eastern Orthodox Church testified to the drama that "all the children of Abraham" are experiencing in Syria. The war was not caused by the religions but by the selfishness of some men."

The President of the Protestant Church spoke of the challenge for religions to lead by example in countries at peace, "dialogue is the building of oneself with the other." The representative of the Armenian Church said: "Tolerance is only 50% of the way!"

The new generation, characterised by its multiculturalism, but also affected by the crisis of reference points, in particular where family and spirituality are concerned, must rely on religions capable of living by listening and harmony.

All the participants welcomed this initiative which allowed them to "stand together against excessive secularisation. In the meeting of ideas, concrete initiatives should follow ..."

Denise Van der Laenen - Antwerp Community

ITALY

During the last summer vacation, various activities were organized from the General Leadership Team by the person in-charge of the students, to broaden our apostolic outlook and to enhance our sense of belonging to the Holy Family. Here I would like to share my personal experience. I began my vacation with the annual retreat at Nemi, It was an excellent God-experience for me to be in silence and to admire nature and to see the wonders of God in it. I was spiritually renewed and energised to revive my commitment. I went to Mother Teresa's house after having had this powerful experience to help them for a month.

When I entered the house of Mother Teresa, I was inspired by a phrase of hers, "*It is not important what we do, but with how much love we do it*". I was moved by these words of Mother Teresa and was ready to do anything. They render service in many ways and I liked doing the same ministries with great interest. I was happy to see the respect and the equality given to the poor and the drug addicted men and women who live in that house and come for daily lunch from outside. Every day they prepared lunch for hundreds of people. In the last week of my days I was able to listen to their sad stories. Though the language was a big barrier, I could go beyond it and build a relationship with them. I have learned to listen and be compassionate in the midst of their enormous suffering.

I had the opportunity to participate in the Eucharistic celebration of the anniversary of Mother Teresa's death. I could see all the men and women and the volunteers gathered together for the celebration. It was a simple

My Experience in Mother Teresa's house, France and Campobasso during my Vacation



but meaningful one. After the mass we had a small gathering and I received the precious gift of the words of gratitude for my services to them. I realised that the experience was an eye opener for me that God's people are suffering and struggling in different ways. I am inspired and realise that my love for the universe cannot be limited only to those who like me and those who know me. I thank the Lord each time I think of it.

France

I had a precious opportunity that made me so happy I felt like jumping up and shouting at the top of my voice. It was when I met the families of my brothers, after 23 years, in France. They were delighted to see me after such a long time. I don't know how to express my happiness. I really enjoyed my stay with them and visited the famous places in France. When I went to the church of St. Sulpice where our Founder received his vocation, I looked for the statue of Mary and then I spent

an hour with her; it gave me strength. I remembered all the members of our Congregation and prayed for their intentions at the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. I could not comprehend with my little intellectual capacity the commitment of the volunteers over there. Really it was a challenge for me.

Campobasso community

It was an opportunity for me to enjoy the beautiful natural scenery of mountains in Campobasso. I was overjoyed to visit our associates. I had the chance to participate in the marriage ceremony of Mr. Gian Luka the son of the president of the Associates. It was a simple but meaningful celebration. The Celebrant Fr. Lino, a Franciscan, came forward and blessed the couple and welcomed them. He did not give a sermon but made the couple as well as the faithful participate in it by asking them some questions

At the end of the offertory procession, I sang an offertory hymn in Tamil and performed a candle dance. There was a great silence. Fr. Lino introduced me to the congregation and he said that our sisters of Campobasso had been the channels of light, guidance and communion for them. My heart was filled with love and gratitude for the presence of our sisters in the parish of Campobasso. When I arrived at the altar, the celebrant asked me to explain the meaning of the hymn. I did it and greeted the couple who were at the altar. It was the first time that I saw the couple joining the priest to offer the offertory. At the end of the celebration, the couple thanked me and said that I had given the greatest gift to their matrimonial celebration. So I realised that everything is possible with the help of God because we find the way, the Truth and the Life in Jesus and only He can fill our lives with meaning.

I visited the boys who were kept in the rehabilitation centre where Sr. Maria Antonietta De Carlo works with Fr. Lino. There were 21 boys and I had a chat with all of them. Though the language was a bit of a barrier, I could go beyond it and listen to



them. They said that though there are ups and downs in life, they live peacefully under the guidance of Sr. Maria Antonietta and Fr. Lino. I have learnt to listen and be compassionate in the midst of their suffering.

I am grateful to the Associates who accompanied me to see the places. I was earnestly waiting to visit the place where St. Padre Pio lived and I had the opportunity to go to his birth place. While visiting the Pierlacina and his house, I realised that he lived in utter poverty while he was young. When I saw the room where he died, I realised how much he had loved the spirit of poverty. But now they have built a big church and dedicated it to his name. I was happy to visit a few families of the Associates.

During my stay in Campobasso I was happy to participate in the closing ceremony of the Holy Family Congress in our Generalate. It was good to see the associates who were active and vibrant and this experience reinforced my sense of interconnectedness. They gave me courage to build up the 'Family on Mission in a changing world'. It gave me double joy that there was a Priest Associate from Sri Lanka, Badulla, who celebrated the Mass at the closing ceremony of the programmes. The community of Campobasso is always open to all. I experienced the atmosphere of silence in this community. Though they were frail and elderly, they were active and witnessing to the life of the *Holy Family*. I am fervently desire you sisters to go forward with joy for the Glory of God Alone.

Selvathy (Student) – Italy

FRANCE

REAL LIFE IS NOT IN OUTWARD APPEARANCE

In the metro, Line 6, a small elderly man in a neglected state finds a place and sits down heavily. I can see him still, huddled in his seat, head bowed. He exudes fatigue and poverty. A touching oldness about him, a fragile, heart-moving human being.

In his hands he has a paper bag. The bag bears the well-known FNAC (Fédération nationale d'achats des cadres) logo.

FNAC – a paradise connecting one to modernity, through all kinds of gadgets where we get lost – and we all do, except the specialists - for lack of references and vocabulary, not to mention the avalanche of printed books and music they provide ...

FNAC - dazzling products that proudly display proportionate prices. We are more likely to see educated, well dressed people using them.

Something is wrong - the bag does not suit the hands that hold it. But after all, it may be a coincidence: it may have been found accidentally in a corner!

But, leaning down, he takes out a small brochure. Surprise: Pariscope! Pariscope is not dear: 50 cents. But it tells of cinemas, exhibitions, guided walks in Paris, restaurants ... you name it.

Perplexity and amazement send my thoughts back on myself, "They have eyes and see not ..."
Someone said, "blind eyes, fixed on the habitual, as if a beautiful appearance automatically means intelligence and culture, as if the human soul could not escape from the ready-made judgments of society, as if the broadening of the heart was a reserved area ... eyes that judge according to a set model!"

Conversion of the gaze, turning inward. Could I not say with Christian Bobin: "I saw neither God nor his advisers before I thought of removing my hands from before my eyes."

*Gift of life, an old man without appearance
But real life is not in outward appearance
Inverted world, defeating appearances*

*Michelle Biraben
Angoulême Community*

SPAIN

PILAR AND CEFE, SPANISH LAY ASSOCIATES, REMEMBER MONTSERRAT DE PALAU

I will always remember this broad vision of God's works, with an unflinching dedication in every circumstance, this noble simplicity, this inexhaustible goodness, this unflinching sweetness and impartiality. She lived with God Alone and for God Alone, so it does not surprise me that she has given these two words as a motto and as an expression. Montserrat so embodied the Charism and the spirit of the Holy Family that her daily life was lived for God alone. She understood, as no one else, that 'God Alone' is the secret and the keystone of the whole building. 'God Alone' has always been the cry of her spirit. A strong, combative woman! Many apostolic sisters remember her years as Mistress of Novices at Ohárriz. They remember her as a 'human' woman, with a big heart, full of attention and sensitivity toward the novices.

For us, Montserrat will always be like Rita Bonnat, Mother Saint Charles Despect and so many other capable and experienced women; free women, open to the world, adapted to the needs of the times, close and affectionate. Montserrat is, for the whole Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles in the 21st century, an anchor in history. She had a great love for the Family and especially for Pierre Bienvenu Noailles to whose cause for beatification she devoted so much time and whose spirit she tried to transmit.

We remember her and the flame of love for the Family that she lit in us. Thank you, Montserrat, for having lived in the different stages of your life as a 'Family on Mission'.



You were for us and for those who knew you, a gift, a hope and a faithful witness of the origins of our Family.

*Pilar and Cefe
Lay Associates*

COMMUNITY OF LOS MATEOS – CARTAGENA – MURCIA - SPAIN

Nieves Laporte is one of the foundresses of the “Los Mateos” community. Through her and others the “Jaloqe” project for Gypsy women began. Twenty years have passed. Nieves left her workshop and shared her experience with us.

Everything began 20 years ago...

With the support of Caritas in Cartagena a team of five women, two of whom were experienced social workers and three of whom were living in the “Los Mateos” area. They were aware of the situation there and began a project that we wanted to be an alternative to the “Caritas of assistance” in the parishes. Now that I have handed over the coordination of the project to a social worker from Caritas in Cartagena, I was asked to say what this experience brought me



We began with ten pupils, women from the area. They soon grew to 30 and 40... plus about 27 volunteers who came to work as teachers or monitors. Other groups in the area also collaborated, as did some good professionals who disinterestedly brought their knowledge and experience and adapted to the conditions of life in the area. It was an excellent experience of working as a network for the most deprived women.

Various activities were conducted to guide the advancement and development of the women who have benefited from the project. We tried activities geared to making

the women capable of managing their own affairs. We will never know if these aims have been achieved but during the journey with them I found a meaning to my work.

The "Jaloqe" project has given me a lot, day by day. It helped me to believe in miracles again (that of the loaves and fishes). How is it possible that such a small project, born without other resource than the goodwill of a handful of people convinced of the possibility of growing together with other women, sharing values and hopes, has slowly and surely achieved a task of integral promotion over 20 years.

I saw how the relationship with these women at risk of marginalisation, with real personal values, although often undiscovered, humanises us and our attachments, and not only me, but all those who approach this project. Unwittingly, these young mothers transmit strength, hope and life. I was struck with admiration at the resourcefulness that enabled them to cope with adversity or the rigors of life. No doubt when they have to 'search for their livelihood' they are forced to show their financial situation in a rather plaintive fashion and appear overcome by discouragement, even tearfully. But seeing them close up, it is obvious that in the midst of the worst difficulties, they do not give up. Their ingenuity, their bubbly mood, their tireless energy, their naturalness, keep them from discouragement. Their future is in no

way assured, but every day they start again, nothing more. As one of them said: "I've never had anything, but I have never lacked the necessary. Hopefully, it will be always like that".

It has also helped me not to restrict human needs to material goods; such necessities exist, it is true, but it is accompanied by other, deeper needs. The relationship established at these levels, dignify us all in a giving and receiving that makes us autonomous and interdependent beings. For this, it is important to create spaces where women can express themselves, have relationships, be themselves, and discover their abilities because they have them even in the most adverse circumstances. In this perspective the years passed. A blessing from God, certainly.

*Nieves Laporte
Community of "Los Mateos"
Cartagena-Spain*



INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS IN ROME

On the initiative of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelisation, an International Congress of Catechists was held in Rome from 26 to 28 September. It was one of the events scheduled for the Year of Faith. The title chosen was: *The catechist, witness to faith.*



I took part in the Congress as part of the Diocesan Catechetical Delegation of Madrid, of which I am a member. I want to share some aspects of this Congress and what I experienced.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council, opened the Congress by telling us about the primacy of evangelisation through catechesis. Among other things, he told us that "it is dangerous to think that the Church can undertake a path of new evangelization with an outdated catechesis, even one of the recent past. The relationship that unites New Evangelisation and catechesis necessarily implies the need for a renewed catechetical process". In this area, I think of what our Founder, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles said about the needs of a century that is beginning not being the same as those of the century that is ending.

Then, he spoke to us from the platform. His presentation, charged with life, was divided into three points:

- 1) *Starting from Christ means being familiar with him.*
- 2) *Starting from Christ means imitating him by leaving self to go to meet the other.*
- 3) *Starting from Christ means not being afraid to go with him to the margins.*

To summarise, I would say that the Pope began by encouraging us to "be" catechists, which means much more than "work" as catechists or "do" catechesis. He talked about the need to continually learn from Christ, for this apprenticeship lasts a lifetime, and he

During the conferences, we talked a lot about the relationship between divine Revelation and catechesis, the ministry of the Word and catechesis, the ecclesial sense of catechesis, the dynamism of the act of faith, the relationship between faith and reason, catechetical methods and the need to adapt them to the pedagogy of faith, of accepting the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its use in catechesis.

What we awaited the most and what was the most interesting part of the Congress was the intervention of Pope Francis. He entered the Paul VI Hall a little before five o'clock on Friday afternoon with his captivating smile, his enthusiastic eyes and irresistible joy. With much patience and great cordiality he greeted many delegates among those located along the central aisle.

insisted that we need to let ourselves be looked at by Him.

He also invited us to leave ourselves to centre ourselves on Christ. He talked about the importance of this double movement of



systole and diastole, that is, the union with Jesus and the encounter with the other, a relationship with Him, but to bring Him to the other. Francis gave the catechists the example of the prophet Jonah, a pious man, leading a quiet and orderly life with very clear rules and judging everything and everyone very rigidly according to his own rules. Someone who has decided what the truth is, can become inflexible. Well, according to the Pope, the story of Jonah teaches us not to be afraid to leave our patterns to follow God, because God always goes further and is creative. And if God is creative, creativity must be the backbone of the catechist. But to be creative, we must know how to change, and we need to change to adapt ourselves to the circumstances in which we proclaim the Gospel.

Finally, he urged us to open ourselves, not shut ourselves into our group, our



movement, our parish and our community. If we remain shutting in, we may breathe polluted air that would eventually make us sick. The catechist, like the Church, must lose the fear of going out to take the risk that it entails, because it is always better to have a rugged Church than an enclosed Church.

On Saturday, the third day of the Congress, we celebrated Mass at the tomb of the Apostle Peter. Archbishop Fisichella presided, accompanied by Bishops from different countries. We professed our faith, the faith of the Church. I was very impressed to see people from so many countries make profession of the same faith, to enter into communion with the person of Christ and one another. And, at the end, the sending to the whole world to proclaim the Gospel was overwhelming because the next day all us delegates left Rome to return to our country, to bring the Gospel to all people.

The crowning point of the meeting was the Eucharist presided by the Pope, in St. Peter's Square in the presence of about two hundred thousand people. The homily on the readings of the Sunday liturgy was of great interest to us all. Among other things, the Pope asked: "Who is the catechist?" And he said, "It is the one who keeps and nourishes the remembrance of God, the one who keeps it within him/herself and knows how to revive it in others."

I do not want to say more, only that I thank God for having been able to participate in this Congress that I experienced as a gift from God.

M. Pilar García Espinosa

*SOUTH AFRICA***CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS SISTERS TO HEALTH CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

“There is a stream flowing out of the temple... and on each bank of the stream all kinds of trees will grow to provide food. Their leaves will never wither and they will never stop bearing fruit. They will have fresh fruit every month, because they are watered by the stream that flows from the temple. The trees will provide food and their leaves will be used for healing people. (Ezekiel 47. 1-12)”

Catholic nursing religious, of different congregations, have left a legacy that none can surpass. They not only go deep into the history of the country but also deep in to the memories of those whose lives they have touched. Hospitals, clinics and training colleges answered the needs of the people in cities, towns and rural areas in the developing Southern Africa. Recently, the religious nursing Sisters have turned their attention to primary health Care, Nutrition, Vulnerable Children and sufferers from HIV/Aids.

The Holy Family Sisters, when the population still lived in tents and shanties, founded the Johannesburg General Hospital in 1888 and other Health Care works followed. The Augustinians Sisters opened Sanatoria in Natal in the 1890s and, in the early history of Zimbabwe, the Kingwilliamstown Dominicans nursed soldiers and citizens under the guidance of the well-known Dr. Jameson. Sisters of Nazareth cared for orphans and the elderly from 1888. The

Assumption Sisters, the first religious to arrive in the Cape in 1849, nursed the sick in their homes and the Trappist monks nursed the sick in three huts.

Catholic Sisters are noted for their high standard of health care and in the 1900s the Precious Blood Sisters of Mariannhill, Belgian Sisters of Charity in Polokwane, Benedictine Sisters in Nkandla, Loreto Sisters in Mpumalanga, Holy Cross Sisters in Taung and Dominicans of Kingwilliamstown, Oakford and Montebello were nursing in hospitals, sanatoria and clinics as well as in the homes of the sick.

Religious Sisters have found new ways of upholding the dignity of the sick and suffering. Today our nursing religious are caring for the sick and dying in their homes, with the help of Home-Based Care-givers, and supporting the many child-headed households left orphaned and vulnerable.

Sr. Melanie O'Connor

CAMEROON AND CHAD

NAZARETH IS BORN IN CAMEROON

"I know of a boat named Canada that brought our first two sisters, in 1949, from the Port of Marseilles in France, to the port of Douala in Cameroon to extend the family of God "

In the 1987 November-December issue of *Le Flamboyant*, the newsletter of the Cameroon-Chad Delegation, Sr. Odette Filion and Sr. Carmen Valbuena wrote, "**Nazareth is born in Cameroon**".

"In 1949, the first sisters of the Holy Family arrived at Mokolo in the extreme North of Cameroon." That means almost 40 years of presence, sharing, communion, intense life with our Cameroonian brothers and sisters.

The Christian communities grew and became strong. The Church in Cameroon matured, local vocations began.

Yes, for a decade now, young girls are asking "to follow the sisters' way". We welcome them into our communities for longer or shorter periods. But, we do not have the structures to continue their formation.



At the end of February 1987, Sr. Christiane Meunier (General Councillor) visited us.

There was a period of intense reflection, prayer, enlightenment and discernment in our Delegation. On her departure a piece of land had been bought at Mokolo; the decision to build a house for the reception of young girls was taken.

"NAZARETH" had been born. The girls began to take certain steps; we began to dialogue with their parents and those in charge of the Christian communities. This first experience began on 16 November 1987 at Mokolo-Mbuoa, with four young girls – Solange, Hellé, Gaipambi (from Djingilya) and Asta Doukoye (from Mokolo-Tada). The Delegation was full of hope, "the future daughters"! The Reign of God was growing and developing in the Church of Cameroon.

In the beginning Nazareth was a house of formation for young people. In 1999 the postulants lived there. In 2001, the noviciate of the Holy Family Sisters was established in the house.

In 2003, the first Cameroonian sister, Solange Graka, made her perpetual vows.

Present activities of our sisters:

“If the rhythm of the drums changes, the dance steps also change.” (Benin proverb)

Now, lay people have replaced the sisters in the school and the health centre where they worked. We go with the signs of the times. We give priority to the marginalised – the deaf and dumb, the disabled, the blind, prisoners, the elderly, the sick, so that they may be respected in their dignity as children of God.

We also work with Catholic Action Movements for children, Catholic women, couples in formation at the Emmaus Centre in Mokolo, the kindergarten, the educational complex at Yaounde, a girls’ hostel,

primary and post-primary school at Gounou-Gaya, care of the sick at Tagal in Chad and community granaries.

For the time being, our Nazareth house is a great help when we have large gatherings such as the Delegation Assembly and sessions for our sisters and associates. Young people in formation, after a stay in our communities, go to Congo for their noviciate.

For the future, we would like this house to become a Pierre Bienvenu Noailles Spiritual Centre where all could refresh and nourish their faith with no distinction of social class and also provide an integral human formation for those interested.

We are also reflecting on providing professional formation: sewing, cutting, artistic and decorative courses such as embroidery, knitting, crochet and cooking. In addition:

Psychology: self-knowledge by working through good experiences,

Spiritual: the pilgrimage of the Holy Family, meditation, yoga, Zen, retreats with the cosmos,

Intellectual: debates on what destroys us... we remain open to the signs of the times and the calls of the Holy Spirit.

We hope that as we work and fertilise the soil of our Delegation the roots of the Holy Family tree will enter deeply into this land and that this young tree will bear fruit in the growth of the Family of God.

*Sr. Carolina MARTÍNEZ
Cameroon-Chad*



PRIEST KIDNAPPED FROM A PARISH IN THE DIOCESE OF MAROUA-MOKOLO

Since the events of BOKO Haram in Nigeria, in our diocese there is a camp for refugees some 28 km from Mokolo. An appeal has been launched to help our sisters and brothers in distress.

Mokolo is a city located almost on the border with Nigeria. There are parishes that share the border with the neighbouring country. Since the kidnapping of the French family, we know that we are in a red zone. Many Nigerian families come to Cameroon villages to seek refuge.

Father Georges lives in NGUETCHEWE where he is parish priest. He is very sensitive to the situation of the people who are suffering and he remained there; he also gave help to those he met.

On Tuesday morning, 19 November, he was in Mokolo to accompany the girls who had

come to start training in a parish centre at Mokolo Mboua. The head of the centre, Brenetta, an Italian, chatted with the priest sharing what was happening around us. It so happened that on returning home that Tuesday night, gunmen came and took him from his house and brought him to neighbouring Nigeria.

These armed men had first gone to the Sisters of the Holy Family in Helmet. They demanded money very threateningly and, as they found nothing, they went to the priest who was then asleep. During that time, the two sisters were well guarded by two gunmen

They asked for money; then they left with him. The Governor has been alerted and the search is still going on. But the priest has not yet been found.

*Sister Agnes
Delegation of Cameroon-Chad*

Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year!



As we celebrate Emmanuel--God with us--we pray that you will know this truth as lived experience and reality. And as we look forward to a new year, we thank our readers, for continuing to walk with us on this journey of transformation.



May God Bless you!



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