

INTERCONNECTIONS

*“Sent for mission –
if we don’t dare
now, then when?”*

General Chapter 2014



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The present liturgical season is a time of preparation for something which transcends us: a time of waiting which requires lighted candles, quality listening and attentiveness to the joys, sorrows and questions which emerge from our world.

In a certain sense it is a time of insecurity – a time of movement, of Passover towards the Resurrection of Jesus. It is a new and renewed life which always appears to us in different shades of colour because we cannot plumb the depths all its richness. It is a time to open ourselves to the mystery of accepting the fruitful death of everything which prevents us from moving towards more fullness of life.

This is the backdrop against which the whole Family will live an important event in union with one of its parts – the Institute. You will have guessed that we are referring to the 2014 General Chapter. This event will affect the whole Family in different ways, precisely because we are a Family, and what is happening in one of its parts affects the whole. That is why Margaret sent letters to the different groups of the Family asking for their participation, enlightenment, suggestions and prayer...

I end these few lines with Margaret's words which describe well our deep frame of mind as we move towards the great Passover of Jesus and towards one more Passover in the building up of our Family.

In the heart of each one of us and among us, a Holy Family body, there is a desire for change, a desire to live our life for mission in meaningful and authentic ways, relevant for today for the sake of our world. The fact is that we cannot look to others to initiate change. This must begin with each one of us. The choices that we make have the potential to make a difference in the world around us and in so doing to change ourselves. Our attachment to Jesus and his mission enables us to recognise that it is he who can make all things new within us and among us. It is in Jesus that we are invited to give ourselves for others, to pour ourselves out as he did. The longings that we experience in our hearts for this newness are prompted by the Holy Spirit.

These longings and hopes for a "new society" where justice, equality and peace reign, where communion is lived through "a new way of relating to God, to humanity, to the earth and all creation" are expressed in different ways in the various meetings and local Chapters that are part of our Chapter journey.

(Extract from Circular no. 318 – To the Sisters of the Institute)

HERE IN ROME

The Pope continues to be news, not because of a great desire for popularity but simply because he takes his responsibility seriously and, when he acts, he listens to the Spirit who dwells in the Church and guides it. His words which are not new and his gestures, above all, take us by surprise and make us think because they are in tune with the readings from the Word of God which we are invited to listen to these days.



“Tear your hearts and not your garments” (Joel 2:13).

“...The prophet’s lament is a challenge for every single one of us and reminds us that conversion cannot be reduced to externals or vague resolutions but that it involves and transforms all life from deep within the person, from one’s very consciousness. We are invited to set out on a path and we have to keep our eyes and ears open because we are not sure of the way. But, above all, we have to open our hearts in order to go beyond our own little world... We must open ourselves to God and to others.

We know that this world which is becoming ever more artificial obliges us to live in a culture of “doing”, of “being useful” and, without our realising it, we exclude God from our horizon. And we also exclude the horizon itself. Lent calls us to get a move on, to remind ourselves that we are simply creatures and not God. When I see struggles for power in our little everyday world, I think, “These people are playing at being God the creator. They haven’t even noticed that they are not God...”

(Homily, 16 March 2014)

We ourselves continue our path towards the Chapter, working hard and having the last meetings before this important event in our lives:

- The Pre-capitular Commission
- The three Councils of consecrated life
- The Contemplatives who are taking advantage of their time in Rome to have a Council meeting.

Let us be united with them through our work, prayer and sisterly affection.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

THE JOY OF BEING FAMILY

We are happy to be able to give this testimony and to share our joy with you.

The year 2013 has been a year of grace because we experienced important and very meaningful events in our religious family. First of all, we celebrated the Congress of the Family which helped the members of the large Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, to live and bear witness to being a Family which is a gift for the world of today.

This event helped us to deepen more and more our beautiful charism of communion, first of all in the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles and then with those around us (those close to us, collaborators, neighbours, vulnerable people...). We share life with them by means of our presence and simple dialogue like Jesus, Mary and Joseph and, as far as possible, we bring them moral, spiritual and material support.

Then Margaret Muldoon and Ana Maria Alcalde visited us in the Congo! This was a great joy for us and was a precious time which renewed our missionary spirit. We marvelled at how welcoming and simple they were and the way they dialogued with each group, especially ours.

We were delighted with the sharing which encouraged us to go forward and confirmed that we are truly a united family.

Marie-Claire Mupende and Sara Nioka, Consecrated Seculars



A ROAD TO EMMAUS

Marceline Woyo and Marie-Josée Mfulayinga are preparing for their perpetual vows and their consecration to God and the service of others.

For the second time, I was invited by Sr. Georgine Mufogoto, the Delegate, to work and reflect with the two young Sisters on the theme of “A Family on Mission”, a subject which was deepened during the Congress of the Family.

Full of joy, I gave the teachings over a period of four days. I marvelled at the way the Sisters listened and at the way they participated so actively and shared on the workshop questions.



A Lay Associate sharing his experience of the Congress of the Family with Apostolic Sisters as part of their formation in preparation for their Perpetual Profession is a real grace at the beginning this new historic era and is also a response to the request for common formation. This should not surprise us. We are a Family to whom the Spirit has given a special gift – a charism of communion.

I take this opportunity to express my great joy at being a Lay Associate of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. I am grateful for all the formation which I have received, especially for taking part in two Congresses of the Family, and I thank very sincerely those who gave me that opportunity. I am grateful to Sr. Georgine and her Council for having invited me to the Delegation Assembly to share my experience of being a Lay Associate, and for the days lived in a family spirit and in the collaboration which we are all invited to live.

The road is long but we have taken a step. Let us go forward!

Léonard Mbembe , Lay Associate

A TESTIMONY – GOD IS WORKING WONDERS!

In March 2013, a couple arrived at the hospital of Lakas with their daughter Bertine and their granddaughter Bien-aimée who was just five months old. The couple then disappeared abandoning Bertine et Bien-aimée to the hospital staff!

The two were so badly nourished and thin that they were in urgent need of care, and material and financial help. They also needed to be loved.

Filled with compassion for these vulnerable, abandoned people, the hospital staff took charge of their medical care and our community looked after feeding and accompanying mother and child.

When their health improved, their painful return to the family had to be considered! In



December we approached the brothers and sisters of the family. There was a lot of resistance but one of the sisters, with the consent of her husband, came forward and accepted Bertine et Bien-aimée into their home.

In January Bertine and Bien-aimée will return to their family.

Let us thank the Lord of life for enabling Bertine et Bien-aimée to return to health and feel loved!

*Sr. Marie-Paule BALULA
Apostolic Sister*

CHAD

AN OUTING OF HOLY FAMILY YOUTH TO CHAD (AT N'DJAMENA)

*The Holy Family Youth had an outing to a meeting of the Chadian families.
Jacques shares his experience.*

We, the Youth of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, had an outing to N'Djamena in Chad from 26 to 29 July. The memories of this journey are engraved on our hearts. They are part of our

personal history and the history of our Christian life.

The families, friends of the Sisters, received us well with generosity and charity. Their

welcome was very simple as at Nazareth and was very meaningful for us. We experienced the joy of being with others as sisters and brothers. What struck us most was the harmony and unity that reigned among these families. We were very touched by seeing a Moslem family and a Christian family living side by side. This way of living is rare in places where there are Moslems and Christians. It is a grace and it awakened in me a great desire to be and to build family with all the people that I meet.

Dear Sisters of the Holy Family, we young people, thank you most sincerely for allowing

us to have this experience outside our own country. The memory of this outing is engraved on our hearts.

We also thank Fr. Mathias and Sr. Aline for their availability and for having accompanied and supported us throughout the journey. Thank you for your openness to the world and to the experiences that we have had. We also carry in our hearts Fr. Achille and Madame Jeanne and all those who helped us financially, materially and spiritually. May God bless you abundantly and give you his grace!

Jacques Kaldadak

(Taken from Flamboyant the Information Bulletin of Cameroon/Chad – no. 2 /2013)

A CHANGE OF MINDSET

Things change from day to day! This year we were happy to welcome 25 young girls to the Catherine Aimée Noailles Hostel. 18 of these are enrolled in the Hope College for which we are responsible.

Since the Catherine Aimée Hostel opened we had never accepted young Moslem women. Actually, applications for places in the hostel come through the parishes in view of the Christian formation of young women. So house rules insist that the young girls play an active part in parish life. This year, with

our new broadened vision opening out to everyone and to all of creation, we accepted two young Moslem girls. At first, they were afraid of their parents' reaction and wanted to come on condition that their parents did not know. However, we considered it necessary to speak to their parents and to assure them that their children would be completely free to practise their religion and that no demands would be made on them.



After we had spoken to them, the parents allowed their children to choose their religion. They were very happy and chose to

become Catholics. One of them is part of a children's movement called *Kemkogi* which means "A single heart" and the other belongs to a group of young people of the parish.

When they went home for a break, we were curious to know how they would be received by their families.

Perhaps they would be threatened or not allowed to go to church? But they told us, "Nothing like that, Sister. We went to church and we took part in our activities as usual". What a surprise it was for us to see a Moslem allowing his child to go to church! Where we are, Moslems look for followers, do not allow their members to leave and even kill those who say openly that they are leaving the Moslem religion.

It is a joy for us to see our sisters and brothers changing their mindset and understanding that each child is free to choose her/his religion. An open spirit is the key to everything. We pray for the Moslems so that we may live together peacefully.

Sr. Emilienne

(Taken from "Le Flamboyant", the Information Bulletin of Cameroon-Chad, no. 2/2013)

SOUTH AFRICA

It all began with an invitation to the celebration of World Day for refugees and migrants at Christ the King Cathedral in Johannesburg. After this celebration, I felt I needed to do something with the refugees living in Johannesburg.

Being a 'loud' thinker I shared with my Sisters the need to take part in the lives of the refugees. I was not sure exactly how. One of the Sisters suggested I met with Diana who manages Mercy House the home for refugees in Bez Valley. I checked the internet and found her contact details.

I called Diana with the intention of meeting her to discuss this services I could offer on weekends at her place. She was thrilled and we set up an appointment. She told me about the children who needed preparation for First Holy Communion at the centre. I was happy to teach catechism and we started with eight children. They all told me that they were baptized in their countries of origin - Congo

A YEAR OF LEARNING AND OPPORTUNITIES

Brazzaville, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We discovered they did not have Baptismal Certificates and they had to be given Conditional Baptism. On the feast of Christ the King three received their First Holy Communion and it was a joyous celebration at Holy Angels Catholic Church in Bezvalley. The fourth was held back because he is still very young.

As the lessons progressed, I became worried about four siblings who were absent from classes most of the time. They are assisted by Mercy House but they live with their aunt somewhere in Berea. The social worker in me could not just let them miss classes; I felt I needed to investigate. After meeting all the relevant people for information, I got to understand that they grew up as members of the Catholic Church in Congo Brazzaville. They claim that they were saved from death because when the bomb killed their family, they were in church. Their grandmother lives in Johannesburg and struggles to make ends meet. The four live with their aunt. She is married to a Pastor who has his own church. Critical questions had to be asked; although they are Catholics, the people who care for them want the children to take part in their church. It was very difficult to tell the children that their present situation did not allow them to continue with classes, since they could not practise their Catholic faith. They unfortunately had to lie to their aunt about coming for catechism.

I had four children to prepare for First Holy Communion. It was a life-giving and fulfilling journey we travelled; they were eager to know God and everything that the church teaches.

I am grateful to my community for allowing me this opportunity to share life with the refugee children of Mercy House. As well as teaching catechism, I became part of the Mercy House family. I shared in the fears and worries of the children whose family rent a room in the neighbourhood and are assisted by Mercy House. Their concern is always about money for rent. They have been evicted and thrown out on the street many times and this is their greatest fear. As we learnt about the love of God and the ever-unfailing presence of God with us, the children shared about the many faces of God they had experienced while in desperation in a foreign land. However, people have always come to their rescue. I really felt enriched through it all. For me it was a learning journey, and I love and believe in continuous learning to serve others better.

Sr. Clementine Sekantsi



PAKISTAN

FAITH IS A GREAT GIFT BROUGHT BY JESUS

“I have come into the world so that whoever believes in me may not remain in the darkness” (Jn12:46)

In the absence of light nothing is clear. It is impossible to tell good from evil, or to see the road to our destination. This clearly shows how faith enriches life in all dimensions.

“The heart is the core of the human person, where all his or her different dimensions interest, body, spirit, interiority and openness to the world and to others.” (Lumen fidei)

Today we need to be reminded of this connection between faith and truth, given the crisis of truth in our age. In drawing near to the suffering of people, we are certainly unable to eliminate all their pain or to explain every evil. Faith is not a light which scatters all our darkness, but a lamp which guides our steps and helps those who suffer, to keep going. Reflecting through all, Pakistan has become a very difficult place, not only for the vulnerable but also for those working for development, to attain their goals.



We are feeling the impact of climate change, natural disasters, fiscal crises, suicide bombers, unstable political environment and increasing challenge of organized terrorism. War and terrorism are the major man-made disasters of the region besides natural disasters. During the past decades, stories of suicide bomb attacks have been continually the headlines in the media. Still people have great faith that God will take care of them.

Caritas Pakistan has been responding to emergencies and working for the rehabilitation of the affected. Pakistan, being a disaster prone country, is vulnerable to different types of natural calamities. Rain, floods and landslides are regular phenomena. Usually after the floods, many diseases erupt

like typhoid, skin and eye diseases. People, and especially children, have to face other complications. The urgent needs for humanitarian assistance include shelter, food, supply of non-food items, hygiene, free medical camps and awareness programs.

Looking at all that has happened in Pakistan, it is clear that we have faced a multiple crisis which has exposed the country's vulnerability to exogenous shocks. If we are touched by this, if we are at all sympathetic, can we grasp the urgency of the situation? We need great faith to make ourselves available for necessary action.

I witnessed the flood-affected areas in Trimmu Head. This is a place where three rivers meet at one point. The people who live close to this place earn their living through cultivation of the land, keeping animals or by fishing. After the floods, last year they built their houses at least 8 to 10 feet above the land to prevent the floods from destroying their homes in the future but they have no roads. The land in between their houses was inundated with water. Each house is at least one to two kilometers from the other. People had shifted to other places with their animals. There are no schools or hospitals close by, even for an emergency.

Going through fields without roads was an experience. Everything is interconnected, interdependent and nothing is isolated.

The Cosmic world is wonderful. After the floods the people came back but with many diseases. We went there to conduct a medical camp. As there was no electricity, we had our camp under a small tree. Many of the patients who came had to travel 8 to 10 km to the centre where we were working. By the time they reached the place the patients were often in a very bad condition but still they accepted the will of God. Some of the people came walking and some sat on the backs of their animals. Others crossed the river by boat.

Male doctors examined the male patients while I had to see to the ladies. Ladies can never come in front of men and are kept separate at all times. The ladies were so happy to share, I had to listen to their cries. The elders have a lot of power and control over them. Many abnormal children were brought. In some families all the children were abnormal, while others were blind or mentally retarded.

After listening to the history of the birth of the children, I realized that this abnormality is due to inter-marriage. Most of the families are closely related and get their children married to first cousins. I tried to explain to the older ladies the seriousness of this problem. However they were not convinced and are not ready to change. Being with these people in their suffering and poverty was a great test of my faith.

Sr. Elaine De Almeida



SRI LANKA – PRIEST ASSOCIATES

THE ANNUAL “LIVE IN” OF THE PRIEST ASSOCIATES - SRI LANKA 2013

Date: 18th - 20th November 2013

Venue: Madhu Retreat Centre

Nineteen Priest Associates and representatives of the other 4 vocations (9 Apostolic Sisters, 1 Contemplative Sister, 3 Consecrated Seculars and 3 Lay Associates) – a total number of 35 participated in the meeting. Some priests excused themselves due to inevitable reasons.

Theme: LIVING FAITH VERGING ON HEROISM

Fr. Jacob Nicholas, the National Co-ordinator, gave the inaugural address. He welcomed all with a warmth heart. It was the first time that the representatives of the other 4 vocations were invited to participate in the “Live In” of the Priest Associates. What was unique about this event was that Fr. George Fajardo and Sr. Vivian came from the Philippines to participate in the meeting. A special welcome was given to the representatives from Philippines. The co-ordinator explained the purpose of the “Live In.”

- To experience that communion of the PBN family.
- To review our life and mission and to plan for the future.
- To update ourselves with current thinking and to respond to the new challenges of our society and the world.
- To deepen the charism of PBN and to grow in the spirit of the Founder.
- To take concrete steps for the common formation of all Vocations, expressing our interdependence and interconnectedness.



In the history of the Priest Associates a revival started after Vatican Council II and a new life began with the commitment of Fr. J. B. Devarajah (Mannar) in 1977 – the first Priest Associate. The first International Meeting held in Montefano, Kandy from 17 to 20 February 2004 is remarkable in that during it the 4th article was formulated. The second international meeting took place in Martillac from 6 to 18 October 2007. The third General assembly took place in Martillac from 25 to 28 September 2012.

The opening prayer inspired all and remained the group that our charism has a prophetic, dynamic power, with spirituality as a driving force to build communion in today's context. We need to work together to promote a just society as 5 vocations and pray "Give us the spirit of wisdom, in all our affairs" (Romans 12:5-16). Then Fr. Benet Shantha, the national secretary, conducted the Family Session. He said that such a gathering is very similar to the Congress held in Martillac and can be called a mini-congress held in Madhu Retreat Centre. The Good Father must be rejoicing to see the family together.

- * The Annual "Live In" session is important for Priest Associates as a way of on-going formation.
- * It is important that a diocesan priest to be well rooted in diocesan spirituality before embracing the vocation to be a Holy Family Priest Associate as a "call within a call". Diocesan spirituality is strengthened by Holy Family Spirituality.
- * The Congress experience which has been a lasting one helps us to feel our oneness?
- * The "Live In" we have in 2013 is a very unique experience of our big family.
- * The presence of Fr. George Fajardo from Philippines expresses our oneness.



The encouraging letter of Sr. Margaret Muldoon from Rome was read out: *"We appreciate the efforts you make as a group to encourage one another to live the Holy Family Mission as priest associates. We are grateful for sharing your life journey with us. ...The theme of the General chapter 2014: "Sent for the mission – if we don't dare now, then when?" will no doubt speak to you in living your priestly call within the Holy Family, in your specific context".* The Family Session ended with the self-introduction of each member in her/his respective vocation. Fr. George shared the traumatic experiences of the disaster caused by the recent cyclone. There was a moment of silence when he really broke down and was speechless. We all stood up to pay our respects to the victims of the floods, and expressed our solidarity.

The evening session ended with evening prayer conducted by Sr. Arul with a power-point presentation. It focused on the importance of being with Jesus, allowing him to transform each one, in order to bear much fruit (John 15:1-10). Welcoming him into the life situations and be touched by him so that he will radiate himself to others through you. The importance of taking time to be with him daily is needed for all of us.

Sr. Deepa conducted the morning meditation with inspiring thoughts through power point presentation. The representatives of the 5 groups were invited to place a lamp around the big lamp which represented Jesus the light. Fr. George Fajardo placed a lamp in remembrance of the victims of the cyclone in the Philippines. The group reflected on the thoughts of Pope Francis regarding our commitment towards the poor. The Pope said, "Don't be afraid to go out of yourselves in prayer and in pastoral action. Be courageous in praying and in going to proclaim the gospel... Go forward

with joy, always with courage to tell the truth. Please don't be 'spinsters' and 'bachelors' – Go forward.”

The prayer of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was displayed as a conclusion to the meditation.

The next day Sr. Euphrasia gave the input talk on the theme:

The Holy Family Mission of Communion, Family and Oneness is our Gift.

- * *We hear the call to a new, deeper understanding of our identity as one family.*
- * *United by a common mission of communion – and inclusive family with the whole of creation.*
- * *We are missionaries who read the signs of the times and respond wholeheartedly.*
- * *Pope Francis expresses the need to return to the gospel and be closer to the poor: “How I wish for a poor church – and for a church of the poor with Christ at the centre.” The Pope calls us to a personal and cultural conversion – making us aware of the 3 false cultures that materialism has created in our world. The culture of comfort, the culture of waste, the culture of indifference.*
- * *We too have evolved, and are opening to a new ways of thinking about and expressing our common mission of communion.*
- * *A sense of urgency with regard to our theme is seen from the theme chosen for the 2014 General chapter – “SENT FOR MISSION – IF WE DON'T DARE NOW, THEN WHEN?”*

A questionnaire was given for group reflection and sharing. What is the alternate way Holy Family Priests can live today so that our lives and living become prophetic in this divided society/world?

- *The need for a deep prayer life. It is then we can respond to urgent needs of the people*
- *Changing our attitudes towards the poor, observing and studying their way of life.*
- *We are not alone; we have to work with others in networking and collaboration.*
- *To live as true disciples of Jesus, to translate the gospel into today's context.*
- *To stand against the destruction of the environment and to protect environment.*

The Faith and Mission of the Priest Associates.

- *Faith is a gift of God, it challenges our lives. We need to be living witnesses of faith.*
- *Faith demands mission. We share in the triple function of Christ.*
- *The Church is the sacrament of salvation and makes everything holy.*
- *Faith and mission are inseparable. We need a new vision in order to make our mission meaningful.*

Two questions were given for group reflection and sharing. 1. How do I experience the triple function of Christ as a Holy Family Priest Associate? 2. Suggest concrete steps to become visible signs of communion in our context today.

Triple Functions:

- *To pay more attention to liturgical celebrations, with much preparation.*
- *Visiting those who are not regular church-goers.*
- *Not to be silent but to play a prophetic role though it is challenging and demands risks.*
- *It will take time to get closer to the people. Gradually we can change the meaningless structures*

Concrete Steps:

- ◆ *Witnessing is one of the predominant factors.*
- ◆ *Simplicity in our relationships, so that people can approach us easily.*
- ◆ *Not be hurtful in sermons but to win the hearts of the people with gentleness.*
- ◆ *To welcome sinners, suffering people and accept them as they are.*
- ◆ *To be the voice of the voiceless, to speak the truth and to stand for just rights.*
- ◆ *To protect the environment from pollution and destruction.*

Each Vocation was given time to introduce itself in the assembly. All expressed the experiences of living communion and Family spirit deeply. Our bonds were strengthened by understanding and the dignity of equality. A desire to seek more experiences through such meetings in the future was explicit in the sharing.

The next “LIVE IN” was proposed for Batticaloa from 26 to 29 August 2014.

We had a Eucharistic celebration presided over by the Bishop of Mannar, Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph. Frs. Peppi Sosai and Peter Manoharan from the Mannar diocese made their commitments during the Mass. All the priests renewed their commitments. Bishop Joseph, during his homily, mentioned that he too was aspiring to be priest associate when he was parish priest at Pandateruppu but somehow he had missed out. He said that our Founder PBN understood the needs of the people after the French Revolution and he committed himself to liberate them and make everyone to experience equal dignity and respect. Sr. Helen Fernando proposed the vote of thanks and the programme came to end.

*Fr. Benet Shantha
National Secretary*



HUMAN RIGHTS SESSIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS COUNCIL IN GENEVA

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
(UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1)

Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:8-9). Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute (Psalm 82:3).

I had a dream that one day I would attend the Human Rights Sessions of the United Nations Council in Geneva. I am happy because my dream has come true. I was sponsored by Amnesty International. I had been working closely with an NGO called NAFSO (The National Fisheries Solidarity Movement) on issues related to fisher-folk, land grabbing and disappearances. They recommended me as an HRD (Human Rights Defender) to Amnesty International.

What I attended was a training session of Human Rights Defenders called Global Training. There were members from 22 countries present – mostly from Asia and Africa where human rights violations occur widely. We had to complete 2 different tests, draft several working papers including one on the human rights situation in our countries. The training was somewhat academic. I also made the maximum use of my stay there by participating in the UNHR Sessions. We got a fair knowledge of the United Nations Human Rights System; the mandate of the Special Rapporteurs and Experts, Working Groups and Treaty Bodies. We had a session on presenting the UPR (Universal Periodical Review) where we learned how to present our home issues to the UNHRC. We were trained how to write to the Special Rapporteur about



the issues relating to Human Rights Violations in our respective countries.

There were very interesting presentations from the different countries and, along with them, interactive discussions on all the topics, such as the violation of women and children, the environment, arbitrary detention, disappearances, the death penalty, the right to food, land grabbing, housing and water needs, the right of expression, freedom of the media and freedom of the Judiciary.

The presentation of all the reports of the Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights violations in the member countries was very critical and Sri Lanka was one of the main topics in the UN sessions with regard to the violation of human rights even in the post-war situation. The government of Sri Lanka has completely failed to comply with last year's NUHRC Resolution 22/1 on Promoting Reconciliation and Accountability in Sri Lanka.

There were a few events organized by the US Delegation and other organizations.

In one session, the High Commissioner presented her case against the actions of the

Sri Lankan government. She said that the Sri Lankan government is continually violating human rights at all levels and while the Council was working, the SL government took two Human rights defenders (Mr. Rukshan and Fr. Preveen (HRD) and detained them in the North. They were released later.



What struck me most is that we have a huge task to do in the field of Human rights. As I mentioned, the common law proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights needs to be upheld through our action.

As a result of my experience, I have been able to come to an understanding that working for Human Rights is a mission of Christ. He was well aware of the violation of the Human Rights. His mission was to protect the rights of all people.

On Sabbath days Jesus would listen to the crowd. The law said that it was not lawful to

cure a person on the Sabbath day. However, Jesus was concerned with the needs of the people. There are numerous examples showing how Jesus' actions were geared towards the protection of the rights of the people. He sacrificed his life to give a dignified life to the people.

We speak a lot about working against all forms of discrimination but we tend to continue to engage in our traditional work. We have still failed to change our lives and activities. There is risk involved when working in the field of Human Rights. The atmosphere is the same as it was in Jesus' time. He paid the price and the question remains as to whether or not we have committed ourselves to this task.

There are so many who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of the oppressed. The time has come for us to take that risk and to go out of our way to carry out the same mission as Jesus, but in a new way which is relevant in the current context because *“The Sri Lankan constitution states that all persons are equal before the law, and no citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds”* (Article 12). Moreover, the constitution also grants *“the freedom of movement, and of choosing his residence within Sri Lanka”* (Article 14).

*Sr. Deepa Fernando
Sri Lanka – Colombo Province*

BRAZIL

WE CHOOSE LIFE

Vanda shares her reflections on faith and hope. She also speaks of her experiences in the work of “Shelter” as well as the attitudes and dreams of the Sisters whose lives are rooted in faith and hope.

Today, the feast of Christ the King, the Church brings the Year of Faith to a close. We can ask ourselves, “What has the Year of Faith meant to me? Where am I on my journey of faith? Where and how do I nourish my faith?”

Jesus told his disciples that even if their faith was only the size of a mustard seed, they could say to a fig tree, “Take yourself from there and plant yourself in the sea. And the fig tree would obey them.” (Lk 17: 6). Just like the disciples, we are not able to move the fig tree but because of our faith we can change ourselves and comfort those who are suffering in our communities and wherever else we are. Because of our faith, we can place our gifts at the service of others and believe that tomorrow will be better than today. Faith and hope go hand in hand: faith and hope propel us into action.

Faith make us sensitive and stronger at the same time. Like Mary at the Annunciation, we are able to accept what we do not understand. Faith makes us courageous. Even if there is no light on our path, we believe that God is always with us.



Pope Francis has said, “The newness that God gives our life is definitive [...] God is in the process of making all things new”. The Holy Spirit really transforms us and wants to transform the world in which we live. Each day we experience “the newness of God”. How can we continue to dream if the number of Sisters is declining rapidly? How can the work of Shelter continue? What I can say is that we may be few in number but our courage and efforts are great.

In general, we can say that “Shelter” is a work which still responds to needs, and the continuous request for accommodation is proof of that. After a time of dialogue and reflection, we decided to employ a lay person as administrator.

There was certainly some confusion. The decision was taken quickly and was very painful for all the Sisters, the lady boarders, the collaborators...

After a year's experience, we now know that the work can continue under the administration of lay people. They will be accompanied by a Sister so as not to lose sight of the aim of the work and the mission of the *Holy Family*.

Every day we look after eighteen women who have every reason to be depressed, discouraged and desolate: or have no will to continue to live. And yet I see that their desire to live grows every day. The thought that there are people willing to give time to cheering them up plays a big part in this. These people believe in the possibility of a healthy, happy, joyful life even if they are old and live in a residential home. Various groups often visit too.

We believe in the power of our Charism. That is why Louise has been sent to be a member of an intercongregational community in the Amazon, and Rosa Valmala, at eighty years of age, has accepted the challenge of going to live in Piauí, a dry place without water and with a temperature of almost 40°.

The Sisters of the Cerejeiras (Sao Paulo) community dream of being able to work with children and teenagers in an area where there is nothing but violence and drugs.

I end with something Pope Francis said during his visit to Brazil. "Have faith, and life will have a fresh taste. Have faith, hope and love".

Vanda – Brazil



CANADA

THE TESTIMONY OF A RESIDENT OF THE BORDEUAX DOMAIN

Before actually living here, I came to the Bordeaux Domain as a visitor eleven years ago. That was when the renovation of the house was beginning. A friend who had a brother who was a Missionary of the Sacred Heart told me that the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux were in the process of selling this beautiful property. The future owner wanted to turn the house into a residence for retired people.

Shortly after this meeting with my friend I spent five hours visiting the Bordeaux Domain. It was magnificent! Even though the renovations were not yet finished, I signed my first lease agreement.

I was looking for somewhere peaceful and practical and this building seemed to answer my needs. It was when I came to the Domain as a resident that I got to know the Sisters of the Holy Family. At this time I felt the need of solitude. About fifty residents like myself had already shown an interest in this magnificent residence. I had already left my profession as a teacher and had sold my house, in this way finalising my decision to become a resident in this beautiful place. I saw it as a safe environment, a magnificent place where I could rest. I have lived here now for ten years and have made it my home.

In 2005, in collaboration with Frs. Sénéchal and Laberge, I became involved in the Pastoral Council. Today I am President of this committee. We set up the Ministries of Communion and Reading for the daily Masses. We have Mass every day thanks to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart who have been living in the Domain since the beginning.



Like all the other residents, I benefit from the services that are offered: keep fit classes three times a week, and I am on a team to evaluate the various activities in the Domain. At meal times I meet the other residents and have happy times with them. So we are a big Family.

I feel at home in the Domain. I regret nothing. I am lucky that I was able to choose this place myself. I

believe that the Lord was waiting for me here. Nobody else made the decision for me and I feel at home.

This tenth anniversary gives me the opportunity to bear witness to what I experience at the Bordeaux Domain. There is a beautiful community spirit here and it is a good place to live.

Madame Flavie Denis



THE TEN BEAUTIFUL YEARS OF OUR RESIDENCE

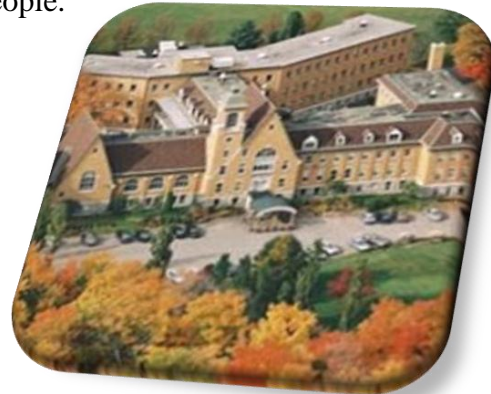
*It is a feast-day at the
Bordeaux Domain.*

On Tuesday, February 18 2014, the residents and staff of the house were extremely happy. This joy was expressed, first of all, in the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Jean Richard. The focus of the celebration was thanksgiving for the ten years since the Residence was opened. In his homily, Fr. Richard emphasised how the attitude of goodwill among the people who live here and of the staff who care for them contributes towards the atmosphere of calm and joy in the house.

A delicious meal was served to the whole household who were then invited to a classical mini-concert given by a string quartet: violins and violin-cellos. This was very enjoyable and was followed by a talk given by Mr. Yvan Ouellet, the Director General of the Residence.

Mr. Ouellet drew attention to the presence of the people who had lived in the house since the beginning – the Sisters of the Holy Family

of Bordeaux, Albertine Fournier, Charlotte Aubin et Evelyne Kane; the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart whose superior at that time was Fr. Conrad Sénéchal and many other lay people.



During the celebration, the Director General warmly thanked the staff of the various sections of the house for their attentive devotedness.

Finally, the feast-day cake was shared and drew a close to the 10th birthday celebration of the Residence of the Bordeaux Domain.

Sillery, Hélène Bédard hfb.

ITALY

A YEAR WITH THE HOLY FAMILY OF BORDEAUX

Simonetta, an Italian lady who spent some time with the Sisters in our house in Marino (Rome) shares her experience with us.

“...So many important times – Masses, adoration, devotion to Our Lady whom I asked to protect my daughter, a study bursary, the election of the Pope, Sr. Lucia’s death, the visit to the Generalate – so many times spent close together gave me life. I never felt alone. Every time I returned from my travels the crucifix which Sr. Nunzia gave me was waiting for me in my room.

I read a book about the Founder of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. I discovered that he was a human father, a sensitive person and someone who knew human frailty and recognised that simplicity can hide greatness. This wonderful intuition enabled him to appreciate and love the mission of the Holy Family who not only accompanied and protected Jesus as he was growing up but also gave him a simple and profound style of home life and an awareness of suffering. According to the Founder, this was a model to be imitated and prolonged through the action of the Sisters whom he encouraged to bear witness forcefully to the values of the Holy Family. In this way, the Founder continues to live in you through your works; and I became part of this dynamic of loving help through which the Holy Family Sisters of today prolong the presence and teaching of the Founder.

People can become disillusioned because they are not perfect but imperfections make you

more human. I would say that they are even necessary in some circumstances. Because of them, people can approach you, confide in you and ask for help. Then you can do what the Founder wanted so much – you can help and defend those in need, not only the poor but all those who are in some kind of need.

I think that your Order is very special because it was founded on deep union, simplicity and friendliness, work and availability. But you cannot live any of this if you do not know how to listen – to listen not only with your ears but with your heart. And you do listen with your heart. Therefore you can do what the ear alone cannot achieve – you can communicate. You can all also challenge one another in a healthy way and this makes you realistic, life-giving and approachable.

I did not know your Founder but by means of his books I know that he liked the Sisters to give expression to his temperament without damaging the originality of each one. The secret lies in creating conditions in which you can live as different individuals in a constructive way in one place – the community. So you have the richness of sharing, of being together in such a way that even if you are far away you do not feel alone. What extraordinary experiences the Sisters had when they went to faraway countries with “God Alone...”

Simonetta

SPAIN

Lay Associate

COMMUNICATION OR ADDICTION?

“As we go forth under the banner of the Holy Family, we must have but one heart and one soul, and we must work together to spread the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. But since we are dispersed in different countries, how can we be united? We are occupied in different activities, so how can we work together?”

Spiritual Guide, No. 70

Prayer is the response that Pierre Bienvenu gives to this question – prayer and numberless letters written to all the members of the Family.

What is our situation today? Ten years ago, the Lay Associates were asked to have a group-address in order to facilitate communication. In those ten years, every community and practically every member of the Family has acquired a computer at home, and elderly people who used to be slightly afraid of new technology now read emails and communicate with their families in this way. In both communities and families, people take turns in using the computer. Today, you are very unusual if you do not carry a mobile phone in your handbag and it is becoming more and more common to receive emails “sent from my iPad”. Even within our group of Lay Associates we share news, dates of meetings and everyday life by email. There is even someone doing the Exercises of Saint Ignatius on “Skype”. Every day emails arrive from other Family members on various subjects and this definitely improves communication, opens us up to the world and gives us common information. With the click of a mouse I can communicate with a Consecrated Secular in Paraguay, a Lay Associate in Peru or a Sister in Rwanda.

But in this article, I am asking the following question. Are we really making progress with regard to quality communication? Do we give ourselves sufficient time to make our own what we see and read? Do we write or read emails at impossible hours taking time from family, sleep or prayer?

To turn our backs on new communications media, apart from being an impossibility, would be to lose a wonderful means of contacting one another. But if we are to have deep relationships, we need to be aware of the real time we spend before the computer, the mobile phone or the television. In the second place, let us try to ensure that the information which we see or read builds us up as persons and that the messages which we send are of substance and personalised so that we think of the dignity of the people to whom we are sending them. May the information which we share help us to walk in the footsteps of the Holy Family united in heart and soul.

*Pilar Sánchez, Lay Associate
Alcalá la Real (Spain)*

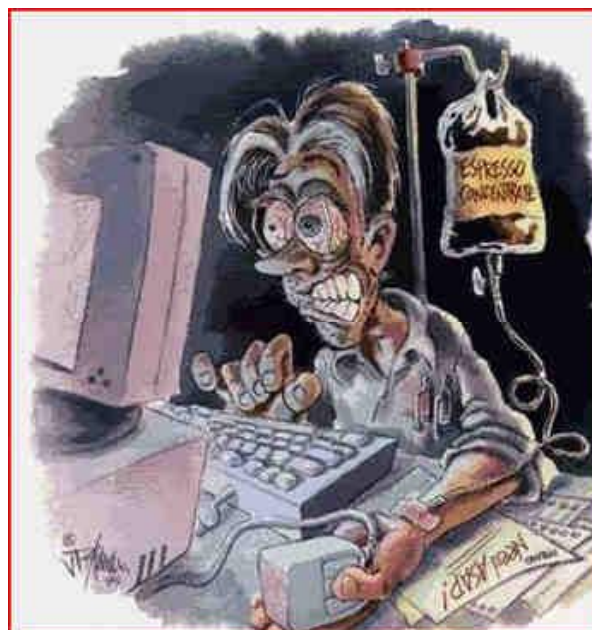
A PROPHETIC ACT OF DENUNCIATION

Last April various Christian organisations and people in Madrid – parishes, movements, religious congregations and other Church groups, including some members of the Holy Family, – began to meet because we were concerned about the cutting back of the social rights of the people of Madrid, and wanted the voice of the Catholics of Madrid to be heard. After a lot of meetings and reflection, we drew up a document based mainly on the Social Teaching of the Church, the Gospel and other shorter and simpler documents to be used for work and reflection in groups and parishes. Our aim was and is to let it be known that **as followers of Jesus we cannot remain passive in the face of the suffering of so many citizens, our neighbours, who are suffering from the consequences of the economic crisis and the policies of cutting back which are now in force.**

On Sunday, December 1 we expressed visibly to society our concerns and denunciations. In a silent demonstration, using posters and banners, we made our demands known. Several Apostolic Sisters took part in this event which took place in the Puerta del Sol in central Madrid. It was very moving to carry out this protest contemplating a huge Christmas tree in the centre of the square made with lottery drums and displaying at its top, not a Christmas star, the symbol of Jesus' birth but a huge lottery drum – symbol of the God of money who presides over the Christmas celebrations in our society.

The following article describes how this event was organised and carried out by a collection of various Gospel, Justice and Social Rights groups as well as other Catholics of Madrid.

*Tere FLORENSA
Apostolic Sister – Madrid – Spain.*



MADRID: CHRISTIAN INDIGNATION TAKES TO THE STREETS

José Luis Palacios

On December 1, a group of people gathered in front of no. 5 Alcalá Street, seat of the Treasury Ministry, in another **demonstration** to express the indignation which is running through society. But this time, there was a little nuance which made it different... This group consisted of priests, religious women and men, families, single people, active people, retired people and the unemployed. All were united in their faith in Jesus Christ and ready to denounce the terrible hardship that present policies are inflicting on the most disadvantaged people in our society, and to express their solidarity with them. Those gathered included more than forty Catholic entities from Madrid and represented parishes, movements, communities, congregations and various other groups.



The designated day was patiently organised so that, for once, the voice of the Church would remind governments, society in general and especially the victims of the situation, **that the precariousness and running down of public services and the neglect of the weakest in society are not pleasing to the God who is revealed in Christ.**

It is some months since the idea was mooted of making the Christian voice heard in the midst of the noise and suffering caused by the long and cold cul-de-sac in which society is trapped because of restrictions imposed on it by economic powers and public administrators. These months were not wasted however, because they enabled us to deepen mutual knowledge, to break down prejudices and to reflect together. Above all, they provided **an opportunity to sew up the fabric of the Church** which lack of communication and mistrust had torn to shreds.

A large banner was hung on the façade separating the street from the offices of the Treasury Ministry. On this was written **"Justice and Social Rights as demanded by the Gospel"** and gave people an idea of what was going on. There were also various posters with quotations from Luke about the impossibility of serving both God and money, the reference from the Book of Exodus claiming justice for the poor and some sayings of Pope Francis, like, "There is no dignity without work." These showed that the demonstration was organised by Catholics of

Madrid. Some leaflets were also distributed to passers-by for their signature.

There were several hundred Church people present – people with little influence or money, much less any access to centres of power and social communications. These were prepared to protest in “noisy” silence to the most insensitive ears and hardened hearts but they were also ready to heal gently the oft-times wounded dignity of those who suffer most. **For almost two hours, those present walked around a cross that was drawn on the ground** displaying posters on which were described some of the most obvious abuses of social rights such as the neglect of workers’ rights and cutbacks in the health and social services.

The morning passed in silence for the most part but was interrupted occasionally by a public reading of a **communiqué** which resulted in a lot of patient and respectful dialogue and deep discernment which was radically faithful to the Gospel and Church

teaching. Not even the theatrical drama showing the sad consequences of the economic crisis and calling the spectators to action broke the prophetic and dignified calm which characterised the event. The demonstration ended leaving in the minds of the majority a bittersweet aftertaste caused by the hardness of the situations that were denounced, the warm comforting of the meeting and the knowledge that a duty had been done.

But there was also floating in the air **the desire to continue working together** with the aim of defending the dignity of the poorest and to make a genuinely Christian contribution to the building up of a more just, more community-minded and more sustainable society.

<http://www.periodistadigital.com/religion/solidaridad/2013/12/02/madrid-la-indignacion-cristiana-sale-a-la-calle-iglesia-religion-dios-jesus-crisis-solidaridad-madrid.shtml>



LIVES OF OUR SISTERS ...

CANADA

Our dear sister, Cécile Gonthier, has just left us at the age of 101 after a long and fruitful life.

She entered the novitiate in Sillery on 15 September 1937 after having taught for six years. In 1941, while she was in temporary vows, she began her nurse's training in the Main Hospital of Quebec and completed it in 1944.

On 8 January 1946, Cécile set out for Africa where she lived for several years in Lesotho working mainly in the Roma hospital. She also worked in South Africa where she was responsible for formation. In 1955, she was appointed sub-directress of Lesotho until the 1957 Chapter. Sr. Cécile would return to Africa once again in 1979 when she spent a year and a half in Togo.

Sr. Cécile loved Africa and the Africans very much. That went back a long way according to her parents' memory. When she was still a little girl, she went on a train journey with her parents. An African ticket collector passed by and she stretched out her arms to him much to the astonishment of her parents.

After the 1957 Chapter, Sr. Cécile returned to Canada to replace Mother Alphonse-Marie as sub-Directress and became the first Provincial when the Province was erected on 10 December 1958.

During the 1969 Chapter, Sr. Cécile was elected General Councillor, a post which she held for 6 years and which enabled her to visit several countries.



When she returned to Canada, she served in many ways as community leader and as a member of various committees and organisations such as the AMI (International Medical Aid) where she worked for several years. Everyone who knew Cécile appreciated her generosity, her honesty, her frankness and her sense of humour.

Sr. Cécile had been in Sillery since 2009 and played her part in community life in spite of some health problems in 2011 and 2012. In 2013, she became progressively weaker up to the last months before her death. She died on 1 January 2014.

I remember Sr. Cécile as someone who was very attached to the *Holy Family* and very responsible in the various positions which she held. The missions were always close to her heart and she was interested in everything that concerned Africa and the countries where we have missionaries.

*Sr. Madeleine Blais
Montreal, Quebec, Canada*

BRITAIN AND IRELAND

HEN TALK

Sometimes referred to as Scotland's Mother Teresa, Margaret Duncan worked for 17 years helping those caught up in the Bosnian civil war. She raised funds for orphaned and disabled children and supported the tens of thousands of women who were raped during that conflict and became pregnant as a result.



Sr. Margaret, who died at the age of 96, also knew suffering in her own life: both her parents died by the time she was 15. She later married but her husband was killed in Normandy in 1944, and her son, James, died of meningitis at 18 months.

Margaret was received into the Church and became a nun, and for 27 years lived at the Holy Family Convent in Leith. She was often involved in fund-raising for good causes, and, on one occasion, rode pillion on a Harley Davidson motorcycle at the age of 86.

Sr. Margaret was known to address everyone as "hen" or "son", including Cardinal Keith O'Brien, who wrote to her a week before his resignation as Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh following allegations of sexual misconduct.

When informed of his fall from grace, she replied: "I don't care what he's done, hen, I love him anyway".



(An article from THE TABLET)

SRI LANKA - Colombo (AsiaNews)

“The most important mission of my life has been supporting young people and proclaiming Christ to help others build their faith. This alone has made me happy,” said Sister Mary Clarice Karunanayake, a 96-year-old nun who spoke to *AsiaNews* about herself and her mission in her native country.

A member of the Order of the Holy Family, the nun has always worked in the Colombo Province. Today she lives in Santha Samaya, a long-term care facility in Wennappuwa convent. "I worked hard for as long as I could," she noted, "and now I spend my old age in prayer."



Clarice remembers when she received her vocation to the consecrated life. "God wanted me in 1940 when I was still a girl and lived in Dankotuwa (Western Province). I was studying at the monastery of Wennappuwa. I always liked the sisters since when I was little. Whenever I saw one, or a novice, I'd stare at them enraptured. When I finished my studies, I was able to fulfil my desire and I became a Sister of the Holy Family. I also became a teacher and served in different girls' schools."

Of her long life, she remembers with particular affection her support for young people who, in the 70s, worked in the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in Katunayake, set up by the government as part of its open economic policy.

"At that time," she said, "many young men and women came to the Katunayake FTZ to work in textile factories or other plants. They would rent small houses and bought what they needed from the nearby shops. Soon, shopkeepers began to take advantage of these young people, raising prices. I could not stand this. So I, one of my fellow sisters and others bought rice, coconut, cooking oil, dried fish and vegetables to sell at reasonable prices to FTZ workers."

This enabled her to establish a different relationship with these young people. "We started to meet on their days off, and we explained to them that human beings need spiritual as well as physical support."

Shopkeepers and business people, however, could not tolerate this situation. "They tried to stop us," she remembers, "and one day they had Freddy arrested. He was a member of our group who helped us with FTZ workers. When I found out, I ran to the police to free him. I explained to them that I knew him and that he was innocent. They would not release him, so I stayed there and I prayed. He was released that evening. "

Sister Clarice remained with the workers of FZT for about five years. Then she began teaching catechism, and talking about Jesus to those who wanted to convert.

"This mission," she said, "was full of satisfaction and joy because it allowed me to come into close contact with those who wanted to embrace Christianity. Hundreds of people came to me to convert, including many Buddhists, as well as some Hindus and Muslims".

Last Page ...

Message of Pope Francis for Lent...

“Return to me with all your heart” (Jl 2:12)

The first element is prayer. Prayer is the strength of the Christian and of every person who believes. In the weakness and frailty of our lives, we can turn to God with the confidence of children and enter into communion with him. In the face of so many wounds that hurt us and could harden our hearts, we are called to dive into the sea of prayer, which is the sea of God’s boundless love, to taste his tenderness. Lent is a time of prayer, of more intense, more prolonged, more assiduous prayer; prayer which is more able to take on the needs of the brethren; intercessory prayer, to intercede before God for the many situations of poverty and suffering.

The second key element of the Lenten journey is fasting. We must be careful not to practise a formal fast, or one which in truth “satisfies” us because it makes us feel good about ourselves. Fasting makes sense if it questions our security, and if it also leads to some benefit for others, if it helps us to cultivate the style of the Good Samaritan, who bends down to his brother in need and takes care of him. Fasting involves choosing a sober lifestyle; a way of life that does not waste, a way of life that does not “throw away”. Fasting helps us to attune our hearts to the essential and to sharing. It is a sign of awareness and responsibility in the face of injustice, abuse – especially to the poor and the little ones, and it is a sign of the trust we place in God and in his providence.

The third element is almsgiving: it points to giving freely, for in almsgiving one gives something to someone from whom one does not expect to receive anything in return. Gratuitousness should be one of the characteristics of the Christian, who aware of having received everything from God gratuitously, that is, without any merit of his own, learns to give to others freely. Today gratuitousness is often not part of daily life where everything is bought and sold. Everything is calculated and measured. Almsgiving helps us to experience giving freely, which leads to freedom from the obsession of possessing, from the fear of losing what we have, from the sadness of one who does not wish to share his wealth with others.

(Taken from the Homily of Ash Wednesday)

The 19th General Chapter invites us to reflect on the theme -

“Sent for mission - if we don’t dare now, then when?”

And together we pray:

*May we listen daily to your Spirit inviting us to respond
with the mind heart of Christ
discerning where and how your Love wants to be expressed
in our world today.*

Margret Muldoon’s letter – 13 January 2014



Holy Family of Bordeaux
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