

# INTERCONNECTIONS

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***SENT  
FOR  
MISSION***

*If we  
don't  
dare  
now,  
then  
when?*

**"To live the mystery of Christ is to live in the freedom of the Spirit". 2 Cor 3;17**

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Contents

		Page
EDITORIAL		03
HERE IN ROME		04
<b>AFRICA</b>		
SOUTH AFRICA	- <i>The Holy Family – model for all families</i>	05
CAMEROON	- <i>Faith brings life</i>	07
CHAD	- <i>Builders of Peace</i>	08
UGANDA	- <i>A “Miracle” happened in Buhara village</i>	09
<b>EUROPE</b>		
SPAIN	- <i>The women prisoners “will go before us into the kingdom of heaven”</i>	10
FRANCE	- <i>Life at the Solitude</i>	11
	- <i>Closeness is real!</i>	13
CONTEMPLATIVES	- <i>Closeness</i>	14
CONSECRATED SECULARS	- <i>A way of being close to others</i>	15
PRIEST ASSOCIATES	- <i>Closeness to parishioners</i>	16
LAY ASSOCIATES	- <i>Closeness</i>	17
LAY ASSOCIATES – ITALY	- <i>The joy of volunteering</i>	21
BELGIUM	- <i>Closeness and respect for difference</i>	22
<b>ASIA</b>		
INDIA	- <i>To reach the unreachable</i>	24
SRI LANKA – COLOMBO	- <i>Stepping ahead and beyond...</i>	25
JAFFNA	- <i>International Women’s Day – 8th March 2014</i>	27
CONTEMPLATIVES –NAGODA	- <i>News from Sisters</i>	29
PAKISTAN	- <i>Its conviction that matters</i>	31
PHILIPPINES	- <i>Youth Earth-Day celebration</i>	32
<b>AMERICA</b>		
PARAGUAY	- <i>The confederation of religious women and men</i>	37
AGENTINA	- <i>The Pastoral Care of Vocations</i>	38
CANDA	- <i>A Window on our Presence with Young People</i>	40

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There is something that has been repeated many times during the past few months – we have to leave and we have “to leave” so many things...

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When I began to write this editorial I was not sure what theme I was going to focus on. Then, thinking about what we are living in the Institute at the moment I thought of this one. Imagine my surprise when, for no particular reason, I picked up Ana Maria’s circular to the Institute and found the same theme... Perhaps the Spirit is inviting us “to leave” even the smallest things, to look on our differences as a richness and to unify them at a personal level as well as in our families, communities, groups and the large Family. If we look at reality seriously we will see that, in the very depths of its wonderful variety, there is harmony, interconnectedness and complementarity which, precisely because they are so deep, are indestructible.

It is true that, whether we like it or not, we live in a state of “exodus” because life itself takes us away from our safe comfort zones and obliges us to leave, to change and to journey. For some it is daily life, for others it is “holidays” that are a stage in this exodus. Perhaps we return to the same places but they will never be the same as they were before. There will be different meetings that we had not planned, different circumstances, rhythms and customs. Even a time of rest means that we “leave” our usual rhythm, our plans, programmes and timetables – our very way of living.

We live in a permanent state of exodus. If we consciously open ourselves to it, our horizons will be limitless and, little by little, there will be unity in diversity, we will see differences as richness, dynamism will well up from our depths and we will be a fountain of life and harmony for everything and for everybody we meet because we will have let go of the security we get from routine, from the well-known and familiar and from being in control of situations ... in order to be available for whatever comes.

*M. Lourdes de la Fuente*

## Here in Rome



The 'good byes' to Margaret, Marie Carmen Vilardell and Colleen can only be described as "DIFFICULT". After their many years of service in the Holy Family from Rome perhaps the only way of describing our practically 'unwordable' feelings is deep gratitude and trustful hope.

After the Chapter we said goodbye to the Capitulants as they left gradually to return to their own countries. Meanwhile the secretariat worked hard completing and translating the Chapter documents so that the Sisters could have them as soon as possible especially since, in some Units, the Chapter transmission was begun immediately.

On June 14 we celebrated Marie Pierre Otiba's Silver Jubilee. Her sisters and brothers, members of her family, priests, friends, some Sisters from the Rome communities and a Consecrated Secular shared in her joy. In the Eucharist which was very meaningful and universal, there were sacred dances and dramatized acts of thanksgiving from various countries. All present thanked the Lord for his 25 years' faithfulness to her. It was a simple, friendly and joyful feast during which we saw how well Africans can celebrate.



On Trinity Sunday 194 years ago, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles gathered together the three foundresses who began the first *Holy Family* community. It was a very meaningful day for the whole Institute. We were united with the whole Family in thanksgiving for the Charism which is lived throughout the world.

At present, we are welcoming some members of our own families who have come to visit us and, at the same time, we are bidding farewell to some Sisters from the Council and the community who are leaving to carry out their apostolate in other countries.



## AFRICA

### SOUTH AFRICA

# THE HOLY FAMILY – MODEL FOR ALL FAMILIES

**W**hen asked by Sr. Joy, to write something on the dignity of women and the family, I wondered what the image of the Holy Family has to say to us today.

In the Holy Family we see the fullness of human dignity:



**Mary** the mother, and the source of tenderness and containment for the child Jesus.

**Joseph** the father, the protector, holding, sustaining and loving his family.

**Jesus** the child, who is given the space, the love, and the deep security to grow into his full potential as an adult human person.

All families are called to emulate the Holy Family. Mary and Joseph offer us, inadequate mothers and fathers,

the model to judge our own loving presence to our families.

But the Holy Family was by no means a “perfect” family. Mary was pregnant before she and Joseph were married. She was also not pregnant with his child. Joseph chose to take responsibility for a situation, that many might argue, was not of his making.

In our country many people have grown up in families that do not look like the “Holy Family” - with a mother, father and children. Children are often reared by mothers or grandparents, with absent fathers. Other children may have lost both parents to death or because they vanished from the child’s life and so they live with grandparents or uncles or aunts. Most tragically we have more and more child-headed households, where there are no adult relatives to care for the children. In these family settings children often do not receive the emotional and spiritual care they desperately need and are more vulnerable to abuse.

I was struck by the inaugural homily of Pope Francis on St. Joseph and it seems to me especially appropriate to tease out this homily and what it is saying in a magazine inspired by the charism of the Holy Family.

The role of “Protector” is one that in more patriarchal societies, is very much associated with power, with aggression and with the limiting of another’s freedom. Pope Francis offers us a profoundly different view, ‘Only those who serve with love are able to protect. The one who protects serves with love. At another moment he writes, ‘How does Joseph exercise his role as protector? Discreetly, humbly and silently, but with an unfailing presence and utter fidelity, even when he finds it hard to understand. In reading these words I found myself thinking that the Pope has profoundly described what we might call the mature masculine spirit. In our own time **Joseph** offers a challenge to men, the challenge to take up responsibility- too often, women are left to carry the burden of child-care, alone.

Women too are challenged; many women formed by our patriarchal society, lack a sufficiently strong sense of self themselves, and may lack the inner resources to protect their own children.

**Mary** offers us the image of strong women, able to say YES to God, to engage in dialogue with God and then to shoulder the burden of motherhood. We women, need to take responsibility for our own lives.

Blessed Pope John Paul II wrote that one of the greatest gifts of feminism was that women forced the men in their lives to be present to them and to their children, to be actively engaged in pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing. By drawing men into the more feminine aspects of family life men and women are both transformed and healed.

The child **Jesus**, God incarnate, reminds us that God is always with the vulnerable, with the poor and marginalized. As a child, Jesus was born in a stable. His parents fled with him to save his life as a baby, and so he would have lived the first years of his life as a refugee. God did not choose to come with pomp and ceremony. Jesus was not born a king or a Caesar; he was not born where he could have had the most political effect. He was born in poverty and obscurity.

Every child we look at should remind us of the child Jesus. We, as adults, are responsible for all the children we encounter, for those in our extended families, in our communities and in our schools.

We are responsible for building a world in which all people irrespective of gender and age are seen as full persons.

*(Edited article) sent in by **Frances Correia**  
South Africa*

### FAITH BRINGS LIFE

In this article, I am sharing with you the testimony of an 80-year-old woman and what she shared with me when I visited her.

Mother Crescence is a Cameroonian woman. She grew up in Yaoundé. When she was young she had the opportunity of going to Rome for the Jubilee in 1958. She says that she saw Pius XII's body.

Afterwards she returned to Cameroon and then Caritas sent her to France to study childcare and applied psychology.

When she returned to France she got married but she did not have any children. However, that did not prevent her from being happy. She now lives alone but her nephews want her to go to live in the village near them.

What I liked was the following: she said "Sister, it is thanks to being a Christian and to the help I received from consecrated people that I am what I am. Being Christian brings

great openness. Sister, God is great and merciful. He is good to me. Otherwise I would not be what I am. Soon I am going to give some of my clothes to Caritas for those who are poorer than I. It is thanks to people like you that I have had the opportunity to get on in life. This is my favourite song, 'I am a Christian; that is my glory, my hope and my support'. This is my song of love and victory, 'I am a Christian, I am a Christian...'” Then she added, “ Sister, to sing is to pray twice. When you listen to the words with your heart and welcome them, you pray. Isn't that so, Sister?”

Listening to this woman, I am amazed at her faith which is so alive; and she is convinced about what she says. She suffers from rheumatism but that does not stop her from going to morning Mass in the parish church where she has to climb up a little incline each day. Faith brings her life, motivation and energy. She overcomes all the obstacles on her path.

*Sr. Agnes  
Cameroon*

## BUILDERS OF PEACE

**W**e are in Chad, in the diocese of Pala. From 3 to 5 January 2014, we, the teachers of the Hope College of Gounou-Gaya and the teachers of the Elie Tao Baydo College of Pala followed a course on the theme, **A Culture of Peace, Democracy and Citizenship** organised by the National Directors of Catholic Schools. The aim of this course was to make us aware of the importance of peace in our Catholic establishments and to improve the teachers' competence in promoting a culture of peace.



A participative method was used and for two days we had talks and group work. We were given several tasks, for example:

- Looking for common points for teachers based on professional ethics in education, awareness of professionalism and love of pupils. The aim of this was to make our pupils responsible for the future.
- Each of us had to look at her/his own responsibility and so became more aware of the importance of peace for him/herself and for others. Peace begins with the teacher and brings about development and social well-being which leads to unity and a community spirit among the children and ethnic and religious groups.



We constantly tried to see how to help the children to take decisions which were not based on obligation or emotions but on autonomy which leads to inner freedom.

We went back to our respective establishments happy with the session and determined to take definite actions to maintain a climate of peace in our colleges, our families and, especially, in society. If we want to give a better education to children we need

to know them, their families and their living conditions. That is why our peace process goes beyond the horizons of the school situation.

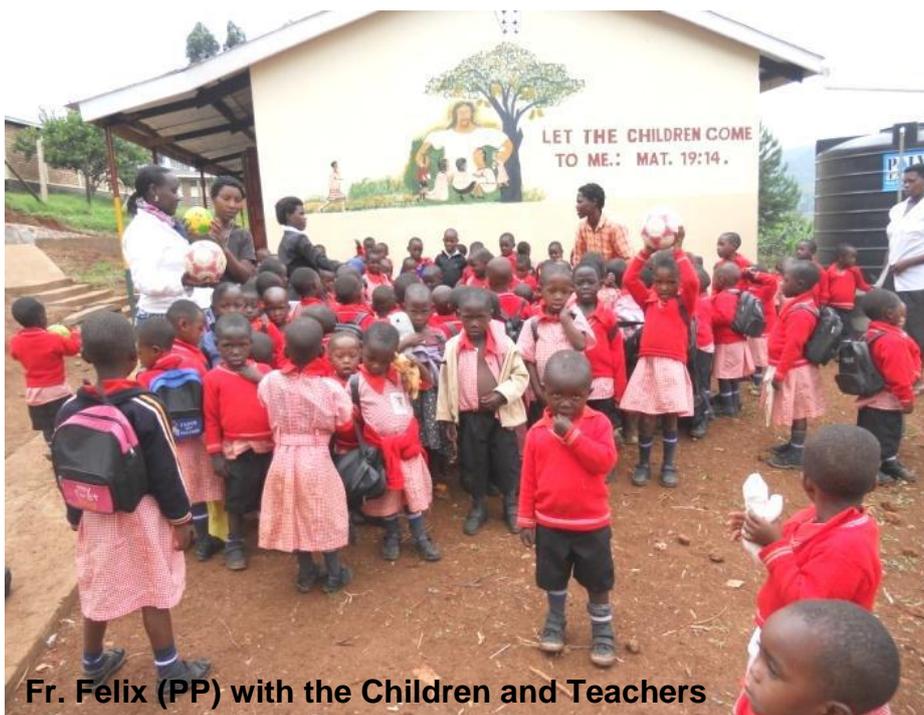
We closed the session with a Eucharistic celebration. May the Lord help us to love our children so that we can give them peace and life. May they too become peace-makers.

*Sr. Nadège NGUIKO, Community of Gounou-Gaya  
Chad*

## UGANDA

### A “MIRACLE” HAPPENED IN BUHARA VILLAGE

**O**n the 3rd Feb 1822 Jesus appeared to the Holy Family Sisters in the Holy Eucharist during Benediction. On the same date, 3rd Feb. 2014 we had the blessing and opening of Buhara Holy Family Nursery School in our village. The whole community, who were very happy, said "we are ready to support our nursery school and we will sacrifice our time and efforts to develop our school".



**Fr. Felix (PP) with the Children and Teachers**

We thank the Holy Family Sisters for the good work they are doing in our village and the world at large. We are especially grateful to Sr. Rathini and the School Board for all they are doing for the children and the development of the school. We wish to express our sincere thanks to all.

**Buhara Holy Family Nursery School Staff Member**



# THE WOMEN PRISONERS “WILL GO BEFORE US INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN”

The evening that we led the Workshop on “EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE” we left the prison deeply moved.

Because of these feelings, Maria asked us, How do we control our emotions? That evening we had been working on emotional self-control and we gave the input with the help of some images.

Cecilia, who up to now had not been very communicative, told us about what had happened to her during the siesta. “I was thinking about my children and I began to cry and could not stop”. She has three children. Two of them are deaf-mutes and are in “communities of welcome” where they attend special classes. The only contact they have with their mother is by video-conference once a month. But the eldest who is 13 years of age is in a juvenile centre and wants to see his mother. He has asked to meet her but was refused and given all kinds of reasons for the refusal. He wants to free himself from this pain by cutting his wrists. All he has is a Gillette blade which he needs for his personal hygiene. “With this”, he says, “I will escape from the pain I feel.”

She thanks her cell companion for her help, her encouragement and her

company. She says to her, “You can do it. Do it for your children”. They know each other because they are from the same neighbourhood and Cecilia has often asked her for food for herself and her children. Ana always helped her even though she herself depended on the Parish Caritas and went to them for food every month. She has four children.

When she saw how discouraged and powerless Cecilia was, Rocío spoke to her. She is in prison because of a serious offence of which she has repented. “You have to get out of this situation. You can do it! Your children are waiting for you. Mine, who are dead, help me and give me strength from where they are with God. You have to be strong and fight for your life – alone – without the partner who abused you. Look. I have to face up to my life, grow in freedom as a person, love myself and not be controlled by anybody. I was badly abused. But now it’s over!”

Cecilia continued, “Yes, I looked down on you. One day at the liturgy you were beside me. I walked away. I didn’t want to be beside you. I condemned you because of what you had done. Then one day I realised that perhaps you did not know what you were doing. I came to you and asked you to forgive me. I put my

arms around you. Do you remember? Who am I to condemn anybody?

She continued again, “I signed the papers for my children to go into care. My husband threatened to tell the children that I had sent them away. I broke up with him. He made me steal to get money for drugs and he hit me when I didn’t get it. Now I want to change my life. Where my children are, they make their beds and do the cleaning etc. I want to continue those good habits with them. But I want to see my other child. He wants to see me too. I don’t know who to write to. I have written

to everybody but nobody takes any notice. It is not fair.”

There is deep silence. We are very moved. We share our feelings and embrace one another. We tell Cecilia how wonderful she is to have changed. We have known her for 5 years and she has changed a lot in a few months.

Yes, Lord, we know that you go before us. In the midst of these situations, past and present, these women are being reborn. They want to change; they are grateful for the opportunity they have in this place to take stock of their past lives and they want to forge new ones for themselves.

***I know that you bless them, Lord.***

*Anunciación Esteve (Community of Jaén) Spain*

## FRANCE

### LIFE AT THE SOLITUDE

**F**or several weeks a festive breeze was blowing over the two Martillac communities. How were we going to celebrate with our three Jubilarians – Mary, Teresita and Françoise?

We got the answer on January 12 during the “Come and See the Spiritual Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles” day which the five Vocations of the South-West had organised.

We had decided to have a first meeting, open mainly to people whom we know and who we would like to

help to know the *Holy Family* better. The communities of Bordeaux, the Priest and Lay Associates and the Seculars invited parishioners, members of their staffs, friends... The gathering comprised about fifty interested people.

An exhibition based on the booklet “Choosing Life” enabled those who came to discover the Good Father’s dream and to see how we are fulfilling it today.

At a round table, a member of each Vocation was invited to explain

her/his way of living “Being a family on mission today”. It was while we were eating “Twelfth-Night pancakes” in a very friendly atmosphere that the desire developed of making our Family visible through words, pictures and texts. Realising that Pierre Meunier was preparing to make his request to become a Priest Associate and that Gertrude Calas was soon to make her commitment as a Lay Associate, we wondered if we could celebrate these two events at the same time as the Jubilees and have a big Family feast.

Diaries were opened, the date was decided and the celebration was organised...  
It was a simple and joyful event...

The following words of Khalil Gibran, describe very well the journey which Mary, Teresita, Françoise and Bernadette (who came from Angoulême to celebrate with us) travelled over their 50 and 60 years of consecrated life.

When love beckons to you, follow him,  
Though his ways are hard and steep...  
And when he speaks to you, believe in him...  
Even as he is for your growth so he is for your pruning...  
And it continues today...  
He shall descend to your roots...  
He kneads you until you are pliant...

All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart  
and in that knowledge become a fragment of Life's heart...  
When you love you should not say, "God is in my heart,"  
But rather, "I am in the heart of God."

Pierre and Gertrude make their commitment today...Our Family is growing...The same spirit, the same life flows through the members of our Family binding them together in unity. Our desire is that this energy will help us to contribute to the growth of the Church as Family.

Our celebration, coloured by our internationality, ended with Mary's "Hymn of Joy" – the Magnificat – dramatized by the "Prayer and Sacred Dance" group who had internalised it over a period of weeks. Sharing a "glass of friendship", about a hundred people chatted and shared their feelings about the event. A warm "Thank you" to all those who were with us in any way on this occasion proving that the Family is alive and well!

*The Apostolic Community of the Solitude  
Martillac*

## CHAMPIGNY

### CLOSENESS IS REAL!

**O**ur fragility brings out our strength and the need to act together.

Hence the meeting of all the tenants in the hall of a building where a group of drug addicts have look-outs. The only way to act together and have a conversation with them. Two young people are appointed to go to talk to them. The young addicts are on the defensive when they see our group going towards them. They are convinced that the tenants have called the police. But they are quickly reassured! Perhaps the problem has shifted... This approach means that the situation can be taken up at a wider level than a local area in conjunction with charitable organisations.

A richness: living close to others in the heart of the city, sharing with our Moslem brothers and sisters. This results in caring for a family in difficulty and putting them in contact with Catholic Aid so that they get the help they need: a buggy for a disabled child.

#### **Mobilising people in view of creating a peaceful climate for everyone.**

Following an attack on a bus driver which resulted in a hold-up for everyone who uses that means of transport every day, the people living in the area got together to hold a solidarity march. A group of 200 – local people and charitable organisations – was set up to reflect on preventative action and to find a solution to the problem.

Even before that, the town had worked with the police and Paris Transport in the priority zone which had been established at the beginning of 2013. This measure reduced attacks on public transport by 20%, last year. Everyone was involved so that public transport could carry out its function for the benefit of all.

This is how solidarity expressed in timely actions in a locality can improve the way people live together to everyone's advantage. It is a way of living close to one's neighbours in a working-class area.

*The Apostolic Community of Champigny*

## CONTEMPLATIVES - MARTILLAC

### CLOSENESS

In the mystery of the Incarnation, God comes close to the whole of creation. The Word made flesh introduced us to a new world of relationships. Through him and in him, God became close. And we are called to be a sign of his presence, a sign of his closeness.

We try to make this closeness visible in the ordinariness of our lives, personally and as a community, an Institute and a Family. It is up to us, under the guidance of the Spirit, to find appropriate ways of witnessing to this evangelical closeness and to radiate the closeness of the One who gives us life.

The Lord puts people on our path who need our care and the love of Christ. This requires us to live close to them in an authentic way.

The Lord calls us to open the eyes of our heart to see Christ who still suffers in the poor, the oppressed and the wounded. *“To be touched, moved by what happens to others and by what attacks them is a way of being aware of the presence of God.”* (Borgman) Our prayer needs to flow into the crucible of every human situation. We carry in the depths of our heart the suffering, the pain and the hopes of the whole human race.

*“Your patient prayer will speak a language of faith which will promote justice, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation and, above all, hope where the world and its language are only signs of despair.”* (Pastoral Letter from the Churches of Jerusalem to the monks and nuns of the Holy Land)

But how can our lives be apostolically effective in a world where there is still *“so much sterility, darkness, emptiness and aridity”*? Our life is *“a silent witness”* (Benedict XVI) of our humble and discreet closeness, nourished and strengthened by our daily fidelity to the demands of the Lord’s call. *“If the monk’s ambition is to seek God, it is obviously not for his own satisfaction. It is in order to give Him to others, to those who are in doubt, to those who are afraid, to those who fall.”* (A monk).

Our consecrated life exists *“so that the world is not deprived of a ray of the Divine beauty that lights up the path of human existence”*. (John-Paul II) Our community can be a Word *“full of grace and truth”* (John 1:18), a proclamation of closeness, a witness of its loving and reconciling presence to everyone.

*The Contemplative Community of the Solitude*

## CONSECRATED SECULARS

# A WAY OF BEING CLOSE TO OTHERS

### Trust

### Discretion

Being a Secular means being consecrated discreetly in the midst of the world.  
So,

A way of being close to others,

A family closeness, being present to others and supporting them

Closeness in life in general: helping others and asking for help

The closeness of friends in affection and understanding

Quality relationships of attentiveness and listening.

### Listening in action

Spiritual closeness through familiarity with the gospel, prayer and the sacramental life.

I will speak willingly about companionship with Christ.

Prayer makes me travel because I spontaneously think about the Seculars around the world and about the Family.

The *Holy Family* charism shapes my way of being close to others:

In our simple daily life where God is present whether we realise it or not;

In a Family where we have evolved towards communion in order to go forward.

And if closeness means “*moving out to the margins*” as Pope Francis says,

**Closeness is a risk we must take!**



*Béatrice Mesnard  
Consecrated Secular*

## PRIEST ASSOCIATES

# CLOSENESS TO PARISHIONERS

### CLOSENESS

When a priest is introduced to the parish which has been entrusted to him by the bishop, he receives the mission of being close to the people of God gathered there. He also receives the mission of being close to all the other people who live in the area.

I have been in that position several times and I can testify to the anxiety that it causes the priest! Of course, he must be available and visible first of all to the parishioners as their pastoral leader. The pastor's fear is that he will hear people saying that, outside of religious services, "We never see him". So there is a need to set aside a time and a place each week when he is available, and

everyone can meet him. He also needs to visit the various Christian groups.

At the same time, the pastor wonders how he can meet those who do not come to him. What contacts should he give priority to when he has so many possibilities of meeting people? Should he attend cultural, sporting and social events? What would he want to achieve if he did? Certainly, he would want to be there in an interested, friendly way and be involved...and hope that some day a good contact or an invitation would result from it. The gospels speak to us about Jesus' kindly, attentive and interested closeness to others as he walked the roads of his country.

### WHEN OUR NEIGHBOUR COMES CLOSE

Meeting people in this way, I have often made a double discovery: the importance of giving space to the other person and the certainty that Someone else had got there before me!

I like to recall the following memory: a family came to the presbytery to arrange a Baptism. We introduced ourselves and they told me about their work, where they came from... We filled in the form while the couple's two children played on the carpet. Time passed and then the couple spoke about Him. And I

thought to myself that it was good that I had just let them talk freely in a friendly atmosphere.

*"The Lord was there and I never knew!"* Remembering that incident, I saw clearly that the Lord was already there in these people and that in a very definite and joyful way he was making me aware that he was the one who came close to me. That is how the closeness becomes reciprocal and brings mutual enrichment and the desire to meet again in the same spirit and in the name of the Lord.

## **YOU ARE THERE AT THE CENTRE OF OUR LIVES!**

Closeness to God, closeness to others. Once again the gospel places us in the presence of Jesus to give thanks to the Father with him for these meetings. People, faces, appointments, lives which bear witness to the Kingdom about to be born in the heart of the world. It is

the time to give thanks with Jesus for the human race and for all our sisters and brothers who transform it. It is the time to pray that no one will be left on the side of the road. It is the time to pray in the words of the Good Father:

***“I give you all that I am and I unite myself to all that you are!”***

*Fr. Jean-Louis Despeaux  
Priest Associate*

## **LAY ASSOCIATES**

# **CLOSENESS**

**T**he smartphone has changed our way of being close to others! It may not be the person that is nearby who is really present to us. It could be the person who is in Bombay or Prague. For a long time the idea of closeness was understood as the immanence of what is not yet. It was something that was coming, that was about to arrive. The Bible is the perfect example of this idea. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself to people in order to make them understand that God was close to them. There are several accounts of this Covenant and of awaiting

God's presence among men and women.

The Incarnation of Jesus is the culmination of this revelation. When he came on earth he wanted to be very close to us.

So, the idea of closeness is linked with time and space.

In today's world, new types of technology are gateways that shorten distances and help us to meet. Closeness implies meeting others and we are all involved in some kind of closeness.

- **Does closeness create relationships?**
- **What kind of closeness can we have?**

There is such a thing as closeness without a relationship. That is what

happens with people who cross our path every day but who do not touch

our lives. This closeness lasts only for an instant and is so fleeting that a relationship cannot be established. Each person remains unknown to the other.

Hermits or the solitaries have no social relationships. They live alone and each one relates only to him/herself. Such closeness is personal, even spiritual.

But the human person is a social being. Nobody lives in complete

isolation from others. Habits and customs create interaction with other people.

“Interrelationships” are essential. They are a sign of life and friendliness. The idea of closeness also evokes warm and peaceful relationships. Living together implies that we are capable of unlearning habits which keep us isolated and separate. Like the Good Samaritan on the road to Jericho we must know how not to shy away from others.

### ➤ **How do we come close to others?**

To be close means to communicate, to encourage dialogue, to create a bridge that “goes to the other side”.

Meeting another person implies an attitude: knowing how to accept the other, being present to the other and listening. It is not a matter of imposing ourselves on others but of being interested in those around us. It is about being alert to others. Respect and the ability to adapt are essential for any kind of meeting with another. Every person is unique and, therefore, every relationship is also unique. Being genuine and flexible helps us to find the right distance so that we will be accepted and also respect the privacy of the other person.

Being close means touching hearts. It also means being transparent, open and in solidarity with others. Let us remember the parable of the Good Samaritan. Our neighbour is not just the person who lives next door or our compatriot but every human being. The way I behave towards others shows the kind of person I am.

Like the Samaritan woman, in the gospel of St. John, let us also know how to be transformed by meeting others because other people are gifts which God gives me in my life – gifts to be opened.

If people do not come into our lives we cannot love them and we remain in a closed universe turned in on ourselves. Anyone who tries to come in is looked on as an intruder. In order to have a real meeting with another, we have to let go of something in ourselves. In the Book of Genesis, God takes a rib from Adam to create Eve and binds them together as a couple.

We may ask, “How am I really present to the other person?”

We need to question ourselves about our dispositions. Do I really want to meet other people or do I put up barriers?

It is something else altogether to know how to build a relationship. The Good Samaritan did not ask that

question. Moved by the Spirit, compassion and love of his neighbour, he felt in solidarity with him and responded to the suffering of the man that he met by chance.

Communion goes beyond communication. God is present in human beings and it is God who leads us towards communion and gives us a sense of the other and of what it is to love our neighbour.

➤ **Do my faith and my closeness to God determine my relationship with others?**

The essence of Christian faith is openness to others and is characterised by love of our neighbour. But there is a love which precedes the love of our neighbour and is born from a dialogue between God and human beings.

When Christians are in relationship with God, they are in a relationship of closeness which nourishes their faith.

They try to approach God and this attempt has to be repeated constantly because God and a human being cannot fuse together. God is mystery and will always be a mystery. And it is this mystery that gives rise to the search for God and for greater closeness with God.

Christ, the primary witness of the Father through his words and actions, shows us God's infinite love. It is he who draws us close to God: he shows us God's love and draws us into communion and closer to others. Christian faith is openness to and love for others. "Love one another" is the principal commandment.

However, before being able to give Love, do we not have to go to the depths of ourselves and empty ourselves so that Divine life – as Zundel says – can be poured into us? Do we not first have to feel this presence in ourselves? Do we not first have to understand that this Divine presence is not withheld or exclusive but offered to everyone?

The mystery of the Love of God is "inter-relational" and infinite because it is offered to all who approach Christ even in a small way: Christian faith is essentially openness to God who acts in every human being through the Spirit.

So my closeness to God enables me to discover God's closeness and determines my relationship with my neighbour. The message is simple, "Put your hand to God's work and make your life an offering as Jesus Christ did" because the closeness of God which we see in the old Testament and which became a reality in Jesus Christ will continue to the end of time.

**Our mission: bearing witness to the closeness of God.**

We live this closeness to God all day long – even when we are not at all conscious of it – every time we do

something to help, to show our solidarity, to share. From the time of his election, Pope Francis has been

inviting us to show forth Christ by the way we live. Every day we are with others in our neighbourhoods, on public transport, at work, in our families.

How can we communicate God to others in these situations today?

There are no ready-made recipés.

### What is essential is “to be”.

To be a living word of God for others – “the reflection of the face of Christ” . (M.Zundel) Our mission is to give Jesus Christ to others and to be accepting of the other.

calls us to love our sisters and brothers without waiting for my neighbour to return Love for Love.

Through our Baptism we are daughters and sons of God. God

Every time we look at our neighbour we are looking at an image of God. God made human beings in God’s image.

### God is love!

But have we a superabundance of Love that we can share with those around us?

Every human being can be a messenger of God: every person is an instrument of the living God. God uses human beings to build up God’s kingdom.

Let us look to see who is beside us; let us learn how to love our sisters and brothers because God is dwelling in them too. If we behave in a sisterly or brotherly way, we will encourage trust, dialogue and sharing and make deeper relationships possible.

Finally, I must admit that I have not touched on all aspects of closeness but let us realise that the *Holy Family* charism is a charism of closeness that invites us to trust in the closeness of God because “apart from God we can do nothing”. (Jn 15:5)

The other can also reveal God to me: the closeness of God in the other can bring me closer to God.

We are all somebody else’s neighbour. So the closeness of God in every being produces spiritual fruit in us and enables us to grow.

Like Mary, and following the Holy Family, let us express the Love of God in our lives by accepting, as she did, the will of God and by being his servants.

*Monique Rattier  
Lay Associate*

## LAY ASSOCIATES - ITALY

# THE JOY OF VOLUNTEERING

Who said that voluntary work is tiring? From what we experienced when we undertook it as Lay Associates and when our Parish Priest involved us in it as parishioners, we have to say that it is above all a great joy, a free gift, a human and spiritual enrichment; in short our experience was unforgettable, laying bare our hearts and showing us the true quality of our lives.

We had this experience especially on two occasions – during the month of December and at Carnival time in 2014.

Some weeks before Christmas, about a hundred refugees – all boys from various parts of Africa – were given shelter in a large camp in my town. Very heavy rain damaged the camp and the boys needed to be transferred elsewhere. The Mayor asked the Chief of Police for help and he went to the Ministry for Internal Affairs in Rome. In the meantime, these poor boys were living in dreadful conditions. Then our Parish Priest, with the Bishop's permission, offered to house about thirty (another instance of solidarity in the town) and the whole community, now aware of the situation, went into action. Not far from the Parish of St. Gabriel, there is a building which is used on occasion by the local branch of Catholic Action, the Scouts, groups of pilgrims etc. It is called the "Hostel of Our Lady of the Smile". The boys, all

minors, were brought there by social workers and other volunteers who were authorised to look after them. They found us ready to welcome them with a snack of hot milk and *panettone*, warm socks and hats, jumpers and wind-cheaters – all collected in record time. Groups of families, with our young people, took turns to organise meetings, meals, games of football, and dance evenings. Those who knew the language (my daughter and I understood it) helped by interpreting, and a volunteer donated various small dictionaries. It was truly a Christmas in black and white!

They were gradually transferred to other buildings or areas. But before that we invited a boy from Ghana to our home. I will never forget his eyes when we found his village on Google Earth, and when later he heard his father's voice on our phone!

We experienced the same happiness at Carnival Time when the parish Philharmonic organised a show for our less abled sisters and brothers. It was a two-act comedy in the Sicilian dialect. For several years now, we have organised bingo and other get-togethers for these sisters and brothers before and after Christmas. This gives us an opportunity to meet them and to give them some time in exchange for their gift of suffering, disabilities and physical and psychological limitations. These limitations always

give rise to a desire for communion, happiness and the courage to face life which builds us up and leaves us amazed and impressed by the message which they give silently: that life can always be lived to the full and that no disability can take away the joy that comes from knowing that we are loved by a merciful Father whose arms are always ready to embrace those who are suffering.

Our friends arrived for the show accompanied by some wonderful volunteers and relatives. We greeted one another cheerfully and as soon as they arrived we knew that they were happy to meet us. They were smiling and were not worried about

letting us see the difficulties that they have to face every day.

In fact, it was not like cinemas and theatres where people leave without even greeting one another. Here people stopped to talk to one another and share moments of joy and community even giving one another a savoury tart or a dessert prepared lovingly for the occasion.

These are the times when we feel most *Holy Family*. When we have these happy experiences, we remember what our Good Father said: “Charity should be the foundation and the crown of all the virtues. They have no value apart from it.” (Spiritual Guide no. 59)

*Lay Associates, Sicily, Italy.*

## BELGIUM

# CLOSENESS AND RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCE

### People of God ... Peoples of God

**I**n Antwerp we are surrounded by Jewish families who practise both their culture and their religion.

Both Jews and Christians see themselves as the People of God who have a privileged relationship with God. Both have their own specific traditions with their own particular meaning.

Christian theology, which was developed by several Fathers of the Church, explains that the Jewish people lost their status as “The People of God” when they refused to recognise Jesus as the Messiah.

For Christians, being the People of God is the result of the Covenant with God incarnated in Jesus. For many, many years they despised their Jewish sisters and brothers and engaged in anti-Semitism.

Vatican II obliged us to embark on a path of reconciliation and closeness. The Church is “The People of God”, not in the place of the Jewish people but with them. We live the same Covenant. The Apostle Paul tells us that it is by virtue of the Covenant sealed between God and the Jewish people that we have access to the same intimacy with God, in Jesus.

Sr Denise Van der Laenen





### TO REACH THE UNREACHABLE

***“When I was in Prison, you visited me” (Mt. 25:36)***

**T**hese words of Jesus inspired me to take up the ministry in collaboration with “Prison Ministry of India” (PMI). It is worth to render our service to save the rejected and condemned young women of our society. I feel that this is a special call and more meaningful to render my service to the prisoners who live behind bars. The society, kith and kin are not willing to look at the prisoners with new eyes and the prisoners are also not in a position to face the challenges of the society even though they have a genuine desire to lead a better life.

Keeping in our mind the Cooperate Commitment on building Communion, we render our service in the form of visit in Vigilance Home in Chennai where the victims of the Immoral Traffic Prevention (ITP) act from different states are kept. They speak different dialects, because most of them are from Northern part of India. They have been trafficked and sold by the mediators for prostitution. Some of them are commercial sex workers. Most of the sex workers come from very poor families. The girls come out of their homes at a young age to get some job and to enhance the economic status of the family. They are cheated by the mediators and ultimately pushed to become sex workers. The poverty is the main cause for women to go out and earn for their livelihood. If the



girls are arrested by the police, there is none to rescue them from prison and that is the end of their life. Due to this mental and psychological depression they lose the hope of their future.

My visit helps these young women to identify their family and to inform them about the situation to the members of the family. I feel the compassionate love towards the individuals which helps to recover and to see some rays of hope in the future. I come in touch with the minds and hearts of the individuals who are unwanted, rejected and who have lost their image in the society.

I met many Catholic, Hindu young girls who lost their faith in God. The close relationship with them brings them back to God by realizing the love of God and realize that He is ever closer to them and He never leaves

them. Prayer, Confession and Holy Mass help the inmates in the Vigilance Home to understand the holiness and Godliness within.

Last month a group of young girls were arrested in Chennai in commercial sex trade. A poor girl named Sathya, 23 year old, got married at the age of 12. After few years the husband left her and settled himself with his mother. With little hope she went in search of a job but unfortunately she became a sex worker. When she narrated the true story to the police hoping to be released, instead she was thoroughly beaten up by the inmates in prison. When she was admitted in the hospital she was found with AIDS. Seeing the situation the police released her and sent her back to her native home. After a week I went to see her in the village with other PMI volunteers. We saw her in a very small shed with her one year old child. She was struggling for life. We prayed and came back; on the next

day I received a call from the village president that Sathya was no more. After a couple of weeks we went to see the little child, I was moved to see the one year old child without a mother. Later we came to know that the child also affected by HIV, now I am taking effort to place the child in the AIDS home.

Utter poverty and ignorance lead the women to become sex workers. It is here we need to be sensitive and reach the unreachable, suffering humanity in our places and respond with courage and inner strength.

“Do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

I am really happy to work with this neglected group of women in the society. I appreciate our Delegation for taking up prison ministry as primary concern to take part in the struggles of Unknown people behind Bars.

Sr. Josephine  
Chennai

## SRI LANKA - COLOMBO

# STEPPING AHEAD AND BEYOND...

***This article was published on ‘In Touch With You’ a Magazine of Colombo Province. Five Sisters who live in a Community are having experience together before going to Bangladesh. They share their building community experience with us. We give our support by prayers to get their visas to go to Bangladesh.***

**I**t was January 5th Sunday in 2014 we the new community of Bangladesh started to live together

at Maradana. The two Provincials of Colombo and Jaffna Srs. Euphrasia and Christa with the councillors

welcomed us to Maradana. We began with a very meaningful prayer service followed by a gathering to share Agape with the Parish Priest, Sisters Jeyaseelie, Francisca, Iroshini, Thanuja and Priyanthi. New way of life sprang up with sharing and listening to one another. The Maradana community members Srs. Helen, Lakmali, Rita and Niroschika were also there with us seeing to all our needs.

The leadership teams arranged several workshops in building community spirit. Fr. Emil Morias contributed by a study of the culture of Bangladesh. Remaining with us for two days he enlightened us to accept the people and respect their culture and to enter into life with them. Sr. Christable conducted the seminar on community building. It took us deeper into ourselves and how to accept our ups and downs in a more meaningful way. It was a big challenge as she gradually prepared us to share our own likes and dislikes with each other. It was not easy to share dislikes but we rose up to it with the guidance and honesty to one self and others. Such discussions will help us to have sincere and mature relationships in the community in future too.

Our third workshop was with Sr. Kumudinie and Sr. Colleen. They were with us for three days. We began with doubts but with their simple and friendly ways we opened ourselves to them easily. It was an animation of community, with several inputs to live in a meaningful way. Though we belong to many provinces we came to realize that we are not a

part of a province but part of a big Family, Holy Family, and our mission is to build communion.



Past is ash but there are things to learn through our past. We have to grieve for our losses. Grieving is necessary in order to gain new life to search for the real “me” in myself. That was the session conducted by Fr. Selvam in Hanwella. It was very helpful to discover our attachments and then to experience the real detachment in order to give oneself totally to build the mission of Christ. We as human beings always tend to react to the situations that we face but it is also important to be proactive and to reflect who myself is; to be more aware of my feelings. Then I will understand the other person in a positive manner. Whatever incidents happen I do not hurt myself but to see the positive ways to go beyond.

However, we are still on a journey. It is not enough only to take part in seminars and workshops. We got the chance to go out as a community and it helped us to know the sisters. It was a time of sharing and caring. We shared our joys with each other. Also

it was a time to practice what we learnt from the seminars and reflections.

The days spent together were also a time to admire the beauty of our country. We were lucky to meet our elderly Sisters both in Jaffna and Colombo and get their blessings. We experienced their closeness, concern and sisterly love which we value very much.

We take this opportunity to thank our Almighty God for choosing us, weak persons to spread His love in a

new country. Our thanks go out to the General Leadership team and Provincial Leadership teams, Colombo and Jaffna and Delegation Superior in India. We accept the obedience as the voice of God we received through them. Also our special thanks to our sisters in Maradana because of your generosity we were able to live as a community. To live together as a community was a wonderful opportunity we got. Please continue to support us with your prayers to live our mission of building communion.

***Bangladesh community***

***“When you lose touch with inner stillness, you lose touch with yourself. When you lose touch with yourself, you lose yourself in the world. Your innermost sense of self, of who you are, is inseparable from stillness. This is the I Am that is deeper than name and form.”***

***Eckhart Tolle***

## **SIR LANKA - JAFFNA**

### **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY – 8TH MARCH 2014**

***This article was taken from the last publication of ‘Sangamum’ – Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The Sister who is involved every year at the International Women’s Day was organised by the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation describes the event of this year.***

**T**he Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, where I am a Board member working with the women who has lost partners,

celebrate this day in a unique way every year. This year I decided to accept the invitation to be with these less fortunate women at Marvanpulo

in Chavakachcheri. This is a very remote and rural area where the people who were displaced due to the heavy fighting during the war have returned and have started their life with many difficulties.

The function commenced in the afternoon and widows and women from Mullaithivu, Kilinochchi, Punguduthivu, Mankumban, Kayts, Maranpulo, Chavakachcheri and Navatkuli had come to celebrate the International Women's Day. The theme for this year's Women's Day was "Women inspirers of Change".

First, there were some games among the women from the different areas like 'pick the cotton balls by nose', 'picking grams with the straw', 'dressing a child to go to school' 'obstacle race' -going through many obstacles to reach the winning post, blind folded to break the pot with water and the final item on the agenda was the tug-a-war between the different groups, each team having seven (7) members. I was watching the games with the other special guest who had been invited for this function from the different Govt. sectors and religious dignitaries from other religions. The speeches were given by the Hindu priest, the Principal of the School where this

function was held, the Grama Sevaka of the area, the woman responsible for women and children, the Councillor working with women from Santhinilayam.

My experience in watching these women is that they forget all their anguish and loss, but their goal and determination was to bring victory and honour to the widows whom they represented from their areas. The team spirit was great and they totally surrendered themselves to achieve a target.

I found that these women had great capacity to commit themselves to achieve a goal once they are motivated and how they were open to listen and collaborate with one another to achieve what they wanted as a team. We also witnessed the joy when they went up to receive their awards, the children too were there encouraging and expressing their joy and support to their mothers for me to watch all these brought many feelings within me and also to be in solidarity with these women who were rejoicing at their victory. They had proved that they can achieve many things in their life, through determination and unity of mind and heart.

The International Women's Day had stipulated that progress in women could be achieved through education and for these they are given the "4 As".

**Availability** of education to each and every women and girl child, for without education one cannot progress in life

**Accessibility:** education facilities should be made accessible to each and everyone to come up in life.

**Acceptable:** It should be acceptable so that each person can make it her own and in what she gains as knowledge or skills.

**Adaptable:** The education imparted should help the person to adapt herself to any situation or circumstance confronted in life.

I was able to share these with the special guests and speakers and in their speech they made reference to it and inspired to women as mothers, sisters and wives that they should make every effort to be educated so that they will be able to respond to the challenges of life in a positive and life-giving way and inspire a change in their way of living and relating within the family and with the society.

***We religious women, too can we be inspirers of change in our society  
and with all those we encounter in our ministry.***

***... to build up good and right relationships  
and so live in peace and  
joy and experience new life.***

***A successful woman is one who can build a firm foundation  
with the bricks others have thrown at her.***

*Bonaventine Bastian  
Jaffna Province*

## **NEWS FROM CONTEMPLATIVES SISTERS AT NAGODA – SRI LANKA**

### **PAKISTANI CHRISTIANS SEEK ASYLUM IN SRILANKA**

**I**n the face of increasing extremism and persecution, many Pakistani Christians are fleeing Pakistan in search of refuge. Over 600 seeking asylum in Sri Lanka.

These refugees are deprived of the right to work. They depend only on us. Bear in mind the future of these Pakistani brothers and sisters and intercede God on their behalf.

### **NATIONAL RELIGIOUS DAY**



It was for the first time that the National Religious day was organized by the Conference of the Major Religious Superiors. The theme considered was “MARY- A PROPHET FOR THE WORLD TODAY.” On the 04th February about 600 priests and Religious sisters from various congregations assembled at the National Basilica at Tewatte. The

day's programme was very meaningfully and prayerfully organized, centred on the Eucharist. It would certainly have been a visible witness of our Christian faith and the

religious commitment. From Nagoda Srs. Sinthy, Rishmala and Freeda participated. Our presence was a witness of the contemplative vocation within the church.

### **BONDS OF COMMUNION WITHIN OUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY**

As done every year, our Holy Family Lay associates of Nagoda joyfully celebrated their "Christmas get together" with us on the 6<sup>th</sup> January. These were happy moments that they spent together quite freely with simplicity sharing each other's love and talents in a true spirit of the Family.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February, the National spiritual Family team held their meeting in our premises. Such occasions expressed the sign of faith and witness of communion and the efforts made to build up the Family.

### **SHARING OUR LIVES- RENEWING OUR COMMUNION**

We are grateful to Sr. Marian who invited us to participate in the Bursars' sessions conducted at Vavuniya and Wennappuwa. Our sisters Anne Curie, Sinthy, Ruwani and Freeda participated in either of these sessions.



A Multimedia seminar was organized by the Claretians Fathers from 20- 24 January. Sr. Rishmala profited much having participated in it.

Our future missionaries of Bangladesh, Srs. Jayaseeli, Thanuja

and Francina were happy to spend a day with us. We assure them of our prayerful support and encouraged them in this new foundation of our Institute.

### **“GO, PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS- BE MY WITNESSES”**

We were very happy to welcome our Benedictine sisters Sylvester and Niluka from Wennappuwa to spend the day with us sharing each other's life experiences according to our contemplative commitment. It was a

beautiful occasion to know one another and strengthen our bonds of communion.

Thank you dear Sr. Mary Slaven and the sisters of Martillac for the

opportunity provided for our sisters to participate at the session “present to His Presence as in Nazareth” from the 11th Feb- 10th March. Our Srs. Christelda and Ruwani seem to have profited much by this session.

Sr. Malini Joseph successfully completed a formation course of 9

months at Mysore- India and returned to the community on the 14th March.

Sr. Sinthi continues to follow a course in dress making, cutting out etc with the purpose of being of service to the community.

***Sr. Rishmala Michael***

## **PAKISTAN**

# **ITS CONVICTION THAT MATTERS**

**W**e have been visiting the area called Combined Military Hospital in Sibi, where there are a few Christian families. We were away during the summer months, June to August, so when we returned, we resumed our visits again in September. I found one family missing there. During our visit I inquired from one of the ladies and she said that they had gone away for a holiday. I missed the lady very much, because she used to go with us from house to house carrying her Bible. During one of our visits we found the door of her house opened and four to five Muslim ladies standing in front of her house waiting for her. As we made our way towards the house, I saw her coming out and she too saw us and was very happy.

At once she asked the ladies to go saying that she would make the arrangements later for the picnic.

I told her that she could go with ladies but she was very firm in her decision not to go with the ladies at that time. I asked her to feel free to go out but she refused and said in front of those Muslim ladies that, for her, prayer is more important than her going out to the park. I was very much impressed the way she witnessed to her faith in being faithful to her prayer. I asked the ladies to wait for her for five minutes. But she was not ready to go.

In that area the ladies are always at home and they have nowhere to go. Only men are at work.

*Learn how to treasure  
those people  
who exert effort just to  
make you feel  
important.*

Then we went into her house with her. She had a long discussion with

us. She thought we had stopped coming to their place because we had missed two of our visits. She shared with us her feelings about the loss of her father too. But all the time my conscience was pricking me and a question was within me, that she had sacrificed her leisure and given preference to prayer. What about me?

Here I quote the words of JESUS, “I have never found faith like this, even in Israel”. This experience has strengthened my faith too.

*Sr. Josephine Maria*

## PHILIPPINES

# YOUTH EARTH-DAY CELEBRATION

**“Youth, the cream and future of the nation!  
the hope and prosperity!  
that’s why the whole world need you  
and your energy to  
safeguard the integrity of Creation!  
The World Needs YOU!”**



This invitation was heard and accepted by the Youth Leaders of the Parish of St. Anthony of Padua, Gubat, Sorsogon to celebrate “**EARTH-DAY**” on April 22 and 23, 2014, a Program organized by the PBN Family in Rizal, Gubat, Sorsogon. Thirty Five Youth Leaders from the Six Clusters from the Parish of Gubat participated in the Activities and it was a meaningful event to be remembered.

We are partners of the Environment Program of the Diocese of Sorsogon, which was initiated by our Three Priest Associates to involve the PBN Family to promote Safeguarding the Integrity of Creation at the Diocesan level. We are privileged to be the recipients of the sponsorship of CARITAS-SPAIN for the entire program of Three Years.



The “Two-day” programs were organized and conducted by Sr. Ida Joseph and Fr. George Fajardo and the Environment Team. The Venue was Rizal Holy Family Hall which is a familiar place for the Youth of our Parish. The EARTH-DAY Prayer Service which was based on THE Theme: “OUR KINSHIP WITH ALL BEINGS” placed the participants in an atmosphere of wonder and awe at the beauty of Creation, and set the tone for an experiential participation throughout the Program.

The program for April 22 was conducted by Sr. Ida Joseph highlighting that this Earth-Day was

important as we face even greater Environmental threats. We need to come together and inspire Youth and Communities, to do their part in securing a healthy and sustainable Future for our Planet. This is the challenge and it is very Urgent!

The History of Earth-Day dates back to April 22, 1970, where 20 million Americans took to the streets across the country to demonstrate for a healthy Environment and a sustainable way of life. It was the birth of the modern Environmental Movement. Today, over one Billion people in 192 countries participate in Earth-Day Activities. The Youth present were challenged to engage other Youth in helping protect the Environment by organizing Earth-Day Activities and to use their knowledge to educate others and inspire them to join in the protection of our Planet. It was emphasized that the responsibility of the YOUTH is to inspire others. Earth-Day, Sr. Ida said is the perfect time to get out and educate people everywhere about sustainability and Environmental issues and to make sure that we get as many people as we can involved in activities related to Earth.

The Highlights of the Program were:

- Global Warming and its effects on the Planet
- The impact of Global Warming and its deadliest results in the Philippines.
- The responsibility and accountability of the Youth in the promotion of Sustainable Environment.
- Involvement of Youth in Environmental Activities
- How to organize Groups and Plan Activities
- The importance of the Three “R” - Recycle, Reuse and Reduce
- Pope Francis on “Care for Creation”
- St. Francis of Assisi and Nature

Sr. Ida stressed that Environment is about Activities. Acquiring mere knowledge will not work. It has to be practical, moving, on-going, maintaining, taking interest, loving nature, informing and challenging others to become aware of the cry of Mother Earth and to be part of the Activities. The challenge is to unite Communities in their efforts to protect the Planet and to safeguard the Integrity of Creation. We need to invite others to join hands to work for the sustainability of Mother Earth and to address Environmental issues.

Pope Francis' words were taken up for reflection:

“The culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not what builds up and leads to a more habitable world: rather, it is the culture of solidarity that does so; the culture of solidarity means – seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters. And we are all brothers and sisters.



- ✓ Cool Clip Art, Interactive Games, Competitions, Quiz, & Educational Outings to Farms, Recycling Centers, and Video presentations on Environment.
- ✓ Organize Bicycle Tour around the Town to campaign against Emissions and Pollution.

We are losing the attitude of wonder, contemplation and listening to Creation. Let us think of St. Francis, who teaches us profound respect for the whole of Creation and the protection of our Environment.”

Each Input was followed by Group work that resulted in brilliant, creative and down-to-earth Activities that turned out to be the most practical outcome of Earth-Day Celebration to continue promoting the Integrity of Creation. Their creativity is beyond imagination and their presentations were much appreciated. They divided themselves into three Groups and named themselves as FRUIT, LEAF and FLOWER. Each Group came up with an elaborated and systematic Plan of Activities to engage Youth Groups, Kids, Parents and Communities. Some of the highlights of Activities were:

- ✓ Form small Youth Groups to educate them to become aware of the issues of Environment
- ✓ Follow up program on a regular basis.
- ✓ Share their unique experience of being in such a group and highlight the diverse and exciting activities they have participated in.
- ✓ Sample Hand-on Projects such as : Home back-yard gardening, Planting, cleaning, watering,
- ✓ Learning to admire Nature, allowing Birds to nest, Fruits to grow, Flowers to bloom
- ✓ Introduce ways to become Earth Friendly – Recycling, Reusing, Reducing

- ✓ Plan a day for Tree Planting, Beach Clean-up, Mangrove Restoration, Recycling Drive to collect plastic, metal and Glass items in the neighborhood.
- ✓ Encourage Students to paint fun, colorful Eco-Murals with Eco-friendly Art supplies.
- ✓ Work with Student Council, Local Government Units and other Groups to organize Environment Activities.

It was fun, thought-provoking, entertaining and at the same time very creative. Presentable and effective Activities were put forward by the Youth Group. They have Three Sets of well organized Program of Activities to be carried out for a period of two years. They also have come up with Three Sets of “EARTH-FRIENDLY 10 COMMANDMENTS” to

be distributed to the Elementary Schools in our Parish to promote sustainability of the Planet and Healthy Environment. We are looking forward to printing them in a simple and attractive way and it will be ready for distribution by the Youth at the beginning of the School Year in June 2014.

There were two Group Activities based on how to make an Impact. The Questions asked were:

- ✓ What do you want to change in your Community?
- ✓ What fires you up?
- ✓ What community issues are you aware of?
- ✓ What do you want to change to make the world better?
- ✓ What do you care about?
- ✓ Choose an issue or issues from the given List and add a number goal for your project.

It was an amazing revelation of how much the Youth can contribute to make an impact on positive Actions that concerns the life of the people around.

The second Group Activity was to FIND YOUR VOICE. The questions asked were:

- ✓ What is your Passion?
- ✓ What do you love to do?
- ✓ What activities make you feel happy?
- ✓ What is a special skill, ability or interest you have?

It was total surprise to all of them, when they discovered the many Talents and Giftedness they possess but not yet fully realized or made use of. The celebration of it was to share each of the hidden treasures they have discovered in themselves.

the sea and other materials on the shore, thus setting example and sending a message that each citizen is responsible to care for a Healthy Environment and that we are to become responsible Stewards to protect Mother Earth.

The culmination of the EARTH-DAY Activity on April 22 was the Clean-up of Rizal Beach of floating plastics in

April 23 was the day with Fr. George Fajardo who energized the Youth with creative Out-door activities to

introduce the spiritual, physical and mental attitudes they need to possess in order to move towards a holistic approach to Care for Environment. He challenged the Youth to invest their wealth of energy and creativity which is their natural Gift and the out-door activities were a testimony to that effect. It was a hundred percent participation and a

joyful expression of their youthfulness at work for the glory of God.

It is with conviction that they pledged to be Collaborators in the Global effort to safeguard the Integrity of Creation. They are confident that they can and have the capacity to become promoters of Life.

The final activity was to reflect once again on the words of Pope Francis to the Youth:

**“Let us protect CHRIST in our lives, so that,  
we can protect others, so that,  
we can protect Creation!  
It means, protecting All Creation,  
the beauty of the created world,  
as Book of Genesis tells us,  
everything has been entrusted  
to our protection  
and all of us are responsible for it.  
Be Protectors of God’s Gifts!”**

**- Rizal Community -**





# THE CONFEDERATION OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN AND MEN

*Sr. Amelia shares an experience she had at a Prayer Walk for Justice organised by Conferpar (The Confederation of Religious Women and Men of Paraguay). A large number of people took part in the walk. "No more immunity", "We want to live in truth, justice and freedom" were chants repeated by many.*

With this cry, slogan or rather, prayer CONFERPAR, through the social media, called on Religious and all who wanted to join us to come on a prayer walk to demand justice for five peasants who were under house arrest, had been on hunger strike for 55 days and were now in the Military Hospital.

We walked from the Cathedral to the military hospital where the five peasants were. The walk began with a prayer and some songs and continued in silence for most of the way.

It all began on 12 June 2012 when, because of the feeling of the people and an explicit denunciation by Jesuits, a confrontation was organised among peasants who wanted the situation of the occupied land belonging to the Paraguayan State regularised. However, when those who claimed ownership of the land were asked to produce the title deeds they could not do so because they did not exist. According to the people, it was all a plot hatched to depose the then President LUGO.

60 peasants were involved, between women and children, and the contingent who came to evict them comprised more than 350 heavily-armed police. They even had a helicopter. During the eviction, 11 peasants and 6 police were killed.

At the moment, 14 peasants are in prison, more than 50 have been charged and 5 have been on hunger strike for the past 52 days. The whole trial of those charged is full of violations of the law. There is no serious proof of anything. The peasants are charged with intent to murder. But there has been no investigation whatsoever of the killing of the police and the peasants.

A very great number of people joined the Religious in the emotional prayer walk. Now and again voices could be heard shouting, "We want to live in justice and freedom", "Life and freedom NOW for Kuruguay prisoners." The courage of the peasants and the support of so many people who recognise and demand the right of all to live in justice, truth and freedom fill us with great hope.

No more immunity! No more widening of the gap from the rich who are getting richer and who ignore and get rid of the poor! Even though they make emotional speeches on their behalf, they do not practise what they preach. For example, the tax on soya has not been increased, which is ridiculous, and neither has the tax on beef farmers. The education and health budgets have

been reduced while, at the same time, we are told that there has been great national growth. Who benefits? The rich who are getting richer all the time?

We hope that these actions will promote the growth of social awareness. We will support them wholeheartedly by our presence and prayer.

*Amelia Fernández  
Community of Ñemby – Paraguay*

## AGENTINA

### THE PASTORAL CARE OF VOCATIONS

***The Team for the Pastoral Care of Vocations of Argentina share their experience in “La Tambora” Quitilipi. Some young people who took part in the Mission share what they lived during it. The slogan for the mission was: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, missionaries in life.***

This was the slogan which gathered us together for the *Holy Family* Youth Mission 2014 in the community of La Tambora, Quitilipi-Chaco. For the past 8 years, inspired by Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we have had a Summer mission (3-8 February) together with young people and some neighbours from the Quitilipi Residence as well as some young people from Posadas-Misiones.

We thank everyone who helped with the mission in any way, especially the Sisters of Quitilipi who provided hospitality for the missionaries and for Srs. Vanni and Rani who came with us as missionaries. We also thank all those who accompanied us by their prayers.

As the Team for the Pastoral Care of Vocations, we are very happy with the experience. We strengthened the bonds between us during the days of preparation and organisation. We became closer also to the lovely group of young missionaries we were forming. We benefited too from the richness of the witness which our sisters and brothers of La Tambora gave us by their lives.

We have decided to return to Chaco in February 2015. Until then, we count on your prayers and we pray that more members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles will join us on mission. With Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may we be aware that we are sent on mission.

*Gachy, Ana María and Patry*

## Echoes of the mission given by some young people

First of all, I must mention that it was the first time that I went out on mission. I never imagined that visiting so many people and sharing with them would be such a rich experience for spirit and soul. The interaction with each group of people was a discovery of God. The affection they showed us was beyond price. This experience kept us going each day in spite of the heat and the mosquitoes. But the most important

thing was that I felt happy, useful and able to give an incentive to other young people in my work group every day in the chapel.

So I thank God and the Sisters for this opportunity and I want to continue going on mission. Sharing the week with my missionary companions was a pleasure.

**Thank you!!!**

*Viviana Carolina Guastalla – Chaco*

My experience of the mission in La Tambora was one of the most comforting, joyful and life-giving mission-experiences that I have taken part in. I learned about the work, simplicity, humility and charity of the Sisters of the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux and of the people who live there as well as that of the people of Quitilipi and Resistencia.

Feeling joyful and strong both spiritually and physically, we set off each day enthusiastic and smiling and looked forward each evening to meeting again the families we had visited.

I chose to work with the young people. So I discovered new ideas, preferences and tastes, which will be useful when I am doing pastoral work later on in Posadas. In spite of being “blessed” among women because I was the only male, I met wonderfully good people and we got to know one another better each day as we

chatted, ate and walked along together. I really felt very happy knowing that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were with us.

As we had worked to get money to go to Quitilipi, the city of friendship, I am hoping that we will be able to go again next year for a longer time and that we will be able to meet again the people with whom we had begun a dialogue and created a bond of friendship so that we can share the joy and mission that Jesus has given us.

Truly, we are blessed with more strength to work for the kingdom and to enthuse more brothers and sisters. We thank the Sisters and also Fr. Federico who were with us during the mission. God will ensure that we meet again next year to continue the mission for his glory and the glory of the community.

Greetings in Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

*José Matías Mariano – a young missionary from Posadas*

# A WINDOW ON OUR PRESENCE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE



**A**fter a long wait, Spring is drawing our attention to the life that is ready to burst forth at the slightest sign of the sun. May 1 will be the first anniversary of the arrival here of our missionary Sisters Jolanta and Aldégonde. They spent the first Winter looking forward to the new spurts of life of Spring.

On 25-27 May Sr. Aldégonde and Sr. Paulette took part in leading a retreat on the discernment of vocations for 18-35 year-olds. They had 12



participants – 10 young women and 2 young men. The main aim of this retreat was discernment for Christian marriage. Paulette gave a talk on the foundations of a couple's love which has its source in God. She gave a biblical overview of every person's vocation to love and especially of the image of God as Love. "Created by love, we are called to love others as Christ has loved us: it is not a love which benefits ourselves but a love which is the gift of ourselves".

Aldégonde presented marriage as a vocation and a sacrament and spoke about putting Christ as the centre of our Christian life. Both of us spoke about what is specific to consecrated life. Other aspects of vocation were presented: how to choose a life-partner... the influence of cultures... Couples spoke about their Christian experience of marriage. All of that was accompanied by prayer, sharing and personal reflection.

## **SAMANTHA'S TESTIMONY**

I had no idea what to expect or how we were going to approach the subject of marriage. I can say that from the first evening I was not disappointed. It was a real spiritual discovery and a way of coming closer to God. The subject that we dealt with was very enriching and enabled me to clarify things and to deepen my knowledge not only of the Christian life which I want to live but of all the experiences which I hope to have, including marriage.

The retreat had a calming influence on me and I felt connected to the group because we were all connected

to God. What touched me most was the testimony of the young married couples. I was able to identify with them and to believe that I could have a marriage that was just as genuine and based on faith as theirs.

I can say to all those who would like to go on retreat but have not had the opportunity to do so that you arrive with lots of questions but at the end of the retreat you have lots of answers. A retreat is a way of taking another step forward in life and in the Christian life. You learn about yourself and about others and that enables you to grow.

## **JEROME'S TESTIMONY**

The retreat was a real time of renewal for me. The place, the programme and the talks were really good. As well as that, the testimonies of the young married couples gave me great encouragement, assuring me that I can be young and also be in a serious loving relationship that can lead to

marriage. It is not just something for young people over thirty because the young couples who spoke of their experience were under 25 when they became engaged. I turned to God and I learned a lot. I am eagerly looking forward to my next retreat.

## **WORLD YOUTH DAYS**

Who better than Sr. Jolanta to help the youth group of the Montreal diocese to prepare for World Youth Day which will take place in Poland in 2016? For the past few months she has been teaching them the rudiments of the Polish language and



culture. She also helps the team to communicate with the Polish dioceses so that they can plan the trip and make bookings for the young people of the diocese.

Sr. Aldégonde will form the group of young adults from the Mission of Our

Lady of Africa who want to take part in the World Youth Day in Poland or in the Diocesan Youth Day in Montreal. She works full-time in the Mission of Our Lady of Africa as a

pastoral worker. She also sees to the formation of catechists. She is very involved with both adults and young adults.

## OUR INVOLVEMENT IN PETITE-BOURGOGNE



We also are directly involved in our neighbourhood. Jolanta prepared young people of school-going age for Baptism and Paulette prepared adults for their First Communion.

Every fortnight Paulette and Aldégonde animate a *Holy Family* faith community. It is a way of sharing our charism without people feeling that they have to become Lay Associates. About twenty people meet every fortnight. Our meetings are focused on the Word of God and prayer.

We try to highlight our charism of communion in union with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Our faith community is intergenerational,

intercultural and interreligious. Jolanta is hoping to gather couples with an interest in *Holy Family* spirituality. So far, one couple has responded to her invitation. She has been accompanying them for some months now. They would love other couples to join them.

That is just a short account of our community's journey of faith and hope. Throughout this first year we tried to emphasise the sharing of our *Holy Family* charism. We also invested our love in the international community which we form together. We have adjustments to make in community but we are full of hope as we continue our journey on the path of evangelisation and the sharing of our charism.



*The Community of Quesnel Street, Paulette, Aldégonde et Jolanta  
Quebec, Canada, 30 April 2014*





**Holy Family of Bordeaux  
Communications / Information Service  
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**“To live the mystery of Christ is to live in the freedom of the Spirit”. 2 Cor 3;17**