

INTERCONNECTIONS

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Jesus became like us, in this respect
by taking the form of a sinner, so we
will resemble him in heaven if we
have imitated him on earth.

- Pierre Bienvenu Noailles -

THOUGHTS ON INTERCONNECTIONS



We appreciate this means of communication very much both on a personal level and as a way of sharing with others... a testimony, something that has been done, etc.

WE APPRECIATE:

- * Everything is *Holy Family*, tells us about where we are present and makes us feel that we are a Family.
 - * The internationality of its content. It brings us close to other situations and opens us up to them.
 - * It helps us to maintain our apostolic zeal in the common mission and to contribute our grain of sand by our prayer.
- * The Good Father's texts at the bottom of each page are very much appreciated.

And we say "Thank you" because it is "ours" and has special meaning for us.

It just remains for us to thank you for the good you are doing and the communion you are creating with this medium. "GO FORWARD".

This community, with so many elderly Sisters, is praying for you and in this way, we want to do what the Good Father asked us to do, "Support one another".

With love,

The community of Pinto – Madrid

Congratulations! Interconnections, is very readable. I asked at our last big meeting in Crewe who had read the last Interconnections. Predictably, those who had been abroad and knew about Africa, Asia or Latin America were the first to look at it. Personally, I always find a lot to get excited about and to learn from, for example, it is good to read about meetings and training days for one thing or another such as leadership. We are all doing this from time to time so we understand. Experiences in ministry like those related by the sisters in India and Sri Lanka can inspire and encourage and we wonder how we might help in their fund-raising efforts.

Some of the older sisters find it a bit long. I tell them they don't have to read it all at once, but it helps to point out an article that might interest them and talk about it. The matter of length is one reason why I like a monthly letter for the Unit; it wouldn't possibly work for the whole Institute, hence the need for a good choice, if you have the choice.

One way I get to know if people are reading the letter or looking at the website is when they remark on what was not there!

So, let us carry on with the work, be awake to how the media world is acting, and take our cues from what is worthwhile in it.

Sheila Mc Gowan (Britain & Ireland)



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EDITORIAL



As 2015 has faded away and the rays of Hope of a New Year 2016

shines on us, we wish each and every one of you the blessing of Peace and Mercy of our God!

While still enjoying the spirit of the season of Christmas, let us step into this New Year allowing the Mystery of God's Love to sink into us.

"God so loved the world... That the Word who was with God from the beginning, became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth..... And from his fullness have we received, grace upon grace." (Jn. 1:1, 14, 16)

Just imagine! What a God we have; that God comes so close to us? "No one has ever seen God..." (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4,12), but in the ONE who has come to live with us, becoming one-with us! This is the assurance Moses gave his people still wondering in the desert saying, "*For what great nation is there that has a God so close to it as the Lord our God is to us?*" (Dt 4:7).

In his message for the 49 World Day of Peace, Pope Francis shares with us his profound conviction of who God is, expressing his New Year wish for the whole world saying:

"God is not indifferent! God cares about (hu)mankind! God does not abandon us!"

We are aware however, that the reality we have experienced during the whole of 2015, was one of war, terrorism, violence of all sorts - ethnic, religious,

gender; misuse of power resulting in breaches of human rights, dignity of life resulting in many losing their lives, homes, country and all they could call their own!

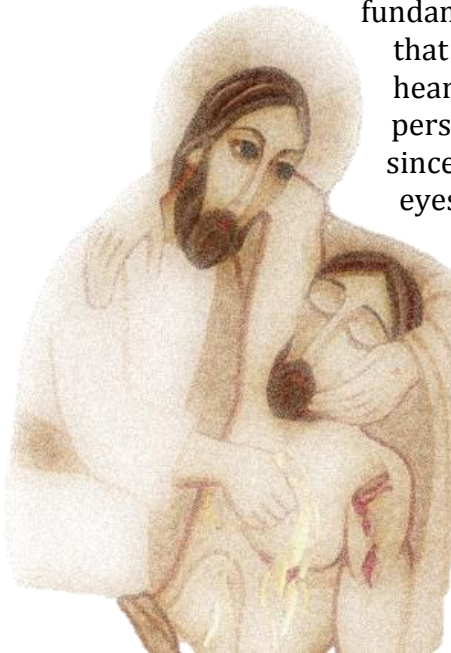
It is in this context that Pope Francis declared the Jubilee Year of Mercy emphasizing that "Mercy is the heart of God and so it must also be the heart of the members of the one great family of God's children: a heart which beats all the more strongly wherever human dignity - as a reflection of the face of God in his creatures - is in play."

As we begin this New Year, may we be open to the grace of God's Mercy WHO became flesh, living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth! May we contemplate the mystery of Mercy taking deep into our hearts the words of Pope Francis in *Misericordiae Vultus*: "Mercy is the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us; mercy is the

fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of all

brothers and sisters on the path of life; mercy is the bridge that connects God and humanity, opening our hearts to the hope of

being loved forever despite our sinfulness."



The mercy of our God is made manifest among us in Jesus and so with grateful hearts we sing, "your mercy endures forever".

May we allow our thoughts, words and actions to be coloured by God's own

"mercy" becoming reflections of Love-Incarnate on earth! May we mirror in our life, in all our relationships, the Tender Loving Mercy of our God!

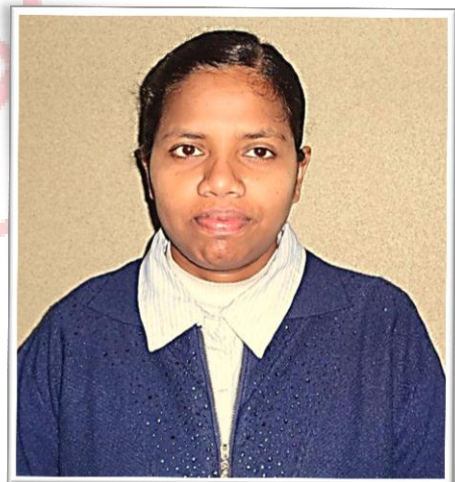
May Peace, Joy and Mercy be your experience of this year 2016!

HERE IN ROME

During the season of joy and love, the Lay associates and the Apostolic sisters in Italy came together on 19 Dec, at Generalate to celebrate and share their life. It was remarkable that the sense of being ONE FAMILY was deeply experienced by everyone in the simple sharing of life and mission and the singing and dancing. We were all enriched by one another. It is time of relaxing and enjoying with all energies at different age levels. I was surprised to hear them speaking of their involvement in different ministries in spite of age and the fact of being less in number.



Another moment of joy is the arrival of Jessica Albert to Rome, from the province of Jaffna, SRI LANKA, on 15 October 2015. The Generalate community is very pleased to welcome her as a new member, who no doubt will bring new life and energy to us all!



A warm welcome to you dear Jessica!



“Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers/sisters that you do unto me.” We in the Generalate are very happy to make the words of this song a reality among us today. A long-time dream has almost come true, when our “little house” at the entrance is now ready to accommodate some migrants/refugees who a safe need shelter till they are settled either in this country or elsewhere. It is a collaborative effort with the Jesuit Refugee Service. We thank God for the opportunity we have to share in some little way “the patrimony of the poor”- as our Founder use to say – though we are very much aware that this is just a wee drop in the ocean of needs! We all wait eagerly to welcome them in the coming weeks.



TOWARDS CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

From the News letter (Britain & Ireland)



Committed to our vowed life for mission, we will explore changes of structure and language in our ‘membership-leadership relationship’ that will enable a more integrated and prophetic contribution to mission. (General Chapter 2014)

This statement from the General Chapter is more than a simple recommendation and was seen as such by the Leadership Team in Britain and



Ireland. Over the past year, a series of workshops has been held in the Unit to explore, in depth, the meaning and implications of co-responsibility, collaboration, and accountability among members and leaders. Growing interrelatedness has enabled that all efforts be truly at the service of communion.

Taking on the decision made at the Unit Chapter last year a Meeting of the Extended Leadership Team (the title is expressive of *a new language*) was held in Crewe (England) from 20 - 22 November. At it were the Unit Leadership Team and the other Teams of Participation; the aim being, "to review the work of the teams since then and, if necessary, to revise our mandates and reformulate strategies in order to achieve our aims".

A powerful story had been the tool in realizing that unless we are open to change that happening all around us at an unprecedented speed, there is a danger of us being happily settled in our closed little world and thus becoming totally irrelevant.

The story, entitled "Our iceberg is melting", is about a colony of giant penguins living in the Antarctic. One particular penguin called Fred is a contemplative bird, devoted to the study of his environment and always on the lookout for danger. Gradually he notices that their home, where they have lived happily for many years is in grave danger of melting. He brings his fears to the leaders of the colony. They listen to his concerns and call a



meeting to inform every one of the danger. Scouts are sent out to search for a safer home and eventually the whole culture of the colony changes. Instead of being settled and always returning to the same place to breed, they become nomadic, moving frequently from one iceberg to another as soon as they realise they are in danger.

The story outlines eight steps to needed change:

1. A sense of URGENCY. Suffering cannot wait, tomorrow may be too late; now is the time to act.
2. Assemble TEAMS who will work together to achieve our goals.
3. Be Motivated by VISION: the vision of Jesus - God's dream of gathering all into the one Family of brothers and sisters.
4. Relentlessly COMMUNICATE the vision to help members be totally committed and working together.
5. EMPOWER one another by delegating and removing obstacles.
6. Celebrate SHORT TERM VICTORIES, not sink back into complacency.
7. Keep up the momentum. DON'T STOP.
8. Integrate the changes into your CULTURE.

Fred the brave penguin taught us a few valuable lessons:

- spend time in contemplation so as to be aware of the needs around us and offer an effective response; speak out our truth and gather support from all our members;
- never go it alone.



We need each other as, guided by our vision and by God Alone, we move out of our comfort zones to build that new society spoken of by our Founder.

This enabled also to be aware that all are responsible for leadership and to regard the teams of Participation as an extension of the unit leadership team.

NEWSLETTER

Holy Family Convent, Newbridge

This letter comes from our elderly sisters' home in Newbridge.



A very happy Christmas to all and may the New Year be filled with joy and blessings for you and those you love. This year we have met as a community to ensure that each sister would have the opportunity to contribute to our annual Christmas letter.

In last year letter, we referred to the “Cell” movement and how some of our Holy Family lay Associates and others are involved in promoting it. Six people – 2 sisters, 3 lay people and a priest travelled to Rome to hear the Pope authorise the cell movement as a tool for evangelization. It was a solemn ceremony, yet full of joy, and hope for the church. We were joined by large numbers from other Cell centres in Ireland and from around the world.

During Catholic schools’ week the Principal and staff of Holy Family secondary school, next door organised a visit to our community. They prayed with us, and surprised us with a lovely session of instrumental music and song. We still maintain close connections with

the pupils from the secondary school: they visit us regularly, organising weekly bingo sessions and chatting with the sisters who are no longer mobile. It is very heartening to know that some pupils are now members of Holy Family youth. We are happy to make our premises available for the annual school retreats, where the participants enjoy a little oasis of peace and quiet. The transition year pupils gave tutorial lessons to some members of the community, showing them how to improve their IT skills! All being well, we hope to help in sponsoring a pupil for the pilgrimage to Poland for the world youth gathering. One of our sisters who is skilled with knitting needles band crochet hook, has raised a substantial amount of money, mainly for local charities. At present, a group of eight are busy knitting and crocheting to support a worldwide environmental project. Another sister, who has spent over 50 years on the mission fields in Africa, is a dedicated gardener – we enjoy some of her vegetables, which reach us from her ‘tunnel’ to the table.





There is a thriving 'crossword club' in the community: this helps to stimulate the brain cells and encourages competition! Two members of the community give tuition in English, mainly to some polish people. A sister who spent 59 years in one of our houses in France has returned to the community and entertains us as she re-enters her native culture! We are envious of her fluency in the French language!

Our overall aim is to be a welcoming and caring community. While reaching out to others, we are also aware that we are the eyes, ears, feet and memory for one another. Many of our sisters who have returned from overseas are in need of care. They continue to be a significant part of our story and the real strength and power – house of our community. They journey with us, and enrich us through their prayer, their pain and their suffering. In the words of our

Founder, the Ven. Fr. Noailles, they are "our treasure".

With renewed good wishes, from all of us ...



LIVING AN INNER EXODUS

The Communities of Rushaki and Gikongoro (Rwanda)



In November 2015, the two communities in Rwanda met together in Gikongoro to reflect on **Living an inner exodus ... creating space ... welcoming the other ... building together** – in view of living our common mission of communion as Sisters of the *Holy Family*".



The meeting began with prayer initiated by Joaquina with the symbol of a tree, which was filled with the leaves our expectations for the event.

Re-reading our history with its strong and weak points; contemplating our models of communion - the Holy Family of Nazareth and the first Christian Communities and the sense of being called to go forward to build the Big Family of God, led us deeper into this experience.

Invoking the Holy Spirit and in an atmosphere of prayer and silence, Marie-Paul Balula, our facilitator, helped us to make an inner pilgrimage; **to make an inner exodus** so as **to create a space** or an emptiness in the depths of ourselves. This space would then be filled by divine graces and by the other members of our communities so as **to build communion together** with God and with one another.

The process helped us to reflect **personally** and **as a group** the wonders of God in our journey, also what blocks us in living communion. We became aware of the importance of our life of intimacy with God that sustains our conviction of being called to live the common mission of communion among ourselves and with the whole of creation. We realized that each one is responsible to bring in our stone towards building Communion. **Authentic and sisterly dialogue and deep listening to our sources of inspiration** will help us to move forward in this.

We listened again to Pierre Bienvenu Noailles calling us to contemplate on our models:

“The most important thing in an Institute is that all those who compose it have the spirit that is proper to them... They will apply themselves above all to acquiring this spirit of God Alone... This is the spirit that should inspire all their actions and be the motive for all the works”. Constitutions 1825 art. 19.

“Have no other spirit but that of God Alone. Seek him alone ... Love and fear only God Alone in all things.” Constitutions 1825 art. 96

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph sought, loved and possessed God Alone. Following their example, the religious should study every day how to detach their hearts from all created things... and in all things, seek only God’s will.” Constitutions 1825 art. 2

The regular deepening of our Family documents steep us in our spirituality and remind us of our reason for living. All of that opens our hearts to the calls of the Church and the world.



We understood that we are on a journey and are called to follow the star that guides us towards perfect communion as we allow ourselves to be challenged by the calls to improve the quality:

- of our consecrated life
- of our relationships and
- of our community life

We returned to our respective communities joyfully being energized by these new calls that will motivate our steps towards communion.

A NEW HOUSE OF NAZARETH IN KITUMBA – UGANDA

Kitumba Community, Uganda

It is two years since we started a second community of Uganda, in Kitumba, in the town of Kabale. It was tough and challenging as it is always the case with “New Beginnings.” At first we lived in a rented house belonging to a rich man but later, we thought of having our own place to live in where we could be free to live as a community. When we eventually left the rented house on 13 July this year, it was like a dream. We were like the Israelites leaving Egypt. Since the house was not complete when we entered it, we slept in the garage. It was hard but we made a lot of fun out of it. We were so happy that we felt like we had reached the Promised Land.

November 19th was a memorable day when our new home was inaugurated and blessed by our Parish Priest. Our Sisters from both communities in Rwanda; from Buhara, our first

community in Uganda, our neighbours, religious men and women from our Parish, well-wishers and those who were part of the construction process joined to celebrate with us. It indeed was an experience of Family. The words of psalm 122: “I rejoiced when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord!” were resounding in our hearts.



During the Eucharistic celebration, Fr Ndyomugabe shared the beginnings of the Holy Family Sisters in Uganda in 1999. Starting from one of the outstations of Kabale town parish, in 2000 they moved to Buhara parish near the border of Rwanda and Uganda. He

further said that the sisters have taken roots, developed the lives of the people and made a great impact in many different ways. He also remembered the sisters who have gone back to God in a special way: Sally Fiore, Mercia Peiris and Maureen Collins. He also thanked the Holy Family sisters who worked in

Uganda and have now gone back to their countries.

We find life so challenging here but as we meet the poor, the pained, the lonely, the aged, we long to see in each one, the face of our God. We desire to be another "Nazareth, a Home of Love."

THE STORY OF LITTLE JÉRÉMIE

Sr. Pauline Manzuetto and Léonie Mateba (Pre-Novice)

"Each time you did it to one of the least of my sisters or brothers, you did it to me"

Matthew 25:40



This is the story of little Jérémie, a seven-year-old child who was brought to the Ngoso hospital. Jérémie, like any child of his age was lively. He climbed up on a cupboard in the kitchen to look for something to eat while his mother was outside. There was a saucepan of boiling water on the fire being prepared for the manioc.

Unfortunately, the cupboard toppled over and Jérémie fell into the saucepan of boiling water. His whole

body was "a wound". He had second-degree burns. He lived in Mbelebulungu, a village which is a few kilometres from Ngoso, in a poor family with parents of rather limited intelligence.

Little Jérémie just got traditional first aid with the bark and leaves from trees. After a week, the situation got worse. His whole body was infected. His aunt brought him to the Ngoso hospital to have him looked after. After a few days, his aunt returned to the village leaving little Jérémie with his mother in that terrible situation without enough money even for food.

- ◆ In the midst of this situation of extreme poverty, God spoke to us. **"Whoever gives a glass of water to one of these little ones gives it to me."**



- ◆ For days, “**the cries**” of the destitute people rang in our ears and hearts, “**I am hungry**” ... “**I am thirsty**”...

Little Jérémie’s cries of distress awakened our compassion, our sense of solidarity and our concern. The whole community of Sisters made a **covenant** with Jérémie and his mother by:

Our attentiveness to and interest in them, praying for them, regular visits to the hospital and talking to the mother.

Attending to him physically and psychologically holding the child’s hand, speaking words of peace, love and hope; looking at him with love and being humorous with him in order to make him smile.

- ◆ The pre-novice Léonie MATEBA says:



Visiting Jérémie, bringing him food, and helping his mother to care for him awakened in me “**The passion of the love of Christ and his compassion for the most destitute, the poor and the sick**”. In the beginning, I was very afraid. I was very upset because of my powerlessness in the face of this situation of suffering and poverty. But gradually, my compassion helped me to share in the life of the vulnerable people. I learned to listen to the cries of the poor, to smile at them, to share my joy... I have created a bond of friendship with little Jérémie. He has begun to communicate a little with a few words of Kikongo, the national language, even though he used to speak only Kibunda, the language of his village. I also had the joy of discovering that every event can be an opportunity for formation and growth.

What a lovely Christmas present. The God of Hope came to visit us.



A VISIT TO KIKWIT PRISON

A PREFERENTIAL OPTION

The community of Kikwit (DRC) is committed specifically to live exodus and proximity with the prisoners in order to open themselves to the world of the poor and to awaken a passion for humanity in the young people (the Pre-novices).

Since we are a formation community, we made the option to pray for and visit the prisoners so as to be close to them and to respond to the call of Pope Francis to go to the margins and to give life to our Corporate Commitment as Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. Prayer and Sunday Mass followed by a time of listening help us to re-awaken hope in these abandoned people.

The collaboration of the chaplain, of a young woman, Catherine and of the Brothers of Tibériade helped us to form a team that could be increasingly close to these people. That was why this *ad hoc* team was formed.

Then the hundred and eighty prisoners benefitted from their presence and a meal. It was a beginning. Actually, this initiative is an option that the community made in order to respond to the calls and orientations of the 2014 General Chapter. It also coincides with the calls of Pope Francis to go to the margins. By means of this experience, the young people try to integrate progressively their sense of gratuitousness, sharing, privation, compassion, listening, solidarity, a passion for Christ and closeness to the poor.

The Community of Kikwit



TOGETHER WE CAN DO IT

The Sisters of the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux console the prisoners by their regular visits to the Kikwit prison. They go several times a year, especially during the mission month. The following was a rather poignant experience: On Mission Sunday, two hours later than expected, we set out on foot with the 180 parcels. We went into the big yard where we were eagerly awaited. We were not allowed to speak to the prisoners but they did not hesitate to ask for soap, a razor blade, or even five Congolese francs.

The atmosphere was a bit tense. The 150 prisoners were called out by name so that the 180 parcels were distributed equitably. The wardens had to shout to gather everybody – men, women, minors and even a baby with its mother. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the size of the parcels and looked for a second one. If we were expecting even a small word of thanks, we did not get it! This was perfectly normal when you consider the conditions they were living in. They spend the day outside in what could be called a big recreation yard where some grow manioc, sugar cane or other vegetables. They go to a huge building without doors or windows for the night which begins at six o'clock. I cannot imagine their living conditions in there without, of course, light or beds.

And as for food; the prisoners' families have to bring them food. If they don't, they have to wait for what the Christians bring when they come to Sunday Mass so that they can have their weekly meal.

Yes, the experience was really poignant and enriching as we entered the heart of a wounded and violated humanity.

Catherine Noel



REINFORCEMENTS FOR CANADA

Gisèle and the Quebec Community

At the beginning of January 2015, we received a priceless gift from Sri Lanka: generous missionaries, Doreen Philippiah, Malinie Jayamanne, and Iresha Fernando arrived in Quebec after spending two and a half months in Montreal.

To come to Quebec in Winter when you are from a hot country needs a lot of courage... the folly of love, no doubt! We admire them in silence.

Maria Rogalska, who is Polish, arrived a fortnight later. But, for Maria, a snowstorm and a temperature of -20°C – -30°C, was nothing to be afraid of. She has seen worse in Poland, or in Belarus where she had worked previously.

So the community of Quebec was delighted to have the addition of courageous young Sisters. We suddenly felt younger.

But they had a big challenge to face – to learn French in three months. Fortunately, after their first term, they were given another one.

And now they proudly share with us in French, telling us about their



impressions, surprises and difficulties in Quebec, knowing that we will be sympathetic.

Very dear Doreen, Malinie, Iresha, Maria, you have taken up the challenge. Your enthusiasm in your work, your perseverance in spite of tiredness, your sense of humour and all that you are edifies us so much and wins our affection and admiration. And even more, your progress in French, your self-giving, the sharing of your experiences, your idealism and your interior life edify us and help us to live our *Holy Family* mission.

We hope that you will settle down in Masson-Gatineau and have a fruitful apostolate. Our prayer and deep affection go with you.

PREPARING FOR WORLD YOUTH DAY 2016

Aldégonde, Maria and Paulette, the Community of 2414 Nicolet



As you know, Pope Francis has invited all the young people of the world to the World Youth Day (WYD) which will take place in Krakow, Poland.

The Archdiocese of Montreal (Canada) wanted to have this beautiful experience with its young people. The formation meetings were done perfectly. Everything was ready for the Great Event.

Maria and Aldégonde, went to Montreal with a group of thirteen young people from the Mission of Our Lady of Africa. This pilgrimage was prepared for during the formation meetings. These young people took a very active part in preparing activities to witness to their faith. They went to some parishes to give expression to their faith in song and to share experiences and prayer with the Christian communities. They also organised their own fund-raising activities – concerts, community meals etc.

This outing was offered to young people so that they could celebrate their faith in Jesus Christ, make contact with each other, be together and share experiences and prayer together. It was the first time that some of them had this experience. It was something new for them:

- ◆ To travel together
- ◆ To express their faith with other young people from around the world
- ◆ To meet the Pope

With the theme of the WYD “**Blessed are the merciful...**” the young people were invited to receive God’s mercy so that they, in turn, could be signs of this mercy in their lives.

Let us go forward with these beautiful young people and support them by our prayers and encouragement.



INDELIBLE FOOTPRINTS

Graciela Barrios, Argentina



Many years ago, two well-loved Sisters, Filo and Magdalena, arrived from Spain with great youthful enthusiasm and the desire to give EVERYTHING.

America was awaiting them and they have left their footprints in Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina.

The years went by and, each year of their lives, they gave themselves in the different countries and communities leaving indelible footprints behind them.

Filo, a tireless walker, visited many families as well as the sick; she looked after catechists and did lots of other things besides. And, of course, I cannot forget the beautiful crochet work she did in her free time. Thank you Filo for all you said, did and gave to us.

Magdalena served in so many ways – as Delegate, Councillor, Bursar, Formator, Director of the hostel, Leader of the Lay Associates – and, in her spare time, did crosswords and played Patience! We remember her too in Quitilipi with Negrita, her little dog. Thank you, Magda

for all you gave us and the way you encouraged us.

The years have passed and, after so much work and self-giving, they bade us farewell on 18 December 2015. They walked slowly and they had wrinkles; as we heard them saying many times “Years do not come alone”. But what they never had were wrinkled hearts and they gave of themselves up to the last day. Many, many thanks!!

For some Sisters, they left a great void. For others, they carried lots of dreams, struggles and shared joys and sorrows. In the hearts of each



and every one of us and of so many people, they left indelible footprints which will appear as flashes of joy when we remember them and chat about them as we drink *mate* or when something simply reminds us of them and brings a smile to our face because, dear Sisters, we will always be united in the great spiritual universe which calls us to Life.



AN INVITATION TO LIVE MERCY

Sr. Rishmala Michael, Vicariate, Sri Lanka



I am Love, Your Heavenly Father and am inviting you ... **“Come closer to me ...” (Gen 45:4) “Be merciful just as your Father is merciful.” (Lk 6: 36) “Learn from me... (Mt. 11: 29)**

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17). In the Old Testament God is revealed to Moses as "Merciful and gracious... abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34: 6). The Hebrew words used to describe the bond between God and God's people suggest that God's mercy means loving fidelity - like a mother's love for the child of her womb; utterly dependable. The psalmist proclaims over and over again that God's "love has no end". (Psalm 136) God is a God of grace and mercy - the two great values the Lord can ever lavish on our life; freely bestowed on every person

who is in need, a "twin" blessing which no money can buy.

God's Mercy and loving-kindness never fail us. (Lam. 3:22-23) They are new every morning, great and abundant is the Lord's stability and faithfulness. God cannot run out of mercy for our life. God does not get tired of coming to our aid.

Cardinal Kasper said that hearing the word **"Mercy"** changes everything; It is the most encouraging word that has power to change the world. The slightest act of mercy makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand what God's mercy means.

Mercy is a grace that should arise spontaneously in the act of seeing and meeting the other, seeing that "the other" is not separate but a reflection of the One Self that we have lost contact with and forgotten. When we see the suffering and guilt in others, mercy should spring forth from us reaching out to them. No effort is required to receive this grace—"the quality of mercy is not strained," as Shakespeare says.

In the end, mercy arises spontaneously from the egoless Self, which is why only God can be truly merciful. Everything else can only be aimed at and can never be permanently attained unless it comes from the depths of one's being. (Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson)

Let us listen to this invitation of our God and do something beautiful for God every day.



MAGNIFICENT COURAGE

Fr. Benny Furo, (Priest Associate) - Philippines



December 14, 2015 the entire morning until midday is a sunny flash of day! Yet, the weather bulletin is telling the entire country that eastern and northern Samar provinces and Bicol region specifically Sorsogon. Before midday, the first landfall happens in an island of Northern Samar; which is just an island away from where my parish in Matnog, Sorsogon is located; for my parish is facing the Northern Samar area, and just an hour sea travel from my place crossing the sea.

An hour later, an instant gloomy weather condition becomes so visible and strong wind coming from the northern part is zooming directly at our place. We take an early lunch so that we can still have enough time to fix things. But, the wind is becoming stronger and stronger, producing alarming sounds. Rains are also pouring out together with the winds. Attacking us, from the northern part. At exactly 2:30 in the afternoon, the smashing of Nona with its rains and strong winds begin and lasted until 6:45.

At the middle of this storm, I heard a voice, calling for help. When I opened my window, a falling branch of the tree, then, another by flying debris hit me. But, it did not stop me going out to look for the voice and trying to find its source. It pained me when I saw the little girl carrying in her arms her little sister amidst this kind of weather disturbance. I immediately grabbed them and slowly led them to come inside the room where we are hiding for safety. What a magnificent courage shown by a little girl to carry, protect her equally little sister. My eyes and heart are focused on them, on her courage and ability to cross the roads.



For me, this is a religious experience concretely manifesting the Christmas message.

A religious experience that needs to be told, amidst the chaotic situation of our society. That is where the typhoon Nona brings Jesus to me and to our community. There is physical destructions of our structures brought by the natural calamity, but from this ruined structure rises another new structure of building and showing to us new structure of human carrying and relating. What a Christmas story!



We are guarded by many gadgets and comforts in life, unlike them. However, they have shown different style of uplifting human dignity without the assistance of gadgets. The warmth of that girl's little sister is what satisfied her in truly protecting the gift of life given by Jesus in a manger.

Their experience is like the encounter experience of Elizabeth and Mary, both carrying in their wombs the very lives of John and Jesus. Their coming to us left behind a message of Jesus born in their hearts, a magnificent courage!

AN EXPERIENCE AT THE "FAMILY UNION"

Sr. Romuald - Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Abdul Kalama – our great Indian leader of recent times, one who is admired and honoured by the whole world, had a famous saying, **"HAVE DREAMS." "YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO DREAM"**

Another great man who passed this way – A Prophet for all times-our Venerable Founder **Fr. Pierre Bienvenu Noailles too had a dream.** A prolongation of the dream of God **"TO BRING TOGETHER EVERYTHING IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH WITH CHRIST AS HEAD"**
[Eph. 1:10]



I consider myself fortunate to have participated and seen with my own eyes, the process of realization of the dream of P.B.Noailles, around 180 years later. The 'FAMILY UNION' took place at the Retreat Centre attached to the Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu in the diocese of Mannar. It is no wonder that our Mother Mary, who showed our Founder the way and guided him at every step of his founding mission, is even now accompanying us – members of the Holy Family to the fulfilment of her Servant's dream.

The members of the Holy family Association from all parts of Sri Lanka, gathered together for our Family Union at this Shrine. The Contemplatives (5) – a rare gift at such gatherings, The Consecrated Seculars (10) The Lay Associates (172) Children and Youth of the Holy Family (138), the Priests Associates (7) and the Apostolic Sisters (54) mingling together and singing "**GLORY TO GOD** in all languages brought tears to my eyes and my heart was lifted up to God in praise and thanksgiving. It was indeed a foretaste of Eternity!

The event was well organized by both Unit Leadership Teams along with PBN team and the members of all FIVE vocations. It was a time to meet new faces, of the same Family. Through sharing got acquainted and renewed our relationships. The heavy rain was not at all a hindrance to pass from one programme to another, rather it brought new experiences of moving with other pilgrims to the Shrine, dining in the canteen, getting wet etc., reminded me of our Founder's exhortation "... You

have not separated yourselves from those who live under the common law....." [*Preface - 1851 General Rules*]

The Holy Eucharist was presided over by the Priest Associates, with the members of the Holy Family, in which many pilgrims took part. It was the climax of this "Family Union". My inner self saw Rev. Fr. Pierre Bienvenu Noailles at the concelebrated Eucharistic Sacrifice and Banquet.

The atmosphere of the Centre with its beautiful surrounding of trees of all sorts, the pond, the swan, the clouds forming sunny and then rainy weather, naturally drew us to the Cosmic Oneness. That we are very aware of, these days. There were two talks in both languages (Sinhala, Tamil)

-The new cosmic views of connecting ourselves with the Divine energy,

-The emerging needs of the world and our place in LIVING OUR MISSION COMMUNION.

The followings are the outcome of the sharing after the talks in the language groups.

- We live and work as one Family of PBN
- As we respect each other we too respect the creation as one of us and live in awareness of the inter connectedness, inter-relatedness and inter-dependence.
- We are happy about our Bulletin "Sungamum" which came out as Family Bulletin holding the articles from all 5 vocations and we give support to continue.



- We try to live our Family Traits of Gentleness, Compassion, Simplicity, Humility, in our day today life and give witness to our Family of PBN.
- We confirm our deep relationship through our gatherings in our Family events and Feasts.
- Always live in awareness of preserving the nature and to sustain them by planting new trees.
- Be aware of managing the use of Polythenes and recycling the car badge at homes and protect the environment.
- Collaboratively contacting the dropouts in schools and guide them for a better future carriers.

Let us extend the divine mercy that we ourselves have received abundantly from God our Father through Jesus Christ, and follow the path of the head of the Church - our Pope Francis. His Prophetic call expressed in all his letters and Encyclicals is summed up in **COMMUNION**.



This **Family Union** is a call to all of us to open wide our hearts and minds and be authentic Prophets, Apostles and Witnesses to **COMMUNION**.

May we be the **Dreamers** and those who make **realize** these dreams, as **ONE FAMILY ON MISSION**.



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