



# interconnections

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*A moment of joy*

## CONTENTS

### Europe

Editorial	03
Here in Rome	04
No More Trafficking	05
Holy Family in...	07

### Africa

A rewarding experience	08
The political situation	09
A Moment of Joy	10
Feast of St. Bakhita	11

### America

Life after WYD 2016	13
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### Asia

As I walk down ...	15
Love is contagious	16
Extra – judicial killing	17
Glory and praise to you my lord	18
Our journey in Sri Lanka	19

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## Editorial

**Easter, the celebration of Resurrection**, is the Feast of Light, of Love which overcomes the darkness of death bringing forth new Life! "Love is stronger than death" says the Song of Songs (8:6)

Resurrection is a daily reality we experience – something that happens in us, through us and in the whole universe. It is a turning towards greater generosity, self-forgetfulness, over-stepping of boundaries, and an unlimited giving of self in love. It is **the power of Compassion** that reaches out to hold you, to raise you, no matter how deep your fall is; it is the light at the end of the tunnel assuring that "Love will always win!" Resurrection offers us hope, inviting us to move beyond our petty, narrow images of God to believe God's abundance and compassion, the thread that binds all together, beyond race, colour, gender, tribe, culture or religion.



It is said of St. Francis of Assisi that he regarded lepers with disgust. However, once after his conversion, having met with one leper, he stopped, got off his horse, gave him alms and kissed his ulcerous hand. Putting his experience into words he says, "What had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body." "Compassion is a river that overflows into the ocean of love that has no end; it

crosses all borders to embrace the suffering of another." (Ilia Delio)

It is with joy we present to you this volume of **Interconnections** which carries stories or rather real moments/events of **living compassion** by our sisters in the different parts of the Holy Family world. Experiences of being with and being for the most vulnerable in the society– organizing and participating in Human Trafficking Awareness programmes, inter-faith prayer services, working for the most abandoned, those deprived of basic needs even education opportunities; creating ripples of kindness; being in solidarity with the suffering and those deprived of their right to life..... These are some of the touching moments in the apostolic involvements of our sisters. These may appear like "mustard seed" (Matthew 13:32) responses – though 'tiny', will surely grow into large tress of kindness, compassion and communion! Yes, as Jesus says, "If you love

me...., then feed my lamb, tend my sheep...." (Jn. 21:15-19)

As we prepare and open ourselves to receive the Gift of the Resurrection, the Spirit who is given to us, who is with and in us – may the words of Pope Francis ring in our ears; "*God is the One who has already given us hope, and even more makes us "happy in hope. Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us."*

## Here in Rome

**Economy at the service of Mission** was the theme of the seminar organized by SEDOS, from May 2 - 6 at Centro Ad Gentes – a retreat centre in Nemi (Rome). Bernadette Taurinya and Eithne Hughes from the Generalate, participated in this. 141 religious from 52 institutes came together for this occasion.

**“No one can serve two masters you cannot serve both God and money  
“Lk.16: 13**

A panel of religious economists from different continents dealt with this theme, focusing on cultural influence in the treatment of money. Some of the major areas reflected on and brought to conversation were - the influence of culture, Ecology and sustainable development, Economy and communion, the risks of corruption and good practices in a sustained fight against corruption in Church structures and the role people

play – from the Religious Bursar to the Chief financial Officer.

“Our time is terrible and wonderful” – words of Professor Luigino Bruni seem to have emphasised the giftedness of our times hence our responsibility in making it life-giving and life-sustaining!



The seminar had no doubt been a very enriching, insightful and enlightening experience for all those who participated.

## Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

**Because I love Zion... I cannot remain silent. (Is 62, 1)**



The current situation of the DR Congo is very worrying. The consecrated people of the DRC living in Italy and particularly in Rome, do not remain indifferent to this crisis that affects our country. That is why, on Sunday 14 May 2017, they

organized a day of discussion and prayer for the DR Congo. The event took place in the General House of the Missionary Fathers of Africa. A mass was celebrated for this intention. Being present there, I was very touched by the general attitude of the participants: meditation, silence, sadness, impotence, concern for unity and desire to take concrete actions together.

*“The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.” (Einstein)*

On Saturday, May 20, the group was expanded to pray for the end of violence in the great Kasai province and to entrust to the Lord the souls of many victims of the massacres in that region. This time, it was with the comforting presence of Congolese lay people, non-Congolese religious and people of good will who joined us to pray for the DR Congo. Through the intercession of our Lady of the Congo and the blessed Anuarite Nengapeta (Congolese martyr), we prayed for peace in the DRC, for the victims of war and in particular for the victims of the massacres in the Kasai region, for the displaced families, for our



leaders, etc. A short video on the history of the conflicts and the massacres in Kasai was shown. A special quest has been organized for orphans in that region.

At the end of this vigil, I felt comforted. I noticed that everyone was pleased with this mutual support in prayer – a powerful weapon for all Christians and especially for us the consecrated ones.

We note, by the way, that there are many painful events happening in DR Congo of which the media hardly ever speak. On 17 May 2017 more than 3,000 prisoners escaped from the central prison of Kinshasa. No one understands the cause of this escape on this important day for the Congo. DR Congo counts on our special prayer in these tough times.

**Marie Pierre OTIBA**

## No More Trafficking

This was the call on the horsebox that transported the UN GIFT Box around Ireland in March. It travelled from Belfast to Drogheda, Dublin, Limerick, Carlow, Tralee, Galway, Athlone, Maynooth, and finally to Dundalk before returning to its base in Belfast. The organisers, the Loreto Sisters and the faith-based group, APT (Act to Prevent Trafficking), were supported wholeheartedly by the Ministry for Justice and the Garda.

In each town, in collaboration with the local Civic authorities, a suitable location in a public space was found to set up the Box.



Locations chosen were public squares, shopping centres, outside Churches or in Church grounds, a University campus (Maynooth, Limerick). The GIFT Box made of metal, had to be transported from town



to town and then be erected in each location. Many generous volunteers came to our assistance for this task, free of charge.

Most difficult was the task of finding a place where the horsebox could be kept overnight. Building sites that had security men agreed to let it stay with them.

The first step involved recruiting and training volunteers who would be available in rotas to hand out leaflets, speak to people, answer questions, bring them into the box to show the graphic details of what happens to people who are deceived into believing they are going to a better life beyond their own frontiers.

Volunteers were senior secondary school pupils, members of the religious congregations associated with APT, friends and interested people. All of the organisers had already built up core groups of such people through previous awareness raising activities which facilitated the process.

In each town, volunteers worked in shifts of about 2 to 3 hours inviting people into the box, distributing leaflets, engaging people in conversation on the topic. I spent a full day on Monday, 27 March, on my feet on the campus and walking around the streets of Maynooth, with a young student for companion, approaching people and urging them to read the leaflet if they had no time to

stop and talk.

It was interesting to discover how many people were well aware of the issue, were willing to engage with it and wanted to know what they could do, and how many had some idea but were not interested in knowing more. There were also those who were not interested in knowing. We are all accustomed to being accosted on the streets by people from various charities and this experience has made me assess my own reactions to them.

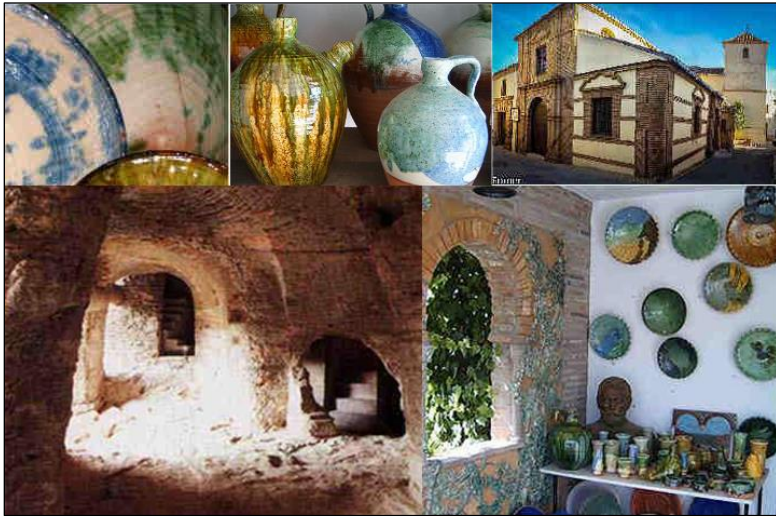


What has this effort achieved? We will not really know but we can hope, and there is reason to believe, that many people are more aware of this awful crime and human rights abuse, and have some idea of how to recognise the signs as well as information about how to report any suspicions they may have.

At our next APT meeting we will be pooling experiences and sharing anecdotes and looking at what lessons are to be learned.

**Síle McGowan, Clane**

## Holy Family in... Coín and Monda



It was in 1975, when the Apostolic Sisters Isabel Montiel, Camino Trapero and M<sup>a</sup> Jesús Goicoechea came to Coín to found a new community, leaving Santurce.

They arrived in a microbus, with some mattresses from the College of Loreto, some furniture and a few other things prepared by the sisters of the "El Monte" college. The generosity of a parish priest, who offered San Sebastian parish house as temporary dwelling, the authorization of a bishop, youthfulness and great availability and dedication were the SEED. Though this article does not carry all the names of the 19 Sisters who lived here, their memory remains in the heart of the people of Coín. They were at first distrusted, and nicknamed as "nuns with loose legs", because they did not live in a convent or wear a religious habit. You would stumble into them in the supermarket; have them as companions in the laundry of a hotel in Marbella or as social workers arranging various documents. Later they got a house in General Rincón Street, then in the Montesol building and finally in San Antonio de Padua. These were humble

places in midst of hardworking and simple people. The Sisters were faced with new challenges and tasks: assigned to different schools, helping children with special needs who could not enter formal education, involved in Junior Movement, dressmaking etc. The gradual integration was such that they even produced flamenco costumes.

### **Beginnings of the Lay Associates**

In COÍN - Our story begins with Antonia Vázquez (year 1988-89), recently deceased, who came every week with other people to the Community to pray. She was accompanied by M<sup>a</sup> Dolores Dolz and, after the tragic accident that cost her life, by Conchita Diaz.

The lay vocation was slowly taking root in Coín and after some hard times during which the group was animated by M<sup>a</sup> Carmen Vilardell, new members joined. The joy of new Associates who, together with the Apostolic Sisters, made the commitment (3 in the early 1990s), the ever deeper knowledge of the Charism of P. B. Noailles, the participation in different national and international meetings and the responsibilities in the National Committee and in the Family Commission, tightened our bonds with the whole Family in Spain and abroad. We have always been very close to other groups - these ties have been particularly close with the groups of Malaga and Alcalá la Real, with whom we have been together not only for inter-vocational meetings but also for some important retreats.

**In MONDA** - This group was formed by very committed people in the parish, who wanted to deepen their Christian faith; consequently 4 of them opted for a specific Holy Family formation and made their commitment on 12 June 2011. They were animated by Ana M<sup>a</sup> Sánchez from Coín.

## A rewarding experience

*"There is no greater joy than to be loved by our sisters."* This comes from the bottom of my heart after having spent almost six months in formation for my perpetual profession in the DR Congo.

I am happy to have lived this rich experience of interculturality, communion and interdependence. It was a time of experiencing joy and love of our sisters and the people; an attitude of openness, attention and mutual respect made me feel at home, feel family. This spirit greatly helped me to follow the formation process adapting easily to this new situation.

I am very grateful to the members of the basic formation team, the Delegation Leadership Team and to all the Sisters. Their gift of self, free sharing and mutual dialogue were a source of deep joy even in the distressing situations and encountering the unknown. This time of my formation was indeed a blessing and so I feel called to become a blessing in turn, to every person and in a special way for the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.

During this time, I have deepened many aspects of community life (vitality in the generous gifts of its members,

The complementarity and the spirit of God Alone were slowly gaining ground. Day by day the dream of the Founder was growing: to make the world a great family of children of God. Today the group comprises of 9 committed members. We grow, share and continue to pray in the Community.

authenticity in the way of doing and being, simplicity in everyday life, dialogue, meetings, mutual acceptance of our differences, empathic listening



(without premature judgment), respect, discretion etc.) I also understood how our life needs to be nourished by our charism of communion, taking into account the new world view. I heard an invitation to cooperation, to interdependence of our common home - a community of sacred life where each in its uniqueness and interdependence demands respect that promotes life.

This awareness helped me to appreciate interculturality as a treasure. I understood that no culture is better than the other but all are in harmony and complementary, contributing to



better mutual understanding and growth. I especially appreciate the richness of our charism of communion, which I call "interconnection". It connects us and reminds us of the complementarity of our five vocations in our religious Family as well as in the universal Church.

While speaking of our founding experiences, I discovered my love story, when the Lord revealed Himself in me; His presence guiding me even in my days of darkness.

I also experienced great joy in seeing how our sisters engage themselves for people

in the pastoral/apostolic fields. They are very close to the most vulnerable, helping them in their hardships.

In short, I understood the gift that we are for the Church and for the world (which I am definitely committed to). It has been a very good Holy Family life experience that invites me to practice. Let us give thanks to God for everything and "let us go forward" in Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

**Verdiane KINUBI, Rwanda**

## The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

**"When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"**

Says the psalmist

As we know, the mandate of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was terminated on 19 December 2016.



On 14 December 2015, the President of the country called for an electoral process and tried to convene a dialogue.

Three months before December 19, 2016, people expressed in different ways their displeasure to have him as the head of the country and obliged him to resign. All

these demonstrations have caused a lot of damage to human lives.

In view of this tension, the dialogue proposed by the president finally took place in October 2016. But this was not acceptable to all the stakeholders and hence non-inclusive.

Considering that the situation went from bad to worse, the president requested the National Episcopal Conference of Congo to intervene towards an inclusive dialogue. This resulted in signing an agreement on 31 December 2016.

This inclusive dialogue was appreciated by everyone and, if respected, was to be a new beginning for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But sadly, despite all efforts and struggles of the National Episcopal Conference to stop the bloodbath and attain peace in the country; despite their time dedicated to allow a new start; despite the intervention of the international community, the dictatorship continues as well as the bloodshed.

The devaluation of the currency accentuates the crisis and misery in the country. People live in misery and uncertainty of the future.

It seems to me justified to pray for all the Congolese people and especially for the political class which is enriched and despises the people.

In spite of our impotence, our hearts do not remain insensitive: novena prayers are organized and we accept some small privations so as to share with the poorest around us. During this month of May we turn to Mary and St Joseph the worker, the model of holiness and compassion.



May this couple capable of disarming anything, intercede with their Son, for the DR Congo and for all the other countries at war or in post-conflict situations!

**Sister Elodie IBWILAKWINGI, DRC**

## A Moment of Joy

It gives me great joy to share my experiences of ministry with you. I offer gratuitous training in Early Childhood Development for pre-school educators in Somalia Park – an in-formal settlement in

Christians and Catholics –and families mostly women headed, with orphans, disabled, mentally challenged, HIV sufferers.

In visiting people there, I heard a call to work with them. Having completed my teacher-training experience and encouraged by my Community, I visited the small pre-schools in Somalia Park and Vosloorus. Discovering that most of the teachers had no training, I set out organising training programmes for them.

In Somalia Park a principal offered me her day care centre - MUSA WE NKOSI (God's Mercy). My main aim was to better equip the pre-school teachers - to provide them with skills and knowledge needed to teach and handle young children, ensuring that they understand the importance of this stage as the Foundation of education and the role they play therein. Two Groups have completed the theory and practice of Early Childhood Development, doing assignments and producing necessary teaching aids - all made with scrap



Vosloorus, a township, in Johannesburg. The development assistance to the township provided by the Government is inadequate; hence people have to work hard for a better living.

Somalia Park is an abandoned settlement, with unmet basic needs. Its people are of different denominations - Methodists, Anglicans, Twelve Apostles, Born again

materials. Encouragingly, the majority of the participants persevered to the end. The certificate awarding ceremony on the last day was a moment of great joy for the teachers and for all of us in the community. Their words addressed to me on this occasion were very touching - *“People are afraid to come to Somalia Park. But you came here to this place and worked with us here. You trained our pre-school teachers. Most of all, you gave us your love. You visited the sick and the lonely”*. I am very happy to work with these loving and welcoming people who always share generously whatever they have. It reminds me of the Widow’s offering challenging me to share my talents with the needy.

This experience encouraged me and with confidence, I began the same in Vosloorus. After some initial struggles, I managed to find a venue free of charge, in the public Library. I try to empower the teachers and give them a sense of worth and self- dignity.



ECD Training Pre-School Graduations 2016 Vosloorus

These are challenging times but with the help of my community I stand strong. I always allow our dear Founder’s words to inspire me **“There is nothing now to check your course - Go Forward”** and the General chapter thrust – **“If you don’t dare now, then when?”** to risk new initiatives!

**Violet Stanislas - Johannesburg**

## Feast of St. Bakhita – human Trafficking Awareness Day 8 Feb 2017

On the Sunday closest to the feast of St Bakhita we organised prayer days and human trafficking awareness events in a

number of parishes around our country of South Africa.



There were two major events in which members of CTIP (Counter Trafficking in Persons) core group organised two marches and interfaith services which took place both in the cities of Pretoria and Polokwane respectively.



### 1. Pretoria

On 9 February we marched through Sunnyside suburb in Pretoria carrying our banners and posters and had ribbons tied around our mouths indicating the silence of victims caught in the trap of the traffickers and unable to speak or free themselves. We ended our march at the Sacred Heart Cathedral. There we held an

interfaith service to pray for victims of this terrible crime and an end to human trafficking.

### 2. Polokwane

In the early hours of Saturday morning, 11 February, seven of us set out for Polokwane, nearly three hours away where we launched *Human Trafficking Awareness Day*, the Catholic Church having partnered with the South African Council of Churches for the occasion. A huge crowd marched from SABC grounds, through the town towards the police station where a memorandum was read out urging the police to up their efforts in seeking out the traffickers and bringing them to book and the Station Commander signed the Memorandum presented to him. We then proceeded to the Sacred Heart Cathedral to have an Interfaith Service. Sister Melanie took this opportunity to speak about the *ins and outs* of human trafficking.

**Sr Melanie O' Connor HF. CTIP**

## Life after WYD 2016

### To leave, return and leave again as the disciples of Emmaus

As you already know, we had some exceptional experiences with our youth before and during the World Youth Days 2016. We want to share with you our life after that event. WYD 2016 was an opportunity for the young people, a time

of grace for our Universal Church and it was especially a time of listening to youth. Personally, we are delighted to see its consequences in the everyday commitment of our young people.

Below are some post-WYD testimonies:

My name is Eric MUKENDI. I attend the MNDA group (Mission Notre-Dame-d'Afrique) where I am a youth animator, co-leader of a group of young people (seventeen to nineteen years old).

In my everyday life, I work, study, play basketball when possible, listen to music, keep myself up to date, and participate in daily mass. It was for the first time that I participated in WYD 2016 in Poland. While preparing for this event, I set myself a goal to be shaped by Christ and to allow God's work of transformation in me, a work already begun. Today, after WYD, the fruits are seen as I continue to be involved in my MNDA group, with a positive and encouraging attitude towards the people I meet. Inspired by the message of mercy reiterated during WYD and the Word of God, I regularly meditate on the Mercy of Christ, His unconditional forgiveness on the cross which also embraces me. This same forgiveness was also granted to the woman caught in the adultery (John 8: 1-11) These are two strong moments that inhabit, inspire and motivate me daily, not to judge or condemn but forgive my neighbour without condition whatever the circumstances are. For this I draw strength from the Word of God (Eph. 4: 31-32; Col. 3: 13-15). Another change, is my participation in the daily Mass where I'm recharged to live a balanced and happy life.

The message of God's Mercy is focused on God as Love, Goodness, Forgiveness, Hope, and Perseverance. Following Christ is a challenge if we consider the things that surround young people today. But let us not forget that Jesus trusted us, that

God created us for happiness, not for sadness or discouragement.



WYD was the most significant experience of my life where I was able to meet young people from all over the world and together praise the Lord.

It is often in our most difficult moments that we learn the concrete reality and it was my case. It was during this trip that I heard the call to gather young people, especially those who went astray, bringing them back to the Church by creating a choir for the GLORY OF GOD.

We are fortunate to have Sister Marcelline WOYO who encourages and supports our choir consisting of about twenty young people. We appreciate the contribution of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux who welcome us in their Youth Centre for various meetings and rehearsals.

The return from Poland was a real shock. I experienced moments when I felt I was going astray, away from God but now I know that all this was a preparation for the person I am today. I realize that WYD was for me more than an encounter with other young people; it was another encounter with Christ. This experience enabled me to discover my mission with young people - of bringing them together around Christ.

**Jean D'Amour**

During WYD, I enjoyed the teachings (catechesis and lectures), the exchanges with other young people, the visit to the historical places and many other activities. My participation in WYD has been an unforgettable experience for me, because I have learned to listen to God, to understand that prayer transforms us and the world. That it is also a way that allows the whole Church to gather together to celebrate her faith in Jesus Christ. I also learned that each day, I have to take a few minutes of silence to be with my God, to listen to Him since He wants to relate to me. We must not always ask for things, but we must know how to take time to listen to God, to abandon ourselves to His free Love and to trust Him.

Since my return from WYD, I pray a lot, I am no longer afraid to speak of my faith when there's an opportunity comes. I feel less resentful towards my neighbour and forgive as often as possible. I ask for grace to learn to remain at peace with myself and with my neighbour. I find myself more involved in the parish community. I feel that God is in my life, that He protects me and I recognize Him in my neighbour. WYD has indeed changed me a lot and I am extremely proud of it. Glory be to God!

**Florence MULUMBA**

**For the Mighty One has done great things for me! (Luke 1, 49)**

I, *Sr Maria*, participated in WYD 2016 in Cracow, Poland, my country. I was very pleased to be among the Poles and also

among thousands of pilgrims who came from all over the world to celebrate their faith.

This experience was a thanksgiving for me; it was a marvellous thing that the Lord did for me. Throughout our pilgrimage along with our youth, I learned confidence in God trusting the words "Do not be afraid". I re-learned to say with faith "Jesus, I trust in you."

The greatest memories of the World Youth Day were the encounter and prayer with Pope Francis and especially with all the young people. The Pope's reminder of the importance of pastoral work in our daily lives helps us to be close to others and also urges us to be merciful like the Father.

Life after WYD is an implementation of all the teachings we received.

We found it important to continue our reflections and to share around the Word of God. Meetings are held once a month at our Holy Family Youth Centre. Our group remains very open to other young people who feel the need or the desire to come and share the Word of God with us. It is a time of grace, much appreciated by everyone; we find ourselves gathered around the Word of God to advance together towards our God who loves us so much, with an unconditional Love.

**Sr Maria ROGALSKA & Sr Aldegonde MBALANDA, Canada**



## As I Walk Down the Memory Lane.....

Living in a predominantly Muslim country as a missionary I reminiscence the challenges and demands that I have experienced in Kohat. With a Muslim majority, only one fourth of the children are Christians, coming from very poor families who are domestic workers for the armed forces, earning a meagre income. Educating these children is a big challenge and is the only force that can liberate them from poverty and misery.

The situation in Kohat has undergone a vast change owing to terrorism. Entrance to areas where Christian families live, which we visited earlier without any restriction is forbidden by the army. We are pressurized by the intelligence for the fact of being missionaries with restricted freedom of movement. We also have constant threats from terrorists. Amidst great challenges, we courageously find ways of reaching people in need, to be of support to them. In all this, our hope is only in God, who is our protector.

Poverty is another form of terror which has gripped our people denying them and their children a decent living. Recently one mother with four children, who have never been to school, approached me. Her only desire is to educate the children but the father is a drug addict and she herself is a TB patient and has no means of educating the children. I was moved in listening to her pathetic situation which made me to appeal to some generous

people who were willing to help the children.

This is one of the many stories we hear every day and we feel called to be in solidarity with our poor people who are plagued by various forms of sufferings. I often recall Pope John Paul's words in '*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*' - "solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, on the contrary it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good..... because we are all really responsible for all."



Our Founder too wants us to face challenges and difficulties, move from our comfort zones to work tirelessly for the kingdom living the compassionate love of our God. The words of our Founder often resonate in us, "Go forward nothing can stop your cause."

**Sr. Jenet Perera - Pakistan**

## Love is contagious

A Mission almost impossible but still continued by whom God has called and all who love God. This mission is all about love, communion and the effort to live this communion wherever one serves God in God's people. When the struggle is over and even when one has to move to another place, the mission goes on. This is what I have experienced as a T P sister through the life of the missionary sisters.



In fact, I was reluctant to accept my recent transfer to Gojra. Being away from this diocese for a long time, I felt somewhat like a stranger; but to my surprise I found many familiar faces – kids I have taught, now in their youth. Once incident awakened me to be in touch with my own way of relating to people. It was a Christmas program for Sunday school children. I overheard a conversation between two young girls -

one saying to the other “this is the sister who taught me when a kid”. Then she shared with me the past memories of how the sisters looked after them so lovingly. This struck a chord in me, making me question as to how I approach people who are longing for love and concern as I engage in the mission of Jesus.

This girl was our former driver's daughter, now a teacher. Later, when I visited her in her place she is giving tuition to the children weak in their studies. It was a joy for me to see her continuing the work which our sisters could not do in that situation.

I am reminded of the passage about real love. “Christian life is an evolution in love, living the beatitudes of poverty, peace, charity and humility in ways that what separate, creating unities. Love us not to sink into the status quo. It is the new spirit of catholicity, of whole making, that emerged in the life of Jesus the dynamism of liberating love. We need a new way of acting and being in the world that broadens diversity, deepens interiority and strengthens the bonds of communion.” (Conscious Love International Bursars Session)

**Sr.Josphine Emanuel - Pakistan**

## Extra – judicial killing

Catholic Laity, Priests, and grieving Families gathered together on March 2 at National Shrine of Our Mother of

Perpetual Help in Parañaque City for the Eucharistic Celebration for the Victims of Extra-Judicial Killings (EJK). It was called



HEMA (Holy Eucharist Mass- Action). The gathering was for the **7000+** victims of Extra-Judicial Killings tagged to Drug Eradication Drive throughout our land and to listen together to the cries of their bereaved family members. It was an action in solidarity with them and an expression of unity against the injustices in the country.

The atmosphere in the Church was so touching that it united all the participants to those families in grief. It was an emotional moment when the families went in processions carrying pictures of their loved ones and their babies. I felt the pain of losing a loved one but the pain I had was far from their pain.

During the homily, some family members of the victims were invited to give testimonies. This sharing brought all to tears, including my classmates who were foreigners, who did not understand the language but felt the pain of the family. My heart was pierced when a young girl shared how her family members were killed inside their house. I could vibrate with the immense suffering of the families caused by this war on drugs. Out of those who lost their lives, some were innocent, some being used and others mistaken

## Glory and Praise to you my Lord

It not easy for someone to share one's God experience. I might say that this is the beginning of my own conversion. I had been asking for the grace to know "what I really am". One day God's touched me and I felt myself as a hard stone-most

identity. I experienced the difference between awareness and being with the real suffering people, living in fear, having no voice!



I was grateful for this opportunity to be in solidarity with our people, our presence assuring moral support and strength to express their truth. Reflection on the situation of our Country makes me realize how our government and its leaders have distanced themselves from the people, from Justice, Truth, Freedom, the Right to Live and Respect for Human Dignity. This activity made a strong impact in my life, to take up the challenge to become the Voice of the Voiceless – who are my sisters and brothers, and to be daring in taking steps for those who are in life threatening situations.

**- Sr. Liezl Esteves -  
Sauyo Community- Philippines**

insensitive with no feelings what so ever. All that I could do then was to surrender myself totally to Him. In my emptiness and nothingness I could completely depend on the Lord and His grace.

It was at a time like this that I heard the sad news of my mother's illness. I prayed for courage to accept His will regarding my family. I went through an inner struggle - to say "yes" to the Lord or to go back to my mother. At this moment I drew strength and courage from the Word of God - "One who trusts in the Lord will see marvellous things". Then with trust, determination and a firm heart I could say 'your will be done in my regard'. Thanks to my superiors, I was allowed to go to India to be with my mother who was hospitalized. Sad to mention that after a surgery and much suffering she passed away. My sister and I faced this situation with much courage. I surrendered to God, trusting the words "the Lord is my strength I have nothing to fear". At this moment God's loving providence was experienced through my aunty who supported us. I am grateful to our Indian Sisters whose presence and help were a source of great strength and courage. I praise and thank Jesus for accompanying and strengthening us in the midst of these



painful experiences. Later, I returned peacefully to my community in Nagoda to continue my formation.

The various elements lived within the contemplative community fostered my vocation more intensely. During the moments of silence and solitude and even at work, I am able to communicate and be united to Jesus. Bringing all my brothers and sisters to the Eucharist and into my prayer I'm able to unite to their needs and sufferings as my own. In community I experience family spirit as I come to know and accept the other; share life together and am encouraged in my vulnerability. My continuous effort and struggles is to remain closely united to Jesus wherever I am and this I know is what I'm called to in this way of life. I take care of nature with great interest and am happy to deepen my spirit of interconnectedness to creation, enjoying the beauty and variety of both flowering and non-flowering plants in my little garden. This too deepens the contemplative dimension of vocation. Thus I can sing "PRAISE THE LORD".

**Sr. Sagaya Mary, Contemplative  
Sri Lanka**

## **Our Journey in Sri Lanka**

Any journey in life - the beginning is never easy but reaching the goal is always possible when we walk with God,

listening to God's call and responding in love.

We Raza, Tehmina, Shameem, Robina - Novices from Pakistan are eager to share

our joyful journey in Sri Lanka, moving towards our “promised land”. We, four young and energetic women experience God through the whole of creation. We find that the dream of our Founder is being fulfilled here, having unity in diversity. Although we are from different places and cultures, we feel one. True, beginnings are always difficult - getting adjusted to food, environment etc. was difficult as we started life here - but gradually we are becoming familiar to our new reality!

We are a vibrant community living family Spirit, trying to accept one another with open, loving hearts which helps us to go forward. Our merciful God is leading us through our Sisters to deepen our faith by means of all that we learn. We learn to accept and appreciate self with gratitude, to choose freely and surrender ourselves to God. The knowledge of the emerging view of the Universe is very surprising, at times disturbing but is an unlearning and learning process. We are beginning to see everything in a new light being gently guided in discussions, sharing and in receiving energy from God and his Word. We are in the process of integrating the new understanding of Vowed life for mission. No doubt, regular visits of our Unit Leaders and Formation team members nourish and encourage us.



We are grateful to God who has called us to the Holy Family Association. The values lived in the home of Nazareth, by the early Christians, our Founder and early mothers open us to the present context we live in. We experience that our call to religious life frees us to be given for mission, only if we interiorize and

practice authentically in daily living, what we learn during this time of our formation.

Our weekly apostolic involvement - teaching English to children brings us joy,

especially in being with them and their parents. We have built good relationship with people whom we find very simple, generous and are happy to have us.

During this time of grace, we experience growth socially, spiritually, physically and intellectually, and hope to be vibrant disciples / Apostles in the future! We keep you all in our prayer as we count on yours.

**Raza, Tehmina, Robina and Shameem**

**1st year Novices  
Sri Lanka**



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