



Interconnections

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INFO/COM SERVICE



*"Make the Lord
Glorified"*

EUROPE

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"Our Founder Pierre Bienvenu was called and sent on a journey of faith without a roadmap, or even a road, but with a vision, a Presence and a purpose: to gather together in communion the scattered children of God. He tranced out a path for us in the footsteps of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Successive Holy Family generations continue forging this path."

(Choosing Life)



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EDITORIAL



The world in which we live changes every day. The fast growth of technology demands that each species in the world make a change. We need a change; we need a transformation, but we never forget the purpose of our existence and the reality of our lives.

The month of June invites us to celebrate two important Feasts as a family: June 12 and 29, the feast of **Our Lady of All Graces**, and the feast of **Saints Peter and Paul (Founder's Feast Day)**. We are all familiar with the life history of our Founder and how he changed his old ways in order to embrace the love of God and serve humanity. Mother Mary played a vital role in his life, and he experienced her motherly care, guidance, and total transformation in his life at the church of St. Sulpice, Paris. He told us that *"I heard her voice; she called me,*

showed me the way, I understood everything".

The island of Our Lady of All Graces in Martillac, which was built by our Founder, expresses his devotion to her. He always wrote the rules for our Big Family under her protection.

Secondly, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul expresses that God chose the vulnerable and sinners to carry out his mission to the entire creation. Like these disciples, our Founder too was called after the turmoil of the French Revolution to serve humanity in his era.

Our Founder always had the option of helping the poor and neglected in society. He always shared with them whatever he had for his livelihood. He spent his time with them in listening, carrying, and searching for them. God used him as an instrument. Therefore, the people called him **"The Good Father"**.

We, the children of our Good Father, are continuing the same mission in the world where we are present today. Our mission, our presence, and our services are not limited to a particular person or group but it is for all...

Our Founder says, *"Whether you are a small or a large number, whether you are far away or near, the aim is the same; and with these thoughts of faith you will be more generous still in fulfilling the duties your holy Rules impose on you.*

(Selected Text. 21)

THE JOY OF SHARING MY JOURNEY...



On the occasion of the celebration of 60 years as a Holy Family Sister, I have been asked to share something of what I have lived, and I do it with joy and affection for all of you.

Since my novitiate, the desire to seek that **"God Alone"** that I heard so much about and that attracted me so much has been a constant in me. That is why I believed that, leaving my country, my family, my studies, which interested me so much, I would be able to encounter more deeply that God who was so mysterious to me, but who attracted me so strongly.

So it was that I went to Paraguay; there I arrived at a mission of indigenous groups from different parts of the country: another completely different reality, other cultures, different ages, different ways of life... who have given me so much, I could also make my own that phrase that is so often repeated: **"the poor have evangelised me"**.

One fine day in 1973 I was asked to come to Rome, to the General House, to be part of the International Information Service. I was to be a member of the Local Community, a strongly multicultural community. From the beginning we worked as a team. The work was rich and varied. I got to know the Institute and the Family better.

My interpersonal relationships were further enriched when, in response to a call from the Vicar of Rome to increase the presence of Religious on the outskirts of the city, volunteers from the General House formed a community in a

neighbourhood on the outskirts of Rome: Montespaccato.

Most of the people there worked outside all day and returned home in the evening. We had the same rhythm as the people: during the day we worked at the General House and in the evening we went back to Montespaccato. Often people invited us to dinner and shared their problems, worries and joys. 11 years of building a Christian Community around the Word of God, and enjoying simple relationships with the people which continue to this day.

The 20th General Chapter was a time to stand up as an Institute and look at our situation. There is a word that resonates, it is repeated: **"intercultural communities"**, without realising that we have already taken some steps in this direction because there are many multicultural communities in the Institute; I have lived and am currently living in one of them. Among the questions I am asked in this interview, the subject of interculturality comes into play.

Before I continue, I would like to say something that we have already known for a long time: we are living multiculturalism and we are moving resolutely towards a real interculturality. I am asked what gives me the strength to live this. The response is grace, which in real life translates into respect, esteem, openness, the capacity to marvel... and the wish of our Founder: to live unity in diversity: **"Nothing now can check your course, go forward!"**

Maria de Lourdes de la Fuente
Generalate, Rome.

BEING A MISSIONARY EVERYWHERE ...

After 46 years of missionary work in Africa, when I returned, I felt like a stranger in my own country.

Today, at my age, I would still like to be useful where I can be of service. Talking with my Sisters in my community helped me find opportunities to be useful. Near our home is the "**Vincentian Social Centre**", which has a charitable drop-in centre: a non-profit association of social service to welcome people who are sick, in great distress, or homeless. The homeless can shower, shave, have a coffee and even an all-you-can-eat breakfast, take away a parcel, and even clothes. The most interesting thing is the "weaving" of relationships between them, the volunteers, and me. The volunteers accepted me and gave me the task of talking to the people who use the center. Sitting at the same table, chatting, and asking them for news is a welcome gesture of equality for these people whose dignity is wounded. For my part, I know something of their world, and I want to be an attentive and liberating listener, despite my limitations. Like Jesus, who was attracted by the little ones who were poor in heart, who had nothing to show, and who manifested himself to them.

The bread to give in the streets around us.

Every time I see a poor person, it is a confrontation, and I feel indebted to them. We know that uneaten food ends up in the rubbish, often the poor empty the bins at night in search of food or anything else they need.

The sisters in my community observed that there was food thrown away in the garbage of the restaurant in front of our house. We agreed with the owner of the restaurant to collect at the end of the day what was not sold (which was going to

the garbage) so as to distribute it to the poor.

In the evening, I collect the leftovers, and then the Sisters help me prepare carefully. The next day, I leave with the cart to look for friends in the streets of our neighborhood.

It is a relationship of friendship that I try to have with these people. By asking the question, "**Have you had breakfast?**", the dialogue continues, the friendship is strengthened, and I have the impression that I have gained a brother or sister.



One of them is Polish, sad because he slept under the colonnade of the Vatican in the cold and had his blankets stolen eight times. To come and beg, he dragged his briefcase with his few belongings; he walks with two crutches. He wanted a bed and a place to take a shower. I tried to help him, but without success. I thought it would be better to ask the Pope's chaplain at the Vatican, and he replied kindly. I appreciate his availability, and within two minutes we were in front of this man, who explained his case in Polish because the monsignor is Polish. They agreed to transfer him near Tiburtina

Station to a center where there is also medical care. We became great friends. He comes back to beg; he takes bread, says what he needs. There is nothing more beautiful in the world than making someone happy with small things.

On the first Tuesday of every month, I volunteer with the Sisters of St. Teresa of Calutta in the Vatican, who house between 15 and 20 homeless women. I help prepare the meals. Afterwards, I meet the women and spend time talking to them. Sometimes the Ambassador offers meals that she has prepared beautifully. It is a pleasure to see this procession of women in elegant clothes serving their delicious meals with such refinement, and it is a feast for all.

Sr. Franca Leone

Via dei Gracchi, Italy, Rome

“I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME ...” (Matthew 25:33)

Hosting refugee women

One of the greatest challenges faced by the people supported by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is the lack of accommodation and the financial support needed for the essentials of life. Take, for example, a bed to sleep in at night: destitute asylum seekers are often forced to seek rest on night buses, rely on friends who might let them ‘sofa surf’ for a night or two, get a place in a night shelter or find a space, often outdoors, where they can pass the night. They are also dependent on charitable organisations or friends for food, other necessities, and legal aid etc. Here in Britain, this reality of destitution can last for years. Most have suffered trauma and gone through loneliness, fear, pain and suffering beyond anything we could ever imagine.

Given the opportunity to spend time in safety and security in a host family or a community is a great help as, free from preoccupation for their safety and the day-to-day struggle for survival, they can give attention to other aspects of the realities of daily life and all the privileges we take for granted.

“We want people to maintain their independence and strength in a system that is incredibly disempowering and takes away agency. In accompanying refugee friends, we are recognising the intrinsic dignity in every human being, and recognising that respectful encounter is essential for humans to flourish. Having safe and stable shelter is integral in allowing refugee friends to begin rebuilding their lives and becoming more independent. With such limited choices, the security of a home provides invaluable respite to refugee friends forced into destitution” (JRS)



During the past 6 years, two of our communities in London, St. Gabriel’s Road and Clapham, have hosted refugee women 15 times for a period of 4 to 6 months and, on occasions, longer. We aim to provide a safe and welcoming space where each one can feel at home. Our experience has been positive both for our guests and ourselves. In doing so we receive a little insight into the painful reality of countless numbers of people who become refugees in our world today. It enables us to be more open, sensitive, and alert to the injustices inherent in a system that marginalises suffering people.

It is a gift and a grace to be able to share our home and offer support to these vulnerable women. In the words of P.B.N., **the invitation is to “share with them as far as you can, all the fatigues, the trials and the dangers of the journey”** and as Pope Francis states: No one must be excluded. God’s plan is essentially inclusive and gives priority to those living on the existential peripheries. Among them are many migrants and refugees, displaced persons, and victims of trafficking. The Kingdom of God is to be built with them, for without them it would not be the Kingdom that God wants.

Sr.Margaret Muldoon
Britain & Ireland



THE HOLY FAMILY IN SPAIN SHARES

Before we start sharing, we would like to put you in context. The Province of Spain has a long history, having been founded in 1844. At the moment, the average age is 85 years, and it has 16 communities, four of which are infirmaries with communities of about 30 Sisters each.

You ask us for experiences; our lives, because of the number of Sisters and the number of years, are full of experiences that are rich because of the strength of the testimony that they have left in the places where they have lived. We pass on to you some voices that alone speak of experiences lived in different milieus. You may say they are just voices, but these voices speak, without saying so, of lived experiences.

"Responding to the needs of the environment, the Sisters of the Holy Family, are women for others, building the family of the children of God by their relationships and their response to the needs".

"The relationship with the other Religious of the town and villages has been an experience of Family, of Communion: all at the service of the people, of the neediest, each one from her Charism, but in the town and for the people" (I.M.)

Recently, we have experi-



enced the closure of communities in peripheral neighborhoods, rural areas, and schools that shared life. Some voices express their experience:

"Thank you for always wanting to build unity so that the people were involved in many events: "Manos Unidas" marches, Hunger Day, Urban Camps... Some people would not be what we are without them, if they had not put a

light in our lives".

There were also testimonies from some Associates:

"In them we have the keys to live the radicality of the gospel, a gospel incarnated in the parishes, giving testimony of faith in the only way that this is authenticated, real commitment. Uniting faith and justice is something that they make a reality, day by day".

"I bless God for giving us such a dedicated, welcoming, fra-

ternal, and luminous Family as this Community of the Holy Family."

Different ways of expressing our experiences in different contexts. They are very concrete experiences of life behind the words that were dedicated to us.

The sharing of the Charism has been very diverse, as have the contexts. We have shared our lives.

In the insertion communities, living as the Family of Nazareth has challenged both the

environment and the clergy. Working as a part of the environment, an open house, inserted in the parish, responding according to the needs.

When they saw our way of living, they asked us questions, and we shared our "Holy Family", what we wanted to make of the world: the Family of the Children of God. They see our preference for working with and for the marginalized.

We have had occasions to share the Charism in meet-

ings of the Conference of Religious, in different parishes, through magazines, radio, television, etc. Family celebrations held in the parish community have been occasions to share the Charism.

In the infirmaries, we are struck by the comments made by those who visit us and those who work with us: "We see the Sisters happy," and those around them appreciate the quality of their lives.

Sr. Anunciación ESTEVE
Spain



THE CHURCH IS A FAITH-FILLED AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY

- A testimony

One beautiful March morning in 2005, I truly became a child of God through the Sacrament of Baptism, and it was there, in the parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Biłgoraj, that I was solemnly incorporated into the community of the Church 18 years ago. My love for God and the Church was born in me from an early age in a special way by my beloved grandmother Marysia, who taught me how to pray and took me to Mass almost every day. I looked with admiration at the altar servers and their special service in the church at the altar. I very much wanted to become one of them as that young boy. As

early as 2013, I became an altar boy and began to experience God and His power manifested in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, which I have since come to love with all my heart; it has become for me the bread of life and, as Blessed Carlo Acutis said, 'the highway to heaven'. In the Eucharist, I experience a God who shortens the distance and comes to me, so humble in this small Host and gives himself totally. The Eucharist gives me power and strength, transforms and renews my life, and gives me the certainty that God is with me whatever happens in my life. Where the Eucharist is

celebrated, there is my centre in the world and in life.

The Holy Spirit, the third divine person, is and works in the Church. In June 2020, when I received the sacrament of Confirmation, He descended on me with all His power, and I received His holy gifts and opened my life to His action even more widely than I had already during the period of preparation for receiving this sacrament. I began to discover how beautiful the Church is and how much beauty and goodness there is in it. In August of the same year, I met the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and I started to go all over

Poland on vocation retreats, where I met many young people like me who love God with all their hearts and want something more in life; they want heaven.

The real adventure began when, on my way to a vocation retreat in Odra in south-west Poland, I stopped in Lodz and met the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, which was theoretically a complete coincidence, but as I am firmly convinced, it was the Holy Spirit through people who made it happen. Since then, my life has really changed a lot. I have found and been given the community I was looking for. In July 2021, we established a community that is growing steadily and from which there

is so much good—my beloved, - 'Correctional'. Although we are different and there are sometimes quite a few quarrels, we are all grateful to God that we have such a community where we can mutually support each other and lead each other towards God and, most importantly, where He is there and works Himself and sends people—Father John, Brother Jack, Sister Wiola, Beata, Monika, and Aneta—who host us in their home every month, build relationships with us, open their hearts, and love with all their hearts. We go on many trips together. One that was particularly memorable was the Festival of Life, where we met together with 1,000 young people who had come

because they had accepted the invitation of the Holy Spirit to meet and, together with young hearts, adore God, enrich each other, and rejoice in faith and in the fact that **we are all the CHILDREN of our LOVED FATHER IN HEAVEN.** And this is what the Church is about—not some old and bitter institution, but a community full of life and faith. The Church is the people with whom I walk together towards holiness and salvation. **The Church is my home, a community that I love with all my heart and in which I feel loved.** It is in the Church that I find Christ. It is in it that I was baptized and that I wish to live forever with Christ.



Maciej Bukarewicz
Member of Holy Family Youth
POLAND

"THE DYNAMICS OF THE PROVISIONAL"

"So I went down to the potter's house and found him working at the wheel. But the vessel he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so he crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over." (Jer 18:2-4)

This text of the potter who finds something wanting in his vessel and starts again illustrates well the challenges that await us in our France-Belgium network.

To accept that the vessel we worked so hard to make is not the right one and, without getting discouraged, to continue the work with love...

Each clay is different; some resist high temperatures, while others crumble or crack. Each piece of pottery has its own shape, its own color, and its own unique character. Working with fragility, first my own and that of others. Our communities are fragile, but they are beautiful because each one is called to surpass itself. It is not easy every day to see one's capacities diminish and to have to face the daily demands and welcome different forms of dependence. This sometimes leads to conflicts; it is inevitable, but it is the going beyond, overcoming what hurts us, that allows each one to grow in love. To look kindly on our vulnerability and on this capacity for resilience is a gift that we receive and that allows us to keep the confidence that the Lord is the artist who shapes our lives.

The responses to the evaluation requested by the Chapter were a real gift. All the communities and almost all the Sisters participated. What stands out in the reading and touches the members of the Council is the peace and serenity with which they look at their lives even through the difficulties, showing how



much they keep alive that little flame of hope that the world needs so much! A challenge for our Network is not **"to quench the dimly-burning wick"**.

Projects, beautiful projects - we try to continue to make them because we know that they are a source of life, but we have to face the unforeseen and accept that what we have thought today may not be realized tomorrow. To live what Roger Schutz called *"the dynamic of the provisional"*. It is not easy every day, but like the potter, we take up the pot repeatedly.

The challenges are many, and the task is beyond us. If some count their novices, we count our centenarians. We are proud of these women who have lived through time and are here today to remind us of the price of life. Taking care of this life remains our main task today, as does continuing to make the heritage that has been entrusted to us bear fruit in order to pass it on to future generations.

France-Belgium Network

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS AT WORK...

When unexpected buds appear on the branches, the Holy Spirit is at work and tells us to move forward...

At the time of the Continental Meeting of the Americas, which took place in Canada in 2010, the Unit of Canada was facing its destiny, its future. Until then, we had sown abundantly and especially among the youth: spiritual accompaniment, formation of Christian groups with young girls, missionary projects, Bible camps, formation of young leaders, etc...

In those years, the context of the Church in Quebec, and even more so today, was very difficult. A great majority openly expressed their hostility to the Church and to the Christian faith. Our Sisters were advancing in age, and most had withdrawn from apostolic commitments.

Before arriving at this Continental Meeting, I had made a firm choice about my involvement with youth. It was over forever. I was heading for other commitments, given that I too was getting on in years. Between the youth and me, there were several generations. We had no other Sisters to take up the challenge of the future.

However, at the 2010 Meeting, they really insisted that I commit myself again to the youth. I finally accepted with great reluctance and faith. I said to myself, ***"Lord, who will roll away the stone?"***, because it seemed like an insurmountable challenge.

At a Provincial Assembly, in the presence of all the Sisters, we presented the following



dilemma: *do we want Holy Family continuity in Canada or do we want to end our days among ourselves as serenely as possible?*

The assembly unanimously decided in favor of continuity. From this, two multicultural communities were born, whose priorities were the evangelization of youth and the proposal of our Holy Family charism.

This year, we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of these two communities, whose mission is alive and well, even though it is demanding. In our Holy Family tree, we see Holy Family buds appearing: young couples, consecrated seculars, youths, and the "Nazareth Children" Even groups from that earliest time hour are bearing new buds.

For the moment, there is no lack of harvest, but the workers are few.

It is by walking in the Holy Spirit that the path is traced. It reminds us of the words of Jesus: **"I am the Resurrection and the life"**.

And then, one fine morning, as if by magic, the stone was

rolled away... Since that day, we are on the road, and we are going straight ahead, letting ourselves be carried away by the great wind of Pentecost.



Sr. Paulette Lambert

Canada



31ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOLY FAMILY LAY ASSOCIATES...



On April 30, the Apostolic Sisters, Lay Associates, and Consecrated Seculars met together for thanksgiving to celebrate the **31st anniversary of Lay Associates of Bordeaux in Lima, Peru.** We are happy that we all belong to the Great Family of PBN.

On this special day, we remembered the seven Associates who have gone to their heavenly home and joined our Founder. We are grateful to them for the witness of their life and the en-

couragement they gave us. Thanks to our Apostolic and Secular Sisters who accompanied us in the very moving Mass that strengthened our commitment to continue being shepherds after the example of the Good Shepherd, Jesus, and for the sharing during the reunion that **rejoiced our spirit.**

Remembering the words of our beloved founder, PBN, **GO FORWARD! "GROW IN NUMBERS AND VIRTUES"**, let us continue to live and instill our charism of **"Being and Making Family in the World"** following the example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

(Source: Facebook, Asociados Peru)



AN ACT OF HUMANITY

In preparation for the Lenten season (on Ash Wednesday), Sr. Baptistina Tlhakola (in charge of the boarders) gave a reflection on Lent. This reflection was focused mainly on the pillars of this season: **prayer, almsgiving, and sacrifice.** In response to the reflection, St. Mary's High School boarders decided to sacrifice the little they had from their daily allowance money to give to the poor in the area. With the funds raised, they managed to buy food items and pack them into parcels before giving them away to the poor. On behalf of the students, Sr. Baptistina presented the parcels to the 11 selected people.

They also presented some funds to a disabled businessman. The man had been spotted by the students on National Television asking for funds to re-open his business, which had faced closure during the COVID-19 movement restrictions.

The students also expressed their gratitude to the Oblate community, which is ever-present and available for their spiritual needs. They presented the community with their token of appreciation.



Lastly, they presented more parcels and goodies to the elderly Sisters living in Amand Noailles. This little act of kindness brought a lot of joy to the elderly community, which in turn blessed them and promised them prayers. All the recipients and beneficiaries could not contain their joy and continuously blessed the girls. The hall was filled with emotion, and it was beautiful viewing the faces of the residents of Ha-Mafefoane, the home-village of the 11 recipients. "The girls really lived up to their motto, 'Nisi Dominus: If the Lord is not the builder, the effort of the builders is in vain.'" said one of the elderly sisters.

The boarders: St. Mary's High School

Lesotho

DIAMOND JUBILEE: 75 YEARS OF THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY FAMILY IN DR. CONGO



The solemn opening of the jubilee took place in March 2022, in all the communities of the province, with the Eucharistic celebration and other planned activities.

In the diocese of Idiofa, in the parish of Kilembe, which was the *first place of insertion of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in the DR Congo, this jubilee was celebrated on February 11, 2023*, the memorial date of the arrival of the founding sisters on Congolese soil, precisely in the said parish of Kilembe.

Everything began with the Pilgrimage of the Holy Family, which was prayed in a spirit of recollection and interiorization: a walk during which we remembered the journey made by our pioneer Sisters, the founders of the PBN family in the DR Congo. It was also a

time to express our gratitude and recognition for their sacrifices in leaving their comfort to join the small people in an adventure of faith in Jesus Christ and for their efforts to extend the charism of the Holy Family, which is currently rooted in Congolese soil. Many Christians from the parish joined us for this prayer.

The pilgrimage was followed by a Eucharist celebrated by Abbe Dieudonné Gabidi, the Parish Priest, in the presence of several Sisters of the Holy Family from different communities of the Congo and the visiting General Councillor Geni Dos Santos. During this Mass, among the lay associates, 42 couples made their first commitment to the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles; 12 renewed their commitment; and two were married.

A social evening closed this important day in the history of the Holy Family in the DR Congo. Let us note in passing that the Sisters are no longer in this parish, this community has been closed for several years, but the positive testimony of the Christians on the dynamism and the involvement of the Lay Associates in the parish was quite remarkable. The presence of Sister Géni, a member of the General Council, on a visit to the Congo, was an encouragement to the Province.

It is worth noting that after this great celebration in Kilembe, each community in turn celebrated the jubilee in its own milieu. Below are the experiences of the communities of Banda, Gungu, and Ngashi.

Community of Gungu



We, Apostolic Sisters and Lay Associates, closed the Jubilee of 75 years of our presence in the D.R. Congo in our local church on March 19, 2023, on the feast of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Mass was presided over by Father Célestin Kikala in the parish of Sainte Famille de Nazareth in Gungu. During his homily, the priest reminded us of the role of Saint Joseph in the lives of Jesus and Mary, and he invited us to live in simplicity and humility to have a taste for work well done. The celebrant also praised and congratulated the great work that the Sisters of the Holy Family are doing in Gungu, namely the care and education of young girls.

At the end of the celebration, the Lay Associates gave a speech on the history of the arrival of the Sisters in Gungu on October 12, 2003, emphasizing the message of the late Bishop Munutu, then Bishop of the Diocese of Kikwit, who said on that day: "The presence of the Sisters and the



Associates is an opportunity for our diocese. On this occasion, the grotto of Yetu High School, managed by the Holy Family Sisters, was inaugurated.

Community of Lakas

The community of Lakas joyfully celebrated the jubilee of 75 years of the presence of the Holy Family in the DRC, precisely in our community of insertion, which is Lakas.

It all started with a series of activities: recollection, confer-

ence, theatre, etc. Sunday, March 19, 2023, was a special day that began with a Eucharistic celebration in the parish of Our Lady of Fatima, presided over by Abbé Aimé Kibwebe, the Parish Priest, and sung by the pupils of the Lycée Sa-Ngol, run by the Sisters of the Holy Family. In his homily, the celebrant recalled that the gift of the charism of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles is very precious in the world, in the church, and in our parish. At the end of the Mass, the floor was given to Sister Rita

Mapuku, who gave a brief presentation of the Family, the Founder, the charism, the spirituality, and her mission.

This jubilee event was a time of renewal for us, a time of awareness of our role as members, and a call for us to be pioneers for future generations.

We feel encouraged and sustained by the grace of God that accompanies us on our journey as the family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.

Community of Banda

We, the Apostolic Sisters and

Lay Associates, experienced the Jubilee celebration with the Christians of Banda. A conference was given the day before on the origin of the Holy Family of Bordeaux and the richness of its charism.

At the end of the conference, a time of exchange and questions and answers was given to the listeners, who were very interested and expressed their feelings of joy for our presence and our commitment in different apostolates and in community life, which for them are visible witness. In their interventions, some spoke of our first founding Sisters of the

community of Banda, of the experience of communion, of the promotion and guidance of women, without forgetting that of the young mother, the care of the sick and the poor, and finally the pastoral work in the villages. An invitation was launched to the young people in this way: "The Sisters have given themselves and continue to give themselves for us; commit yourselves also to serve the Lord like them so that the work and mission of evangelization continue from generation to generation. A Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated on April 23, 2023, on the third Sunday of Easter.

The magazine Telama

Province of R. D. Congo/Burkina Faso

ON THE PERIPHERY: THE CALL TO CREATE A MOBILE COMMUNITY

Initiating mobile communities was a convincing request made by the Unit Chapter in 2022. The "Mission Team," as termed, was entrusted with the responsibility of finding an appropriate place that would demand 'our walking with the people'. After exploring, discussing, and studying different places in the unit, the leadership team discerned to open the first mobile community in Pitipana, Negombo.

Reading the context of Pitipana, Negombo:

A traditional Catholic fishing-village consisting of 3500 Catholic families sits on the

west coast of Sri Lanka in Negombo, which is known as "Little Vatican". The fishing sector contributes significantly to the economy of the island, meeting the needs of the people who consume more seafood than meat. Walking on the sandy beach of the village, hearing the sounds of waves crashing against the shore, and breathing in the salty air, gives immense joy to anyone, yet beneath the beauty of the seashore lie the untold stories and the sub-optimal living standards of some fishing families. Some of them settled on land that belongs to the



state; therefore, they do not have legal ownership of their land. Fishing and related activities remain the main economic means of the village. Nevertheless, the fishing sector in the whole country faces a watershed moment due to the current economic crisis in the country. More than half of the fishing community cannot

engage in fishing at present, mainly due to the hike in fuel prices and runaway inflation in the country. On the other hand, the government has not paid attention to the plight of the fishing community, due to which the family life of many fishing families is undergoing hardships. Alcoholism and domestic violence in fishing households are other main concerns that need to be dealt with. Apart from these, early marriages among young girls and drug addiction among youngsters, including school-children, are other invisible factors in



the community. There are well-to-do families in the village, yet many people are in need of counseling due to various family issues. This reading of the context of the people demands that we stay and journey with the people in Pitipana - a call that we heard from God.

New Beginning

7th January 2023 was a memorable day, as we initiated our journey together with the people in Pitipana with the blessings of God in the presence of Sr. Chandani Jayasuriya and her Council, the Parish Priest, and the Kepungoda community to which we are currently attached. We, the

three members—Shiromi, Rasika, and Mangala—are in the community, supported in our mission by the Kepungoda community. Belonging to a community and being aware that the community has a mission gives us the vision to move forward. Every Monday, coming together as one community is a joyful moment

when we share our joy and sorrow, our struggles, and our experiences with one another. It is the moment when we gain the strength and support of the community, which reminds us that we are sent by the community on mission.

Journeying together with the people:

We strongly felt the need to visit families in order to help us get closer to people around us and make us aware of the purpose of our existence as Religious in this area. Every family welcomes us with much joy and spends time in conversation with us, sharing their struggles, pains, and

joys, which we feel entrust us with the Dual Call, walking with the people, i.e., taking the side of 'the other' and analysing the unjust structures that construct 'the other.' The other in the context is defined by not only economic constraints but also neo-liberal individualism. On one side, they get the courage, support, and strength of sharing their struggles with us, and on the other hand, we are challenged by the way they cope with their family problems, economic hardships, and all the other social issues. For instance, I met

one woman whose husband was a drug addict, and they have five children living in a small hut where there are no basic facilities. When I spoke to the woman, her sharing was:

"Before marriage, as a young girl, I had a dream of living a good family life, but today my husband is a drug addict, and he never takes any responsibility for the family. He never gives a single penny to the children. Every day I get up at 3 o'clock and make some food to sell. Then I have to take my children to school. While they are in school, I work in a house. They give me a little salary. Then again, I have to

bring the children from school, and again in the evening, I prepare some food to sell. Most of the time, my husband uses the money I earn for his drugs. If I do not give him money, he beats me and shouts at me. I try my best to create a better world for my children. That is my dream."

With the aim of journeying together with women, especially the wives of fishermen, we began a women's association. Considering it a good opportunity for women to share their experiences—joys and sorrows—and learn new things, they are thinking of some alternative ways of living their family life joyfully. We also decided to walk with the children, helping them move towards their dreams in life. They are longing to come for

the gatherings as they learn things about their lives through different activities. Listening to people and doing counseling for the needy is an essential part of our day-to-day lives. Our active presence among them makes a difference, as most of them feel that we are with them. Having spent four months there, we read the signs of the village and keep our hearts and minds open for new calls. Among the environmental hazards the Negombo Lagoon has been facing, sand mining in Negombo to build the Colombo Port City has had a major impact on the fishing sector. We, as a community network of environmentalists and social activists, raise our voice against environmental pollution and all the other un-

just mayhem in the area. We feel that our mission demands of us that we be creative in the midst of the struggles of people while taking the side of the oppressed and raising our voice against the structures and systems that marginalize and oppress them.

"Be the change, live the purpose."

'Being the change and living the purpose' is the vision that guides the unit from 2022 to 2028, which aptly suits our communion, which is our mission at Pitipana. Focusing on the 'Dual Call' of 'Walking with the Other' that demands of us 'Challenging the Unjust Structures' that continue to construct 'the Other'

**Shiromi, Rasika and Mangala
Colombo, Sri Lanka**



A MINISTRY TO REGAIN THE LOST

The Prison Ministry India is a vibrant movement: the Church and National Organisation has nearly 6000 volunteers serving in 1394 Prisons all over India. It is working for the renewal, release and rehabilitation of the inmates in Prisons. It gives training and awareness to those who volunteer to get involved in the ministry. Jesus identified himself with the people in prison by saying *"I was in prison and you visited me"*. Pope Francis specially

makes this plea to encounter our brothers and sisters who are incarcerated, and to open the door of mercy through our visits and service to them.

As a PMI volunteer I would like to share with you my personal experience of this ministry in 'Special Jail Puzhal - III Chennai Prison for Women. Puzhal Central Prison (I, II, and III) is one of the oldest and biggest Prisons in India with the total number of male and female inmates number-

ing around 7000. During my visits I found that behind the bars of every Prison, there are fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, friends and neighbours, all persons made in the Divine image of God who are longing for love and reconciliation. Also I have observed that the inmates have come from families of economic deprivation and poverty, terror and violence, drugs and alco-

hol, abuse and immorality, personal and family brokenness, isolation and loneliness, anger and guilt. Very often many of them are victims of life-situations. The greatest suffering for them is loneliness: being away from families, friends and others who have abandoned them. Some of the inmates are wrongly accused and imprisoned and have not been visited by anyone for years together. There are pregnant women and women with babies going through untold suffering and ill-health. A person is sent to jail to be reformed and not to be punished.

We the volunteers visit the prison regularly on Saturdays and Sundays and listen to their cries. We see the disfigured face of the Crucified Jesus in them. They are in mental agony, wounded, broken and in hopeless situations. They need our presence, our emotional support. We spend quality time with them and listen to their feel-

ings, emotions, and their sad stories with understanding and a non-judgmental attitude. Our main area of service is counselling and giving psychological assistance. Many have deep-rooted anger, feeling of revenge, frustration and some even have suicidal tendencies. We also conduct some dynamic games, group activities, sharing moral stories, awareness songs and inner healing exercises in order to release their stress and depression. The majority of them are receptive to whatever we say and the Word of God but they expect God to do miracles in their lives. They request our prayers that they want to be bailed out soon. In this way we give spiritual and moral support so that they experience peace and conversion of heart.

After Covid-19 this year we were allowed to celebrate Christmas Mass and celebrations in all the prisons. Most Rev. Bishop Neethi Nathan of Chengalpattu offered the Holy

Eucharist and shared the Christmas message. We also visit the families of inmates and prepare them for accepting the prisoners back with an open heart and mind. More than 200 prisoners of poor families were identified and we provided provisions recently. This day was celebrated as 'Family Day' and all the prisoners' families were treated with great respect and dignity. Education assistance for children of prisoners from poor families, legal aid for innocent prisoners, and rehabilitation for ex-convicts are given. We have a good rapport and friendly relationship with the Prison authorities and other staff members so that they co-operate in all our activities.

On every second Saturday all the volunteers come together at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre in Santhome, Chennai for evaluation and reporting. We strongly believe that the source of our ministry is only Prayer. Our strength and energy is the Holy Eucharist.



We begin the meeting with adoration of our Lord Jesus who is our source of strength. The coordinators of the groups from different prisons in Chennai submit their reports. We discuss the challenges and difficulties we face during our ministry and get strength and energy to continue.

I feel that the prison ministry is the **'Ministry of Presence'**. The prisoners need a spontaneous smile, a kind word, a happy greeting, a graceful nod, a concerned look, willingness to listen to make a difference in them. The core impact of the Prison ministry is seen in that there are more than one thousand inmates who are genu-

inely seeking and longing to change their lives. Jesus came to forgive all including the murderer. God has granted me the grace to see several prisoners who shed tears of repentance and question themselves. Their only cry is *'Lord will you give me a chance to live again and to begin a new life?'*

Working with persons behind the bars is a special call for me and for all the volunteers. It is a privilege and a blessing to reach out to the less fortunate and take part in Jesus' own ministry. I try to deal with them with love, patience and compassion giving my whole self, without expecting anything in return; this gives

me inner peace and joy. I'm very much convinced that we cannot transform any person unless he/she experiences the gentle touch of God. I'm grateful to God who has called me to this ministry where I experience innumerable blessings and miracles in my life and in the life of the victims.

Let me make a difference by bringing a change in the life of these least, lost and last of the society. It is a great opportunity to work with a team of members from different Congregations, Priests and lay people of our Diocese. We are all called to be brothers and sisters in Christ in this ministry **TO REGAIN THE LOST.**

Sr. Josephine Antonydasan

India



LIFE IS A GIFT; LOVE IT

"Not to us, Lord, but to your name, give glory." (Ps: 115:1)

The awareness programme was conducted by the 'Prevention of Drug Addiction' group of the Jaffna Unit from February 15–19 at Talaimannar.

Talaimannar is a small Catholic village consisting of about 450 families. It is situated in Mannar District and is 5 kilometers away from India. The main occupation is fishing. Since there are many men and youth who are addicted to drugs and alcohol, the Parish Priest of Talaimannar heard about our service working with the prevention of abuse and invited us to work in his parish. Therefore, at his invitation as a group, we decided to give an awareness programme for them.

We, around 20 Holy Family Sisters, reached

the place on the 15th evening. We met the Parish Priest along with the Zone Leaders. The families were grouped into 7 zones, which made it easy for us to visit all of them. We, too, in groups, visited each Zone. The Zone Leaders directed us along the path and led us to the houses that we were expected to visit. Hence, there wasn't much difficulty reaching the houses.

We started our visit in the morning; each family welcomed us with a radiant smile and shared their lives, the struggles, and the hardships they were going through. At the end of the day, each Zone had a Mass or prayer service according to their convenience in a creative manner. All participated joyfully and with much enthusi-



asm, throughout the entire program. At the end of the day, we recaptured the activities and evaluated them. The participants were open and freely shared their lives and experiences.

The programme we had arranged for the youth and children was very good, as it was an opportunity to create awareness in them about drug addiction, early marriages, the value of educa-

tion, and the basic values of human and Christian life. More than 55 youth and 75 children participated. They brought about their talents through role play, games, art, and dance.

We owe our gratitude to the parish priest, Rev. Fr.

Marcus, all the good-hearted parishioners, and, of course, with the support and cooperation of our Holy Family community, and above all to our God, who showers His grace upon us continually to bear fruit in abundance.

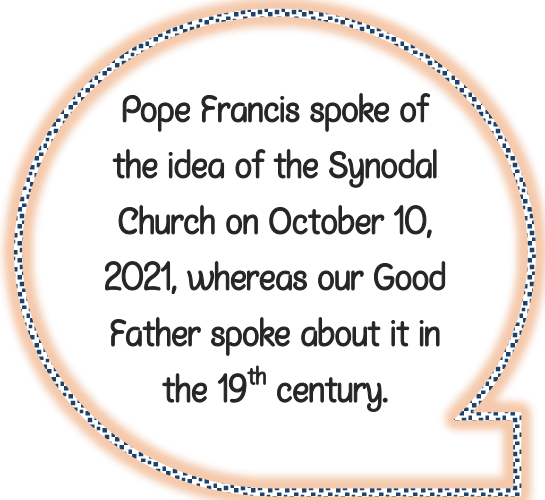
As St. Paul says, "I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." (1Cor 3:6)



Sr. Amali Kiyomar Figurado
Jaffna Unit

**WALKING TOGETHER AS FAMILY:
BENEATH THE DOOM AND GLOOM**

A Synodal Church is the dream of God that we all might be one, interwoven, interconnected, interdependent, and interrelated. There is no inferiority or superiority. We all must realize that we and the whole creation are embraced by the transcendent love of God.



Pope Francis spoke of the idea of the Synodal Church on October 10, 2021, whereas our Good Father spoke about it in the 19th century.



The Charism of Communion and the Spirit of God Alone are guiding us and giving us the grace to move forward together, to listen to the people, to respect their sacred stories, and to have solidarity with them in their struggles and aspirations for all humanity.

There are so many challenges; therefore, we need to meet people and bring them closer

to God through the spirit of communion and participation, which requires mutual listening. Listening involves patience, being open to the other, and having love for the persons who speaks their heart to the other without a tinge of fear of being judged. Although it is not very easy, it is possible.

Communion is not an obliga-

tion, but a celebration. Communion celebrates the Gospel: Jesus broke himself for us so that we could be healed by Him of our brokenness. Celebrating communion marks the story of Jesus and how He gave Himself completely to give us a better life, a new start, and a fresh relationship with God (1 Peter 3:18).

Communion is the act of remembering the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This symbol of **"eating his body and drinking his blood"** reminds us of all that Christ has done for us. For me, communion is a holy time of remembering God's gifts and acts of love towards me and a rededication of my life to following Christ. Communion is also a time of self-judgment, where I pause to reflect on how my life lines up with God's expectations. Also, I have come to communion not only in the church but in my home as a time of consecration where I can express to God the desires of my heart. Communion is also a time to ask for heal-

ing, God's strength, his grace, and his provision for one's life.

In Pakistan, our Sisters are helping so many families through our pastoral activities. We encounter many people who share their lives and sad stories. Recently, we visited one family whose lives shocked our whole being.

There are four children and their parents living in a small rented house. The father is a drug addict, the mother works in different houses to fulfill the needs of the family and gets only 2000 rupees at the end of the month. The elder son was working in a factory in order to help the whole family. But one day, while coming back home from work, he met with an accident and was badly injured. There was no hope for his recovery. The family came to the Sisters in the middle of the night with eyes full of tears and hearts full of sorrow. This situation touched our hearts, and without hesitation, our Sisters went to see the boy in the

hospital in the middle of the night. It was very pathetic to see him fighting between life and death. His situation brought us to tears. Along with the family, with faith, we turned towards God and together we encouraged the family and stayed with them at this sad moment. They were very downhearted, but the Sisters strengthened their faith and asked them to put their trust in God. They were able to feel a little peace and thanked the Sisters for being with them at this difficult time. God heard the prayers, and after a week, the boy started recovering. This was a great celebration, an experience of oneness, which brought new life to the whole family, especially the boy who had been at the point of death. We tried to walk together as a family with them to give them new life. Our presence made them see God's grace in their lives and be grateful to God always. Now their situation has improved, and they are ever grateful to the P.B.N Family.

Holy Family Sisters of Pakistan

GOOD THINGS TAKE TIME

- GOODNESS IS LOVE

Introduction:

Man attains his ultimate end through good actions: those actions which are in conformity with law and his conscience. These good actions can be helped by good habits called virtues. A virtue is the capacity and the desire to act

well, to give the best of oneself. This capacity and desire to act well is a feature of a person's character; it is a quality in the person who performs the action. When Thomas Aquinas states that **"a virtue is a habit of doing good or permanent disposition**

to do good," he means that a virtuous person is disposed to act well, in other words, a virtue is a habitual, well established, readiness or disposition of a person's power directing them to some specific goodness or act.

Why was our Founder called

*And a certain ruler asked Jesus, saying, Good Master, what good thing shall I do?
Lk 18:18;*



“Good Father” by the people of his time? It was because of the quality of his life and his work among the people. He imitated his Master and Lord, who went around doing good (Acts 10, 38). The good example of our Good Father always stirs up something within ourselves. It was the nickname “Good Father” which put me into this journey of search to reflect on goodness and virtues. Life is a search; formation is a search, a life-long process, we learn in living.

Good deeds and true happiness:

As human beings we are oriented toward the good. While emotion and imagination contribute to one’s distinctive identity, virtue is what we most frequently associate with character. It was the Greeks who first used the word virtue (arête) to express “excellence.” For them everything has a purpose or end (a telos) that expresses the most complete form its nature can

take. For Aristotle this would be to reason well and act accordingly. He called living this way “happiness.” For Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the broader Christian tradition, this is living in communion with God.

The Catholic tradition has always insisted on a proper love of self and the importance of happiness and self-fulfillment, not with the individual as absolute and ultimate, but as a part of God’s gracious reign and love. Love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self ultimately fit together. The Christian brings the human to its greatest perfection. The virtues are seen in the context of this theologically grounded vision of human flourishing and happiness.

Conclusion:

My interest in sharing on virtue is in connection with our quality life and the nickname of our Founder. He was a man of virtue: the people of his time called him ‘Good Father’, because of his goodness and

his good deeds towards them. For us as Holy Family religious the new way of living the Christian virtue is living our Charism of communion, bringing all God’s children into one family, the family of God. Virtue is “a habit of doing the good”. Our Founder spoke number of times about the virtues and virtuous life for which his own life stands as a witness. He gave Jesus Mary and Joseph as our model for virtues in the living of our charism of communion. In our meetings and gatherings we reflect on values, attitudes, priorities, essentials, motivations intentions and the dispositions of heart that we need to have in our everyday living.

We as Christians, are called to live in a way that reflects the character of Christ. St. Paul says in his letter to the Philippians: **“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus”**. (2,5). Matthew 5:16 says, **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”** Goodness is not about doing elaborate things to gain recognition. Instead, it may be a small acts of kindness that make a big difference to those who around us.

Sr. Catherine Pilethiran

Contemplative, Nagoda, Sri Lanka

¹JOSEPH J. KOTVA. J. A. *The Christian case for virtue ethics*, in *The Catholic moral tradition today: A Synthesis*, ed. Charles E. Curran (Georgetown University Press, Washington DC, 1999), pp. 110-111.