



# Interconnections

NO. 60

OCTOBER 2021

INFO/COM SERVICE



**WITHOUT A VISION  
THE PEOPLE PERISH.**

**Proverbs 29,18**



**Do not be afraid to dream great things! – Pope Francis**



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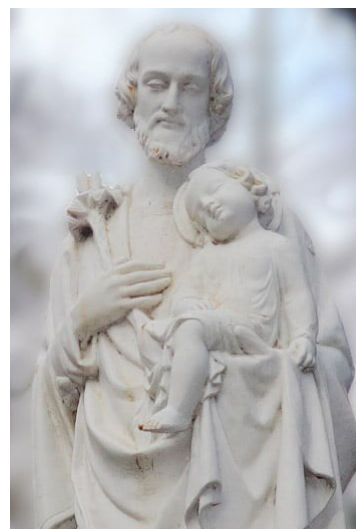
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The Holy Father Pope Francis has proclaimed a "Year of Saint Joseph" from 8 December 2020, to 8 December 2021.



Pope Francis issued an apostolic letter dedicated to the foster father of Jesus. The pope explained in the letter, titled *Patris Corde* ("With a father's heart") and dated December 8 that he wanted to share some "personal reflections".

"Each of us can discover in Joseph - the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble," he wrote.

"St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

### EDITORS :

Maristella Annie Anthonipillai  
Christine Fene Fene

### TRANSLATORS :

Aine Hayde (Britain & Ireland)  
Marie Carmen Leach (Spain)  
Monika Kopacz (Rome)

**WEBSITE :** <http://www.saintefamillebordeaux.org/>

**FACEBOOK:** Sainte-Famille Bordeaux

**YOUTUBE:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBa2x1ncfYtTiFUasEoseSg>



## EDITORIAL

### Courage to Step into the New

"I'm going ahead," said one goose. "I'll find the route, make sure the possibilities, and communicate directions back." The other geese agreed. They waited for instructions, and then made their way together to the agreed-upon location, and the migration was a success!

It is more than a year that we, as a body, have been participating in the process of our new findings, possibilities to move forward, as the urgent calls to live mission today keep awakening in us. We are waiting for the right moment to make the shift.

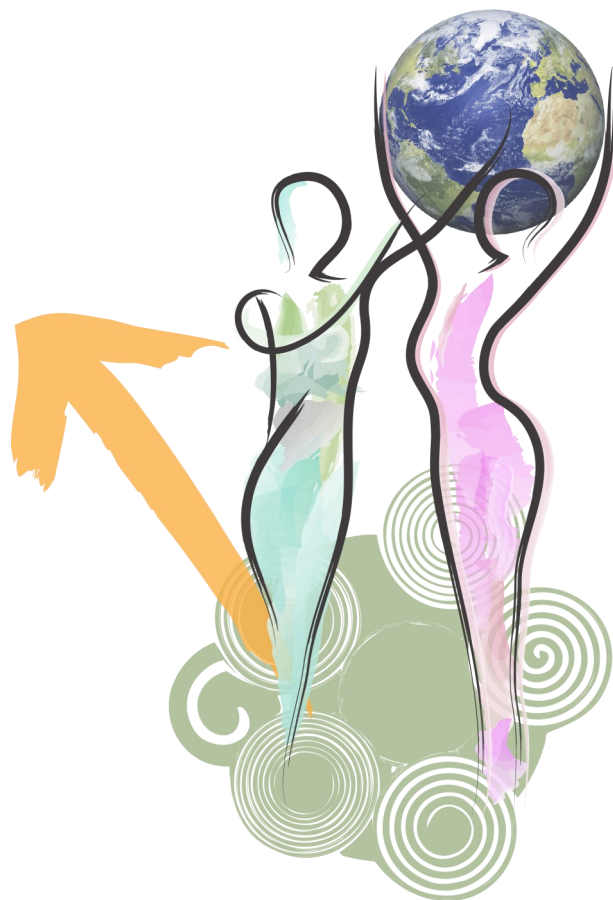
Meanwhile we also are becoming more aware of the world we live in – it's a world of trouble, destruction, separation and despair. At the same time, it is also a world with new signs of hope, of opportunity... the opportunity to step into new space and sense the future that many of us want to see, even though the 'how' is unclear.

As we await to navigate our liminal space, we never fail to respond to the present calls, in living our mission, helping the others' hope to flourish.

This issue will bring you little stories and experiences to enrich you, connecting you how we continue our mission in the world of today.

**"Do not be afraid to dream great things! "**

-Pope Francis -



## GENERALATE

### Founder's Birthday

In honour of our Founder's 228th birthday, we decided to make a video to recall our Founder's dream to be re-energized by his passion and to allow his own spirit to move us on in living mission with the same missionary daring.

It really surprises us to see how our Founder, amidst various challenges, was able to carry out his vision and mission.

Kumudinie Dassanayake and Micheline Kenda - two General councillors and Lourdes de la Fuente (Superior of the Local community) shared their views and experience.

**GLORY, GLORY, GLORY TO GOD**

**GLORY, GLORY, BE TO GOD ALONE.**

**M** - What made you sing this song?

**K** - I don't know, it just came to me... may be, the Founder's birthday is coming closer...

**M** - Why don't we listen to this song?

**K** - Yes, a good idea, let's listen...

**The lyrics of the song:**

Come forward to praise the Lord

Let's join our hearts to celebrate

The path we trod for two centuries

Singing in echoes with loud acclamations to God

**Glory, Glory, Glory to God**

**Glory, Glory, be to God Alone**

**M** – beautiful song, I like it very much..

**M** – but God Alone, God Alone what does it



mean?

**K** - I think, for the Founder, with all the various works he began, it was the force that brought everything into unity.

**M** – yes I think that it was source of life and energy for him and for the early members to take courageous steps, to go to other countries...out of their boundaries...

**K** – and imagine if the Founder were here today, I'm sure he would encourage us to look at it in a

**Micheline Kenda's sharing :**

**The intuition of P.B. Noailles has its starting point in a dream. What is the real meaning of this dream?**

THIS DREAM,

expresses the desire that we recognise each other as beings coming from the same source, from the same God, in mutual acceptance. To become more and more aware that we are all connected by the energy of Creator- love.



Each particular creature brings its own beauty, and all come together to form an interconnected and interdependent whole. This is the Family, we need each other.

This dream is in line with Jesus' desire, when He prays "that all may be one".

You can see that we are here today as members

new way – I mean, with our growing awareness of God in all things, God's presence, the beauty... – to understand this spirit of God Alone as the binding force, the bond of unity that brings all into relationship.

**M** – but in the daily living, how do we express it?

**K** – it's again the loving attentiveness, the caring for the other, with respect for who they are, in their own unique way.

of a great Family made up of people from different continents, races, cultures... and it is the very essence of a charismatic family that our house has no limits, every human being whoever he or she is has a place with us; we are not alone, we are family with all the other families, with everything that exists. Little by little we are coming to understand that we have a common home. There is no separation... COMMUNION is the word that expresses this cohesion that is built from the 'giving and receiving' of what is different, unique and subjective...

It is a process that requires a great deal of humility on our part and a great spirit of contemplation, so that we may seek to grow together with our brothers and sisters in humanity, in nature... with which we all form the same community of life.

Together we say Glory to God Alone!

**Kumudinie Dassanayake's Sharing:**

**How is it that our Founder never gave up ?**

So what was his secret?

In a letter to the then Archbishop, he writes – "If my friends, my children abandon me, God remains with me; with God Alone, one is consoled for the loss of all the rest..." So, it is his conviction that he was on the right path – and on God's path.

Sometimes I wonder, how the Founder could be so courageous.

A story comes to my mind at this moment. Once a father took his son and asked him to stay the whole night in a forest, blind-folded; he was frightened for the suggestion, but he agreed... he was blind-folded, he went to the forest; he was staying the whole night. The



father said, "you are not to open your eyes, whether you hear or feel anything." He took the challenge and he was there. In the morning, he removed the cover of the eyes and found that the father had been sitting there, watching him the whole night.



So it is with the Founder, he had many trials, troubles, misunderstandings, discouragements...but still he could have confidence, because he knew that God was with him. And at that moment he was so courageous, nothing could stop him.

It's the same with us in our life; sometimes discouragements, little things upset us... But this is the assurance, this is where we need to fall back and find courage, find trust, find our roots.

This is the experience of that first little community, when they were blessed by Jesus himself.

We all know that we are celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the miraculous benediction next year, it is the same trust and confidence that we are called to live. And so, we go on with that trust, that confidence... with joy.

#### **Lourdes de la Fuente's Sharing:**

Missionary dimension:

**To receive the proclamation and to give it back turned into song.**

**What is our song...?**

I have been asked to share with you something

of the missionary dimension of our life, and I will try to do so. After my Final Profession I was sent to Paraguay, to a mission among the indigenous people; there I could feel and experience the active presence of God in my life; how God multiplies our capacities and guides our instincts, for example, in assisting a difficult birth that was almost impossible outside a hospital. God also evangelised us little by little through the great honesty of the indigenous people - a virtue which we, with our progress and our economies, find very difficult to live.



After South America I was called to the Generalate and there too I lived my missionary vocation. In order to make God my absolute, I left behind all that was known, all that came easily to me, all that I liked for the sake of God alone. At the Generalate I experienced, as nowhere else, unity in diversity and although we had limited outside contacts, and spent a lot of time among papers, we also lived our missionary vocation in the service of the whole Family.

#### **The final lyrics of the song:**

Filled with God's love all our life

His blessings so precious that carry us through

The dream of our Founder beloved and good

Together let's make it real today

**Glory, Glory, Glory to God...**

We are the fruits of our Founder's dream; today we take that responsibility, and wish all of us a very happy Feast!



October 10 2021 our Holy Family Association had bicentenary celebration in St. Andrew cathedral Bordeaux

The celebration was scheduled in the year 2020. Since of the Pandemic situation and its consequences was high, respecting the protocols it was postponed to October 10 2021.

During the celebration of the Holy Eucharist,

the Gospel was read according to St. Mark chapter 10, verses from 17 to 30.

The rich man who is eager to inherit eternal life has found Jesus, We read that he ran to Jesus and knelt before him... and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

Based on this Gospel, the homily was delivered by the chief celebrant; Msgr. JEAN PAUL JAMES, Archbishop of Bordeaux.

Dear friends, I want to let Father Noailles speak! He writes: "The Word of God has a charm and an unction that cannot be found anywhere else. It is therefore enough to read it carefully to get a good grasp of it". Dear members of the Holy Family, the sap of the immense tree of which you are a part, this charism of which you are bearers, comes from meditation on the Word of God practised by the Good Father. What would he have said about today's Gospel? I don't know. But I note certain features of your charism: the Christ of the Gospel leads to God Alone, and He invites us to communion.

But first, who is the man in today's Gospel? How old is he? What is the colour of his skin? After hearing the young people from the Saintonge high school and seeing the African and Tamil women dancing last night in this cathedral, I believe that he is from all cultures and all ages. This man is running to Jesus. Why? What is he looking for? He is not satisfied. Or rather, he is a man with desires: he

wants real life, happiness. Last night I heard young people sharing their dreams with us: a journey to China on foot, an astronaut experience, the desire to feed the planet: so many desires that reflect what inhabits our hearts, even those of the oldest among us: the thirst for happiness, fraternity, justice, beauty. And what does Jesus do when faced with this man? He was about to leave. He stops. He listens to him. He looks at him and loves him. This is what happens today to all the members of the Holy Family, from the Superior General to the youngest in the Saintonge High School: he looks at and loves each one. This is what happened to your Founder in this Cathedral. It all began here: first the baptism of Pierre-Bienvenu Noailles at a very troubled time in our history. A few days after his baptism, the Cathedral was turned into a storehouse for animal fodder.. But what was sown in the trials of those days, this small seed, was to



become a great tree. Like the young people last night, Pierre-Bienvenu had his own desires: he was passionate about literature; he was also a risk-taker: he climbed the scaffolding that surrounded the spires of the Cathedral! In the midst of the wilderness, the seed grows: after confession at the age of 20, he had an encounter here, in the chapel of Our Lady of Mount Carmel: happiness, peace, the life of God filled his whole being. This spiritual experience gave an extraordinary impetus to the tree that was growing: a passion, a heartfelt love for the One who loves us infinitely, eternally, passionately. "Jesus looked at him and loved him,"



And this Jesus leads to God Alone: "No one is good except God Alone". I would like to dwell a little on this experience of your Founder: in the 19th century, when the Church was in ruins and trying to recover, Pierre-Bienvenu Noailles carried a message that gave an astonishing impetus, here in Bordeaux, and later on in other continents: "Seek God Alone in all things, like Jesus, Mary and Joseph". In the difficult times we are going through, let us not forget the religious explosion of the 19th century. When everything seemed to be over, there was an amazing religious revival! Our God is faithful! To act, God needs men and women of faith, people like Father Noailles who trust him. God Alone! To seek God alone! And who is this God? At a difficult moment in his life, Pierre Bienvenu had the astonishing experience of his mother's love, of the process he went through with his father, going to confession at the same time as him; contemplation of the Holy Family, which led Father Noailles to the mystery of the Triune God. God is a communion of love, an outpouring of relationships, of life. This is a beautiful tree, from which many different branches grow, with flowers and fruits of all seasons.

So, in the Good Father, inhabited by this Trinitarian

Mystery, and by the contemplation of the Holy Family of Nazareth, was born the desire for your Association, a vast society that would welcome women and men of different vocations. It is also so closely linked to the dialogue of Jesus to the man in the Gospel: "Go, sell what you have and give to the poor". In other words, don't close yourself off, don't withdraw. Refuse walls, build bridges, enter into relationships, especially with the poorest. And in this neighbourhood, the Holy Family was born: three women, following their Founder who gave everything, three women came together in their poverty to welcome the poorest, starting with a little orphan girl. You are continuing this magnificent work! It is God's work that starts small and becomes a gigantic tree where birds of all colours come to rest, each species having its own particular song but forming a single voice. Dear friends of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, yes, I wish you a happy anniversary, that is to say, I wish to tell you once again that it is important that you exist, that you are here among us in the Diocese of Bordeaux. In the Diocese, we count on you. Many around us no longer believe that fraternity is possible, that solidarity is possible. Live your charism, radiate your charism, live this famous spirituality of communion of which the Holy Pope John



Paul II spoke, that is "the capacity to be attentive (...) to one's brother (...) to offer him a true and profound friendship. Knowing how to "give a place" to one's brother by carrying "one another's burdens" (Gal: 6, 2). A magnificent program that already drives you forward towards the 250th anniversary of the Holy Family! An unrealistic program? No! Here in Bordeaux, Father Noailles, Father Chaminade, Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous and Jean Joseph Lataste tell us that fraternal communion is possible. And it is God who gives the growth!

Dear Father Noailles, as we are gathered with the Holy Family of Bordeaux, in the place where it all began, intercede for us, with the Holy Trinity: may we be eager to make family life, fraternal life, grow stronger, singing together: Glory to God, Glory to God Alone and all through Mary. Amen.





*To say **Oharriz** is to say gift for the eyes and rest for the spirit. A Capuchin friar from Lecároz said of this beautiful area of the province of Navarre in 1987, on the 50th anniversary their move into the former Jaureguía Palace "How much life has been lived within these walls! This house holds a history that will never be known...". It was a Novitiate, a house for receiving Sisters and various different groups: couples, young people, Zen groups, Yoga... all of them came in search of the silence, comfort and charm of Oharriz. This iconic place has been very important in the life of the members of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in Spain. On hearing the news that the community that has welcomed us so wonderfully all these years was to close, we asked a member of each vocation to express what Oharriz has meant to them – from the time of its foundation as a Novitiate in 1937 to the Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving for the years of presence of the community of Apostolic Sisters in the Baztan Valley.*

"In this turbulent world, everything has its beginning and its end. Today, the roulette wheel has stopped at OHARRIZ.

Yes, OHARRIZ.

Every SAFA (Holy Family) member who hears this news will have his or her own thoughts: nostalgia, sadness, amazement, memories... It is almost like a body having a limb amputated.

But we cannot remain on the negative side. On the contrary, we can remember the good that has come out of OHARRIZ.

It was a House which, over the years, really *lived* recollection, prayer, communication and family life.

We have lost something of our own, knowing that now we no longer have a Holy Family place where all vocations can meet. We are saddened by our poverty; it is a reality that we must accept.

In that beautiful corner of the BAZTAN we found the spirit of the FOUNDER. Through the years, and in different ways, that House helped us to pray, to participate in the richness of our HOLY FAMILY life. It gave us the possibility to understand and respect the specific nature of each vocation, to love each other as CHILDREN OF THE GOOD FATHER.

From our vocation, we the Consecrated Seculars in Spain, want to thank all the Sisters who, with their work and dedication, made possible all the projects that took place there.

Olimpia Iracta

(consecrated secular)

**Oharriz:** One of the most treasured houses of the Holy Family of Bordeaux.

A few days ago, the Provincial House informed us that the Oharriz Community was closing. It is not just another community; it is a place that many Associates of different vocations are familiar with, and where several Family meetings have been held, which have undoubtedly given rise to unity, reflection, thanksgiving, etc.

The Communications Team has asked me to share, on behalf of the Lay Associates, what OHARRIZ has been for us and for the whole Family. My main experiences and memories are centred on the 1994 Family Meeting, when I was still new, and that of 2009, when I had already been on the Committee and was a member of the Family Commission.

We had not been in formation





for very long when the 1994 Family Meeting was organised in Oharriz. We were encouraged to attend, and our daughters could join us. The four of us signed up. There were several other couples, also with their young children, so their situation was similar to ours. We met many Apostolic and also several Contemplatives and Seculars.

On a personal level, it was an enrichment to get to know the Holy Family. I was able to see in reality what we had known through formation in the group. It influenced me so much that, first to my wife and then to the animators, I told them that I would commit myself as a Holy Family Associate.

In addition to the activities programmed for the meetings, the place allowed us to enjoy delightful walks in the countryside, bordered as it was by a river and surrounded by farming areas. We often went out in small groups, before breakfast, after lunch and especially at the end of the day, before dinner. We would go to nearby Elizondo to carry out the orders we had been given for home-made chocolate. All of this was conducive to getting to know one another as Associates.

Since Oharriz also enjoys a special geographical situation near the border, it was possible to dedicate a whole day to visiting Martillac. On two occasions, all the participants at the meetings were able to benefit.

The Lay Associates would like to thank all the Sisters whose work has made it possible for us to serve the Family for so



many years - also for their patience and affection for the children. In this way they facilitated the presence and peace of mind of their parents.

Valentín Sainz

(Lay Associate, Madrid)

***When I got the news, I couldn't believe it...***

So begin many stories of farewells and last journeys, memories, thanksgiving, emotional management and calming of the soul.

It is time to say goodbye to a very dear and sacred spot, a spiritual centre where the heart rested so comfortably, the house that was home to so many "daughters of the future" for 84 long and glorious years... So many Sisters formed for God Alone within those walls...!

So, thanksgiving and nostalgia for what was, but also a new impetus to the common mission that our house has served and promoted from the beginning ( It was founded in a convulsive and difficult time: the years of civil war...) and now Oharriz is called to transcend itself and continue to be faithful to its purpose, to be

more than a beautiful but sad memory of something that has passed... Oharriz, its spirit, our Family spirit, is called to flow out from the physical place it once occupied, to descend not only where the Holy Family is still present, but on each member of the vocations dreamed of by the Good Father, wherever we are... Hence, in the heart of every member of the Holy Family, this renewed commitment to the spirit of Oharriz that can continue to take us to Nazareth: ineffably united in time and space like an invisible and spiritual chain giving Glory to God alone, part of the one and only great Family of God in Jesus, Mary and Joseph. ...May we continue to meet each other in the Oharriz of the heart!

Félix Élez Talaván

(Priest Associate)

My experience in Oharriz in the 33 months that I spent in Formation at the age of 21, was one of growth in knowledge and love of Jesus, accepting the difficulties, humiliations and joys of the concrete reality of each day, as a path of conversion, an experience that remains in my life today.





In '64 I entered the novitiate and everything spoke to me of a precious time in search of God and I continued to live this following of Jesus. After my Profession, I was a member of the Community as a cook, happy and content with another Sister. Oharriz strongly marked my life, helping me to acquire deep roots through the simplicity of an ordinary and hidden life like Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth.

Nekane Sagastibeltza  
 (Contemplative Sister)

### Mass of Thanksgiving

Yes, it was a celebration prepared with grateful affection by the Chaplain and Parish Priest - Alfonso and Javier respectively, and concelebrated by six priests from the area.

The whole community took part in the Eucharist accompanied by many neighbours and friends from the surrounding villages and, of course, the Arrayoz Choir sang with great enthusiasm; their

melodic voices enhanced the celebration; yes, it was a great occasion in which we celebrated the Death and Resurrection with great enthusiasm. *Death* for the closing, the departure..., "Our life will not be the same, you Sisters are part of this place, we will miss something, your presence"; *Resurrection* for the sharing of life that has made such an impact over these long years of neighbourliness and friendship, emerging from the mission of Communion that frames our charism.

Thank you, Lord, for so much affection expressed; thank you because, in some way, the Holy Family of Bordeaux is still alive in every "corner" of Oharriz and in the heart of every Sister who has passed through this place.

Mari Paz Aizcorbe  
 (Apostolic Sister)

## FR. T. E. T. RAJAN SHARES

Once every three months, each one of us taking turns to host the meeting and plan the day with topics for study and discussion, such as the fascinating New Story of the Universe and other I was delighted when Sr. Áine asked me to contribute an



## Priest Associates

article for the Unit Newsletter Family Links. During my long years in London and, as one without another priest to associate with in the Holy Family, it was the Sisters, especially the ones at Woodford Green, who helped me to keep my identity as a Priest Associate. It is they who made me feel at home in the spirit of the Good Father and kept me updated with new ideas and the emerging trends that would make the apostolate meaningful and relevant. I am therefore, in a way, duty bound to 'report' on how I am faring now here in my home diocese.

It's three years since I returned to Jaffna. I was appointed to the same parish where I had served before going to London three decades ago. The parishioners themselves were evicted from their traditional homes in 1990 by the security forces as the ethnic conflict intensified and were allowed resettlement twenty-eight years after their eviction and nine years after the end of war.

Resettlement was never going to be easy.



## **Made welcome :**

As I took charge of my new mission, I was given a pleasant surprise by the Priest Associates in the diocese. They came together at short notice to welcome me into their fold. There were fourteen of them.

They came with a truck load of plants to begin a tree planting campaign as part of one of their projects. I was happy to be part of a team once more. Before the pandemic we used to meet current issues related to our ministry.

At national level, we are about fifty Priest Associates and 'Live-in Sessions' are organised once a year. These sessions help deepen our understanding of our charism and spirituality in the light of the vocation we have received and to review our life and mission in order to make it more fruitful and meaningful. The fifty of us come from the two major ethnic groups that have been at war for so long and yet the friendly atmosphere that is created by the familial spirit is one the Holy Family could always be proud of. In our own way, we set the tone for peace and reconciliation and are an example especially among those priests and religious who find it difficult to be open and understanding of each other.

Disappointingly, the attitude of some of the diocesan bishops in the country towards the Association is at best 'tolerance'. They seem to feel that the diocesan priests' spirituality is good enough for our sanctity and ministry and that there is no need for another association which, in their judgement, is a distraction.

The matter was discussed at one of our meetings and the host of the day rightly pointed out what Pope John Paul II had to say about this attitude.

"Other insights or reference to other traditions of spiritual life can contribute to the priest's journey towards perfection, for these are capable of enriching the lives of individual priests as well as enlivening the priesthood with precious spiritual gifts. Such is the case with many old and new Church associations which welcome priests into their spiritual family". (Pastores dabi vobis 1992 no. 31).

## **Parish Ministry:**

As for my Parish ministry, I have had to deal with two major issues. The first is the resettlement of my parishioners and the second is helping my people cope with the lockdowns and their impact on every aspect of their lives.

During the long-drawn-out war and multiple

displacements, these people had lost access to their productive assets. The painful reality is, that returning to what was their traditional area, they still feel 'displaced' because there were no land marks left to identify their home places.

Their houses, Churches, schools, convents and even cemeteries had been bulldozed and razed to the ground for reasons best known only to the Security Forces.

Headline housing schemes and vocational training centres alone cannot provide solutions to people who have been subjected to brutal violence and displacement. It takes a far more comprehensive approach and a thoughtful strategy to rebuild a war-battered community. It must be one that appreciates the intimate link between the lives of a people and their land and livelihoods, and in keeping with their current realities. But my parishioners have had to and continue to put up with a rather messy resettlement process, counting only on their resilience.

With their harrowing experiences over the years of war and multiple displacements, they had lost all sense of belonging to a community. This has continued to be a serious drawback that needs to be addressed as a matter of utmost importance by pastors like me committed to their cause.

## **The Impact of Covid19:**

The restrictions imposed to prevent or minimize the risk of Covid-19 have made matters even worse for my already beleaguered community. Without the means to earn an income during lockdowns many are unable to feed themselves and their families. This could further exacerbate undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency for the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

I have six village communities to look after – around 450 families – all of them struggling to get settled and now to survive through the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic. The task is heavy and multifaceted.

People have come to depend on their priest to take up their cause with the authorities in matters of housing and resettlement, of their right to life and livelihood security, facilities for the education and well-being of their children. And now, during the pandemic, they depend on us to seek and provide relief assistance from the State, NGOs and well-wishers.

My little parish house has become a haven for people irrespective of caste and creed where they feel their woes are listened to and, where possible, addressed with sincere devotion.



## POLAND

After a break of several months due to the pandemic restrictions, we were able to resume meetings with different groups.

On August 20 and 21, we organized a retreat in our house in todz, for families on the theme, "Go to Joseph". Nine families from different Polish cities participated in the retreat. Father Tomasz Kostecki, known for his video blog called "The Ox and the Donkey", introduced us to St. Joseph.

According to Sr. Wiola, who organized the event, it was a time of grace that confirmed the necessity of organizing today, such experiences for families: "How many times can you hear that something needs to be done for families and not do it? I learned from St. Joseph that when you hear something, you need to act on it."

Father Tomasz presented St. Joseph as a real man of flesh and blood, showing St. Joseph's love for God and Mary in three spheres: the sphere of knowledge and facts, the sphere of emotions and feelings, and the sphere of will. The participants were able to discover these spheres of love within themselves, where they touched the facts, also of what is happening in the world today and in families. Discussing the issue of emotions and feelings, they realized the importance of not making concrete decisions under the influence of emotion.

Mrs. Marzena, a participant who found it impossible to put into a few words her retreat experience said: "We came here with 20 years of marriage experience, and it turned out that such marriages predominated among the participants. We came here as a family. From the moment we walked in, we felt confident. The inputs were wonderful. We are grateful to the sisters for organizing this retreat. Two days are not enough. We hope for more. We have already registered for the next year and we hope that this work will continue."

The pandemic also postponed the retreat for married women that should have taken place in our house in Konstaktyńów Łódzki in 2020. Finally, it came through in September 2021. The theme treated was, "Arise, my friend, my



beautiful one, and come!" or "Beauty Course." Four wonderful women, wives and mothers, participated in the retreat.

The spiritual guides for these days were the sisters and Father Bogumił Kucyk. The first part of the retreat was spiritual in nature. Together we reflected on the theme of the vocation of women. We asked ourselves what the spiritual beauty of a woman is, what God has granted us from the beginning of our existence, what incredible mission the Creator has put in the heart of a woman - to be "ezer-kenegdo" for Adam; a helper, a support. We also reflected on the problem of the wounds in our lives that prevent us from discovering the beauty within.

The second part was a workshop. Ms. Marta helped the women in the discovery of outer beauty. She demonstrated on using 'makeup' and gave tips on choosing an outfit that goes with one's figure and how to engage in interesting and fashionable styling. There is beauty in every woman waiting to be discovered!

We thank God for the time of these beautiful and enriching meetings with the families and women and look forward to our next programme, already scheduled. As expressed by the participants, these workshops we see as ways of responding to real needs.



## LET US CROSS OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE

D. R. CONGO

The passage from the bicentenary of our foundation to the tercentenary was for me a crossing, a strong invitation from Jesus who invited his apostles saying, "let us cross over to the other shore". This invitation to cross over to the shore of the Tercentenary began during the retreat I made in 2019 and it continues to move me on. During this retreat, I felt the invitation to have faith and trust in God to dare to cross over without fear, with only what is necessary, letting my 'cloak' fall as the blind Bartimeus did. I realized that I must help others, my community, my people, so that together we can reach the other side.

The fruit of this retreat helped me to discover in my apostolic milieu in Patu, that many people of different age live with all sorts of disabilities, the causes of which I am unaware. They keep knocking on our door asking for help. They do not ask for money or food, but for some means of mobility (wheelchairs, crutches...) and for a job to support themselves. In spite of their condition, they are always radiant with joy and live a deep sense of sharing. These people living with disabilities have the hope that one day they will add a valuable contribution to society.

Our share as a Sister of the Holy Family is to give them hope, to be close to them and love them until the day we can give them material help. Thus, we count on God's providence as our first mothers.



## ST. JOSEPH

Winifreda Wasalathanthrige

A few years ago the inmates of Ndorwa prison in Kabale, Uganda, were celebrating Christmas. Some of them had the permission to remove their prison uniforms and dress up for the Christmas play. Mary and Joseph were journeying together when all of a sudden Mary started labour pain. St. Joseph immediately got into the role of the midwife. He took out the doll hidden under the robe of Mary and presented to people amidst laughter and applause. This scene so well presented never

left my mind. In this year dedicated to St. Joseph I thought it is good to reflect on St. Joseph, the midwife.

Midwife is a mediator. While the mother struggles in pain she sees to it that the baby arrives safe and sound. She has to attend to so many details in order to make it happen correctly. Slightest mistake can kill or damage the baby. We normally remember our teachers. We are grateful to them. Do we also remember our midwife? How many of us have





thanked her even once?

St. Joseph played the role of the mediator not only at the birth of Jesus but in the whole mystery of salvation. In order to fulfil this role he went against the norms of the society of his time. The woman who gets pregnant out of wedlock is to be stoned

to death. Yet he wanted to put aside Mary discreetly avoiding danger and embarrassment. Then he accepted Mary as his wife when God asked him to do so. By accepting Mary He made her accepted by the society. The message was communicated in a dream without any consultation yet he accepted it and did as he was told. He went to Egypt to save the baby and came back to Nazareth after Herod died once again following the calls of God communicated through dreams. His response was always immediate and whole hearted. In that male-dominated society man was the chief of the family. Everything happened the way he wanted. But in the Holy Family the main character was Mary and the life of the family evolved around the mission that was entrusted to her. Joseph knew how to fulfil his role and leave Mary to fulfil her own. He was able to remain in the background. He did not claim the privileges that were given to the men of his society. Yet he remained close to the family and earned a living through hard work. Definitely he educated Jesus and trained him as a carpenter. His life influenced the life of Jesus so that Jesus could become the human person that he was in the society. Joseph was anxious and kept

searching for Jesus when Jesus remained in the temple without the knowledge of his parents. This shows that with Mary he fully participated in the life of Jesus.

We know very little about St. Joseph but the little we know can have a great impact on our lives.

He shows us how

- To remain open to the call of God not matter in what form it comes.
- To be available to do what God what wants of us and to do it without delay
- To fulfil the role that is entrusted to me and leave the others free to fulfil their own.
- To be hard working, caring and responsible.
- Not to go by power even when it is given to us by the society or is attached to the responsibilities that are entrusted to us.
- To value silence, acceptance, availability, obedience and reconciliation.

Often in life, things happen whose meaning we do not understand. Our first reaction is frequently one of disappointment and rebellion. Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow.

Joseph is certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments.

(Partis Corde, Pope Francis)



## SOUTH AFRICA

### Pietermaritzburg Community

On the afternoon of Tuesday 21st September 2021 the community of Pietermaritzburg had a Rosebush planting celebration as part of our journey towards being a transformative community and also to respond to the invite to celebrate 1st September to 4th October - The Season of Creation. It was a very chilly afternoon, which is not supposed to be the normal as it is springtime down south.

We all gathered in the garden, sang the hymn, “All Creatures of our God and King “ followed by praying Psalm 104. When this was over, Theresa and Violet, who were assigned to do the planting proceeded to put the rosebush in a well-prepared hole dug by Violet. While they were planting we sang the hymn again, said the blessing of the Soil Prayer and processed back into the house singing Lead us on O Lord.

This was a beautiful experience for us all to be and pray together in our garden. Due to the corona virus lockdown, we had not been able to spend time together outside as the whole community. We thank and praise God for this beautiful experience as community.



## The Counter-Trafficking in Persons Office, South Africa

The Counter-Trafficking in Persons Office (CTIP) is a joint project of the LCCL (Leadership Conference of Consecrated Life) and the SACBC (Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference). It was set up in January 2008 after a meeting in Rome with the UISG and the International Network against Human Trafficking Talitha Kum. The main objective of the project, coordinated by Sr Melanie O' Connor of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, has been the protection of potential victims of trafficking by engaging in five main areas.

Capacity building workshops along with Prevention/Education re Human Trafficking

A Training of Trainers workshop for Religious Sisters and co-workers took place at Lumko Institute from 23 to 26 March, 2021. A second edition of the workshop took place from 26 to 30 April. A number of trainees are now conducting awareness programs in their respective areas.

The CTIP engages also with undocumented migrants and victims of human trafficking who wish to return to Malawi to stem the tide of Human

Trafficking from Malawi to South Africa.

The education programme and skills training has now been extended to 4 centres in Malawi – covering particular hotspots for human trafficking.



St Paul's parish in Mzimba received four electrical sewing machines in June, 2021. The parish found a qualified teacher who now teaches sewing to vulnerable women, potential targets of human traffickers. The classes began on 5th July, 2021. Both participants and project leaders are





very much pleased with progress. The women now are able to cut materials very well, they are able sew their own dresses; they can sew face masks, sanitary pads, children's clothes, etc.

## 2. Survivor support

The CTIP provides accompaniment and shelter for victims of human trafficking. Since the end of 2020 it has been accompanying Gertrude, a 22 year old woman, brought up in an orphanage in Zimbabwe, a survivor of human trafficking in South Africa. The CTIP rented a room for her and she started attending sewing classes. The young woman delivered a baby boy early June and decided to keep the baby rather than put it in foster care which she had initially intended. Both baby and mother are supported by the Office until Gertrude completes her sewing lessons.

## 3. Raising awareness

The Human Trafficking Awareness Day on the Feast of St Bakhita, February 8, was celebrated at the headquarters of the Catholic Bishops Conference for Southern Africa in Pretoria.

Because of Covid-19 restrictions, the Mass was also broadcasted on line for those who were unable to attend.

Archbishop Buti Tlhagale OMI, in his homily, confronted the culture of patriarchy and silence as one of the main root causes of abuse and violence against women and children in society.

At the close of Mass, Sr Melanie took the opportunity to warn all listeners about human traffick-



ing and gave examples of what has been happening in South Africa - especially over the past year. Then a moment of prayer with candle-light followed, in memory of the victims of human trafficking some of whom had recently passed away.

## 4. Fieldwork/research work.

The Office finalised the research done into trafficking routes, modes of transport etc. between Northern Malawi and South Africa and shared the findings at a workshop in April, 2021. The report was then submitted to Bishop John Ryan of the Mzuzu Diocese where much of the recruiting for trafficking purposes takes place.



Members of the CTIP also visited a shelter for men, the Carrol Shaw Memorial Centre, in May this year. After a raid by police of a Chinese factory in Johannesburg, 93 survivors of human trafficking were brought to the shelter. All of the survivors were from Malawi and had spent two years locked in the factory. For two years the survivors had worked for their masters in two shifts. One shift began at 6am and ended at 7pm. The second shift began at 7pm and ended at 6 am. The Office distributed blankets to the survivors.

## 5. Media

This year, the CTIP gave a few interviews regarding its current projects.

In February, Sr. Melanie was interviewed on Radio Veritas. This gave her a chance to warn people about human trafficking, which is so widespread in South Africa. Young people, desperate for jobs, are easily lured into accepting false job offers.

This year, also, the Human Trafficking booklet that the Office produced for teachers and catechists was revised and copies were sent via email to catholic schools and catechetical programmes' coordinators throughout the country.





It is nearly two years since Covid-19 hit us. It is a pandemic that some believe has affected the whole world the same way but it is not the case. For the first time in our lifetime have we felt like we are in solidarity fighting the common enemy, the pandemic has shaken the rich and the poor economies in a way we had not experienced before.

The World Health Organisation has put in place the protocols in which we all have to change our lifestyles. These measures put in place to minimise the spread of the virus are the barometer that reflects how unequal we are even though we are fighting the same disease. For example, the population that my sharing focuses on find it hard to keep social distance because they live in overcrowded, poor-ventilated structures where water is a luxury.

I would like to share my own experience in my context South Africa, in the face of the world pandemic – Covid-19. When the pandemic hit our shores I was serving Migrants and Refugees communities under the auspices of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC). In South Africa we have been in lockdown since the end of March 2020. The levels are revised and adjusted by the government as new variants emerge. I wish to spotlight asylum seekers, undocumented people and refugees living in South Africa as I share the “unspoken inequality of the pandemic.”

South Africa is a destination of choice for many migrants, asylum seekers and refugees from the rest of Africa. South Africa has a political will to accommodate and care for asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented people who choose it as a destination. However, the increasing economic and financial woes facing the country in recent years have led the government to adopt and frequently change laws and policies that in many ways impact negatively on the lives of the asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented people. The majority of these population work in an

informal sector of the economy, eg, small businesses, street vendors, domestic work etc. They mostly live in crowded low income rented establishments where they lack running water and sanitation.

Since the advent of the pandemic with different phases of the lockdown measures, asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented people disproportionately experience the negative impact of the Covid-19 because of the already existing vulnerabilities. For instance, they are experiencing weakened social support, they cannot work and have income for basic needs such as food and pay rent for their shelter. Their nightmare has been unequal access to health care and social services. When health protocols call for social distancing and regular washing of hands with soap, how could they adhere to such when they live in overcrowded spaces where drinking water is an added expense!

It is said that, “none of us is safe until all of us are safe...” the vaccination or lack thereof is another added stress to many in the global South. South Africa is trying its best to roll out vaccines to everyone. However, the large population of undocumented people still cannot be vaccinated because the system requires a form of identification for one to access vaccine. Inequalities are experienced in different forms. We are one world family, but how can we all be safe if we do not have equal access to the vaccines to fight our common enemy!

We, as Holy Family Sisters in South Africa are in solidarity with asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented people. We believe in partnerships and therefore are supporting and sharing with Governmental, Non-Governmental and Faith Based Organisations that serve asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented people with basic necessities during this time of dire need. It is difficult to reach everyone, the needs are huge, and challenges seem unsurmountable due to restrictions but we soldier on with hope.



## A WEEK OF AWAKENING!

Marion, Colette, Tshidi, Cathy: Overport Community (S. A)

In response to the Chapter's call to work on our relationships in community, we the Overport community decided to spend a week together in the Drakensberg mountains, giving us time to reflect on and share on the questions on community life while spending some quality time relaxing and enjoying the beautiful surroundings!

While we, Tshidi, Marion, Colette and Cathy, were settling into a much needed holiday, we received news that there was a spree of looting, and general mayhem taking place back home in Durban (and Pietermaritzburg) and also Gauteng specifically.

It seemed that madness had taken over in two of our Regions namely KwaZulu Natal and parts of Gauteng. Television reports showed scenes of police being outnumbered by the looters and standing by unable to contain the situation. We watched in horror and helplessness as anarchy reigned for a few days when no-one seemed to be able to stop the mob mentality of looting, destroying and burning shops, pharmacies and just about any building that stored or sold goods.

Ordinary South Africans were afraid to leave their homes as they watched the streets taken over by mobs of angry young people, and not so young as they too were caught up in the mob mentality of destruction.

It was a concerted and planned effort to destabilise the country and the alleged people behind it were supporters of the former president of the country who was imprisoned because of contempt of court. He refused to answer questions regarding corruption charges against him by the presiding judge of the State Capture Enquiry.

It seemed that the dream of Nelson Mandela, our first democratically elected president of our Rainbow Nation was fast going down in smoke as buildings stripped of their goods were set alight, especially shops! The majority of South Africans watched in horror and fear the nightmare that unfolded during that week from the 11th to the 16th July.

This was a Kairos moment for South Africa! While we are still relatively young as a democracy, 27 years, that week taught us that we have a very long way to go in building a truly democratic Rainbow nation where every person's dignity is upheld and respected.

As a nation, we had been slumbering and that week was a rude awakening! Yes, we are saddened by the corruption within government and politicians, the ongoing violence against women, the poor service delivery, the growing poverty, etc. etc. Do we face the challenges or do we continue to bury our heads in the sand and hope that it won't happen again???

Please click the link to continue your reading...

<http://saintefamillebordeaux.org/v2/en/content/week-awakening>



These gentlemen drove from Azaadville in Jhb to Durban with their own trucks & security, carrying 32,000 loaves of bread for distribution.



## EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN AN ISLAND

### [UCHCHIMUNAI - NORTH WEST OF SRI LANKA]

The theme of our 20th General Chapter - “Can we still live our purpose” - keeps me awake, giving me energy to direct my life as a member of the PBN family. It is with great joy I share my experiences of working in Uchchimunai Island since 25 January 2021. I cannot imagine the ways of God for his people!

I returned from India on 31 December 2020, after completing P.G. Diploma in counselling and psychotherapy. While I was on a visit to my family, the Leadership team consulted me of the possibility of doing some team building work with a group preparing to offer services in this Island. I accepted the request with great joy. The project started on 25 January. Though the initial task entrusted to me was over, my stay there was gradually extended – first for days, then weeks, until I was asked to take the responsibility of being the coordinator. A Catholic parish in Colombo (Colpetty) funds this project and the Holy Family Apostolic sisters take responsibility for implementing the activities of the project with the support of others.

On 25 July, we completed six months in the Island. We are a ‘model’ community with six members on the team – two religious brothers, three young women and myself. The religious brother found temporary accommodation in the church compound and others in the teacher’s quarters. The young women are mainly involved in the education of the children while the two brothers and I take responsibility for community activities. We work on weekdays and take a break during the weekend. I belong to Kurinjampitiya, the closest community on the mainland and eagerly wait for Friday to return to my community to be with my sisters, to rest and relax for there I regain my energy and reconnect. I am very grateful to their spirit

## Sr.Shiromi Fernando - Colombo

of caring and listening as I share my experiences and for accompanying me through prayer.



My day begins at five in the morning with some yoga exercises, meditation and the Morning Prayer together with the two brothers. During the day, many activities take place. As a coordinator, my role is to organize activities, to see about implementing them and evaluate the work done. Balancing them all, is a time and energy consuming task. We managed to work with the children even during the lock down. Most of my time is spent with people in counselling, listening to their family stories and struggles faced. They call me “Our sister”.

We live a very simple life here. We fetch water from the well for drinking, cooking, bathing and for other basic needs. We get electricity only from 19.00 – 22.00 in the evening and the network connection is often very poor. However, we are blessed with a less polluted environment and natural wind for 24 hours. I enjoy gazing at the stars at night. Our mode of travel is boat and often the journey is quite tiring and scary. I appreciate and am touched by the concern, care and support of people





during our journeys. One day because of heavy wind, I got drenched and one person offered me his jacket. Even though we face challenges living as a community I feel blessed to have this experience of a new way of community living and witnessing to our COMMON MISSION of COMMUNION.

I am very grateful to Sr. Jesmin Fernando, our leader and her Council for the trust placed in me and for this opportunity to live among the people who need our presence. I greatly appreciate the monthly visit of the parish priest and



his parishioners to the Island, supporting and encouraging us with their presence. I thank my community members for supporting me. Most of all I am grateful to the Creator God ever present in my life, choosing me to be HIS/HER presence to HIS/HER people. I surrender my journey in to the hands of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph trusting their protection and guidance now and always.

## OUR GOD IS A GOD WHO SAVES

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1Thes.5:16 - 18).

People with a purpose, goal, and vision have no time for delay. They invest their energy creatively focusing on living a positive life. It is very important to generate a good heart, for happiness depends on both yourself and others. “In the time of plenty, think of the time of hunger; in days of wealth think of poverty and need” (Sirac.18-25). This is the reality of human life.

Economically, Sri Lanka is classed as a middle-income country. With the global pandemic now into its second year, many people are still struggling to make ends meet. The effects of the pandemic affect all with no exception. Infected cases increase daily. People panic searching for reliable types of vaccine. Life has become

## Jaffna Unit, Sri Lanka

extremely difficult with travel restrictions for those living on a daily wage. Alongside, emerge all kinds of violence, abuse, addiction, racial issues, breakdown of family, suicide, mental illness, unemployment and poverty, leading to immense human suffering. Fed up with lockdown People long for “normalcy” with the hope of a better tomorrow.

We realize more and more our vulnerability and the need to surrender to God and keep trusting. In preparation to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Miraculous Benediction, every community is engaged in daily Eucharistic adoration for an hour, from 15th July 2021 till the end of January 2022, in gratitude for the blessings received. The whole PBN family in the Unit too joins this prayer monthly via Zoom, being in solidarity with our vulnerable humanity and our aching Mother Earth.

In this new and unexpected situation created by Covid 19 we are challenged and called to a



discerned faith-reading of our reality and a passionate involvement in the Mission of Christ as PBN Family. Urged by the energy we discover in the Charism of Communion, we adopt the necessary changes in living the “New Normal.” Thus, becoming a beacon of light to our sisters and brothers who struggle to find the right direction in life, we face the challenges with courage. “Shall we receive good things at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?” (Job 2:10)

As members of PBN Family in our Unit, we live in awareness of the suffering of our people listening to their needs and making effort to respond. The schools being closed, the Teaching Sisters use innovative ways, themselves learning new methods to be of service to the students now, in a new way. Some sisters benefit from the lockdown learning French and English by the help of our own Sisters in the Unit, foreseeing the needs of the big Family. Though in a situation of fear, anxiety and tension, they hear a strong invitation to seek silence, enter into one’s depth and consciously work on one’s personal transformation. The pre-chapter preparation at all levels and the inputs from resource persons through zoom meetings initiated by the ULT, keep us in full awareness of our context regarding where we are and how we are to respond.

We happily share the donations received from the kind hearted friends in Diaspora and the produce from our community home-gardens, with the needy - drug addicted clients and the Staff at the ‘Centre for Change.’ This resource has enabled us to provide dry ration, clothes, medical assistance and protective materials for the corona infected patients in the Hospitals, while strictly adhering to the restrictions during this lockdown period. Some of us leave a gospel message or a word of hope in the parcels we prepare to be shared with them. This sharing gives meaning to humanitarian services being an expression of God’s compassion and love. “You are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love You, I give people in return for you, Nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear for I am with you” (Is. 43: 4-5). Many of us use social media to listen to their pathetic stories and pray for and with them, assuring our solidarity especially on occasions like anniversaries, thanking God’s



goodness and invoking God’s mercy on the dear departed and consolation for their mourning families.

The words of Pope Francis urging people not to “yield to fear” over corona virus or any hardships and calling on us to be “messengers of life in a time of death” is indeed a message of Hope for us.

Our God our loving Father, our Savior, who cares for all His creation desires our happiness. So let us live in hope and become hope-giving people to all our wounded brothers and sisters living this seemingly hopeless situation.



## THE EXPERIENCE OF 'VIMUKTHI'

Sr. Santhiya Mathew, Vimukthi Center  
Andhra Pradesh, India

The year 2020 is an unforgettable year for the whole world. The pandemic of Covid-19 has affected everyone physically, psychologically and spiritually. Despite the severe effect of pandemic, we the Holy Family sisters thank and praise the Lord in a special way for all the blessings we have received from the Almighty as we celebrated the Bicentenary year in different ways. "The Lord has done great things for me and Holy is His name" (Lk 1:49). Personally, I express my deep gratitude to God for His providence for the past 25 years of my religious commitment in the Holy Family.



As I cherish my religious life, I appreciate the special call received to serve in the Rehabilitation Centre in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh called 'Vimukthi', meaning 'redemption.' For years, the Salesian Fathers were guiding the drug addict children in this centre. With zeal and joy, I accepted this new ministry. Sr. Susheela

Badugu became my companion in this collaborative ministry, trusting on the Lord's unconditional love and constant accompaniment.

The official opening ceremony was on 6th October 2020 with the participation of some of our sisters and Salesian priests. It was a very meaningful beginning. Later, both Suseela and I received some orientations to this ministry assigned to us. Due to the pandemic situation, we started with only two boys but gradually from December 2020 the numbers increased to fourteen.

This organization called 'Nava Jeevan Bala Bhavan' is an Institute run by the Salesian Priests for the 'street children' collected from streets, railways stations etc. Some are orphans and some with one parent, but all poverty-stricken and nowhere to go. They are from seven different 'Homes' of different age, sex and study groups.

Among the seven, we serve in 'Vimukthi', welcoming and caring for these poor boys.

We are entrusted with inmates aging from 10 – 18, a very few having both. They are addicted to various substances and neither want to go to school nor interested in anything. Having no purpose in life, they are practically undisciplined. However, some have an aim to learn something for life and are determined not to fall into the same trap.

Our Presence demands great compassion in listening, understanding, observing their mental ability and guide them with skill training in different fields like electric, mechanic and craftwork. Hence, it involves a professional as well as human, moral education.

The challenges we face are many. The tedious task of maintaining and updating documents for government inspection, security issues with frequent escapes of inmates who never return often weigh us down. Maintaining good relationships with boys coming from different families, cultural and educational backgrounds, disappointments in failure to have control over them, difficulty of eliminating the habit of consumption of toxic substances and above all keeping them focused, are our daily struggles.



Many have lost their self-identification, some children do not want to meet or relate to their parents, siblings and carry feelings of hatred towards them. Having helped some to communicate with their parents, I see the changes happening. However, some children are not open to listen and it is sad and discouraging to see no difference in them. The Word of God strengthens me always to regain energy, “The grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it will not bear fruit and have life” (Jn 12: 24).

Building good relationships with oneself, parents and others is a huge task. Our efforts to do so is through community based games, indoor and outdoor games. Inputs on self-awareness and personal guidance are great helps in bringing them out of their old way of living. They learn to speak truth and avoid unkind words. Daily evaluations are a means of helping them towards better inter-relating and interacting. It is a joy to see some changes as they begin to share freely and cooperate in friendly ways.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity of ‘being sent’ to be with these children, which experience shapes, myself too. While thanking God for the daily graces I receive in accompanying



these young lives in their journey towards becoming better citizens, I remain grateful to Sr. Jeya Mary Arockiam and Council for entrusting me with this new ministry.

My wish is that the words of Pope Francis “Welcome, Protect, Promote and Integrate” (*Fratelli Tutti- No.129*) echo in me and in us always!

**HEARTFELT GRATITUDE FOR GOD’S BLESSINGS ...  
LORD, IT IS GOOD TO GIVE YOU THANKS...**

**Matatag Community,  
Philippines.**



With joy and Gratitude, we remembered on the 14th July 2021, the 25 Years’ Journey of the Holy Family Life and Ministry in Matatag Community in Manila and our presence in

Barangay Pinyahan. It was a day of remembrance to give thanks to the Lord for His Bountiful blessings and graces that we received from Him for our life and mission.

As our Good Father Says: “MAY EACH COMMUNITY REFLECT THE HOUSE OF NAZERATH”. We believe and give witness that these words were lived and being realized in this Community. From the beginning until now, this house resembles and reflects the simple and humble house of Nazareth. All those who entered this house experienced the warmth welcome and hospitality and the spirit of simplicity of the Holy Family. This house became a home and shelter for so many





people locally and internationally. The Visitors, our own Holy Family Members and Student Sisters, they all have experienced the family spirit, love, care, and simplicity above all God's presence in the silent and quiet atmosphere. Moreover, our presence in this community radiated through our ministries among the poor, youth and children, who have received our love, care and support. Poor and the marginalized are our first choice. Through our simple presence being united with and among them, we witness to God's love and communion.

On July 14, 2021, we gathered together as Community with few of our Lay Associates to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Community. At 10.00 am we gathered around the Table of the Lord to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and we offered our thanks to God's continued presence and guidance that we experienced during the past 25 years of our journey. The Thanksgiving Eucharist was celebrated by our Parish Priest Fr. Adlai S. Barre and concelebrated with Fr. Maxi one of our Priest-friend from Sri Lanka. We were happy that even in this pandemic, we were able to gather to thank God and celebrate the Anniversary, observing the protocols. The Celebration of the Thanksgiving Mass was relayed online for the PBN Family in the Philippines to join in to give thanks to the Lord. It was a joy-filled, simple but meaningful Family Celebration.

During the Eucharistic celebration, we not only thanked the Lord for the blessings that we received, but recalled the many blessings showered on us through so many people who had been part and parcel of the Life Journey in the past from its Foundation, for their presence and ministries undertaken for the

success of our Mission. Particularly, we lift our hearts to God in honour and gratitude for all the sisters who have been part of and served in this Community. Especially we remembered the first Three Sisters:

Sr. Eithne Hughes

Sr. Catherine Coonghe

Sr. Bernadette De Silva

who formed the Community in the year 1996. They put all their energy, love and hard work in common to build this community and turn it into a Home. With gratitude and respect we remember Sr. Catherine Coonghe for her untiring service that she offered to the community and to the people. May God reward her in his kingdom and may she rest in peace. We were happy to have Sr. Bernie De Silva in our midst for this celebration.

With joy we thanked our Parish Community for their love and acceptance of us and for being companions on our journey and in our ministries. They became part of our life journey and who are always there for us to support us in everything. Special thanks to our Lay Associates for their continued presence, support above all being partners in living our mission of Communion. As we continue our life and mission in this Community, we ask God to continue to be our guide and shower His blessing to live our life with zeal and dedication and to witness to our Mission Communion, in following the footsteps of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

July 15, 2021 continued to be part of our Silver Anniversary Celebration of Matatag Community. We as a Community planned to celebrate the Foundation's Silver Anniversary with a specialty of living our Option for the Poor, particularly in our area and we very







much wanted to celebrate this memorable event with them. It was a unanimous decision that we share food with the Youth around us who are unemployed and are jobless at this time of the Pandemic and who are doing odd jobs here and there when there is something for them to do. We selected the group of Youth working temporarily for a couple of hours in “CAR WASH & GARAGE” to be our Anniversary Recipients to share in our joy. We made 50 Packs of choicest Food – of course of Filipino Menu – and were ready to share it with them. July 15th by 10.30 am we were ready and one of our Parishioners with a Tricycle joined us for the distribution of the same. It’s our way of journeying with the

Youth who are at cross roads without hope and direction, trying to find a way to understand, to be of companions and to make them feel at home with us. It was a surprise for them and it was a welcoming gift, which they received with smiles bubbling in their faces and with a heart of gratitude. We were doubly happy that Pandemic is not always to be viewed in the negative. It has the challenging power to make us think and act differently.

It is our prayer that our Little Community will always remain a Home of Nazareth, radiating the spirit of the Holy Family and create for us opportunities to be with and for the Poor.

“Glory be to God Alone!

