



Interconnections

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EUROPE

DO NOT BE LIKE STAGNANT WATER	03
MINISTRY IN COVID-19	04
The HOLY FAMILY IN BARCELONA	05
THE ORDINARY LIFE	08
BENEDICTION	09

AFRICA

I AM WHO I AM	10
UPLIFT THE GIRL CHILD	11
EXPERIENCE OF THE PROCESS	12
THE EXPERIENCE OF ASH WEDNESDAY	13

ASIA

AN OPPORTUNITY TO HARNESS	14
SPREAD THE FRAGRANCE OF OUR CHARISM	15
WE ALL ARE ONE	16
MUTHURAJAWELA, SRI LANKA	17
MARATHON PRAYER RALLY	19

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EXPLANATION OF OUR LOGO

The idea of changing the logo for our Information Communication Service began during our last Information Communication meeting, held in May 2018 in Rome.

A logo has to make an impression; it should be deceptively simple, and instantly recognizable. Therefore, we decided to take our inspiration from the Holy Family crest, which is already well known and widely used.

The design:

In the centre, as in the original, three leaves of *the shamrock* symbolize the Holy Family: Jesus (blue), Mary (silver/white), and Joseph (sable) with a purple stem. *The shield* is formed from the God Alone Cross on the left, representing our spirituality, and on the right, *a branch with five leaves* symbolizing our five vocations. At the bottom, is our *motto* "Gloire à Dieu Seul" The treble clef intertwined with the cross signifies that 'each has its own song but all merge into one voice' to sing in perfect harmony, "Glory to God, Glory to God Alone".

**"I HAVE COME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY"
AND TO HAVE LIFE... "PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP".
"LET US CROSS OVER TO THE OTHER SHORE". "DO NOT BE LIKE STAGNANT WATER".**

María de Lourdes - Generalate local community



Perhaps these phrases and images are the synthesis of what we are living. They speak of process, of movement, of leaving familiar shores behind, to move to a new and in a certain sense insecure terrain, because it is unknown.

They are an invitation to cross the waters, to accept the risk of insecurity, of struggle, perhaps of a storm... They are conditions for welcoming Life in abundance.

Two complex and unknown realities: "Preparation for the Chapter" and "COVID 19" share between them: space, time and human groups. They are so complex that we cannot put them into the usual categories; we have to accept them and take them as they come.

COVID 19 teaches us to look closely and squarely at our vulnerability. We realise that we are discovering many aspects of the pandemic from the experience of the pandemic itself and the circumstances surrounding it.

We were used to anticipating, we claimed to know what would happen in the future. Our rational minds worked with known data; now, there are no data, things happen and we, human beings, remain perplexed and confused by them.

Events can have positive and enriching aspects

and painful aspects. In the Pandemic, human lives are disappearing by the thousands, so much so that we have become accustomed to hearing in the news a daily death toll in the hundreds and in some countries in the thousands. Lockdown awakens our aggressiveness, damages human relationships and makes us afraid of those who are in contact with us because they can transmit the virus... This tiny, invisible creature, so small that we can neither see nor capture it, has turned our way of looking at reality upside down, but at the same time it has taught us humility when faced with our limited human condition.

A March editorial in a Spanish magazine, says on this issue: "Despite the profound relationship between the destruction of nature and pandemics, this year of Coronavirus has left in Spain unexpected temporary benefits reflected in the improvement of air-quality and a decrease in polluting emissions, but also sources of harm, such as the millions of masks discarded in the open, which will take 400 years to decompose".

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In our "official" General Chapter preparation, the facilitator, Matthieu Daum, helped us to put the spotlight on a key question that would later become the central theme of the Chapter:

"Can we still live our purpose at the beginning of our third century?"

We were preparing for this event with such precision, able to fix the program and the timetable, but suddenly, everything shut down, and the plans collapsed. We realised that we had to change, the Chapter could not be held in the "normal way", since the capitulants could not travel.

Whether we like it or not we are having to use the new means of communication; through them we have discovered many things that enrich us, but at the same time impoverish us: we experience that nothing can replace physical presence, but, at the same time, these means offer us the possibility to

participate actively in the ongoing preparation of the Chapter; communities, groups and individual Sisters participated actively, via 266 connections, in the meetings of prayer and reflection around a very rich process, where we put in common not only our intellectual gifts, but the whole person through the sharing of feelings, desires, responsibility, and what dwells most deeply within us.

This experience has offered us the opportunity to be more humble and less categorical; we are learning to enable the participation of all- something that is generally not considered essential, but that we are discovering to be irreplaceable.

MINISTRY IN COVID-19

Sr. Bernadette Deegan, Clane Community (Ireland)

"Growth of a mustard seed": A reflective looking back of working with members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, and others, during the Pandemic.

The ways of God are very mysterious! One can lose hope, faith and energy in knocking on doors that seem very unyielding as regards ministry in the local area. Some time ago I explored the possibilities of having weeks of guided prayer in the Celbridge/ Straffan and Clane Parishes. (in Co. Kildare, Ireland) While open to the idea, a small group of parishioners met and thought the parishes were not quite ready for one-to-one spiritual accompaniment.



Instead, we decided to put on reflective evenings for Advent and Lent. The members of the team were Charlie Flynn, Terri Coonan (two of our Holy Family members), John Farrelly, a Clane parishioner, and myself.

When Covid-19 struck in March, we finished the Lenten reflections via Livestream in an empty church. Up to a point, we had lots of people attending.

In the 'new normal' times, we needed to think of what we would do about the weekly Centering Prayer Group since we could not meet in person. John Farrelly, who is a wizard in technology, used his skills, and the group of 12-16 members from Clane, Maynooth, Westmeath and Dublin continue to meet each week on Zoom. It is open to anyone to join.

So far, we have facilitated three retreats. One took place in Clongowes Wood College before Covid-19, and the other two were online with people attending from a wider radius on Zoom.

Moving out from the Parish, "Silence@Six" has emerged. This takes place daily at 6pm (Irish time) on a virtual Meditation Chapel site

(<https://meditationchapel.org/wisdom-chapel/>). Between 50-80 people meet every evening for input followed by silent meditation. Those attending come from Clane, different parts of Ireland, UK, Canada, Iceland, Australia and United States. We now have a team of 11 facilitators, including Sr Anne Kearney.

One can imagine how supportive this daily meeting is to everyone and has introduced many people to meditation and contemplation in a new way. We have become a worldwide community. For many it is a life-line, especially for those with physical impairments. It is a profound experience and gives a great feeling of solidarity.

For Advent, a retreat took place over a weekend. On each Sunday, a Special Candle was lit by a representative from each continent. In Lent, there is an extended session once a week with some facilitators highlighting creation.

Our "Silence@Six" has now extended to a "Silentium Spiritual Practice Group" which meets on Zoom every Thursday night and a

"Silentium Contemplative Sabbath Liturgy weekly.

Before the Pandemic, a Labyrinth beside the Church in Clane was created and has proved to be a source of great benefit to parishioners. A real joy for families who used it throughout the summer and, in lock-down times, it was another way of introducing children to different ways of praying.

We had 'great plans' to hold rituals and highlight care of the earth, but that was pared down to a Creation Ritual last September (with social distancing and masks) that took place outside our house in Clane, spearheaded by Sr Anne Kearney. Stones were beautifully painted that day and later placed on the labyrinth.

However, more important was the prayer, raising of awareness, and being together. The energy and joy in the group as they participated was a delight. It is hoped that this group, mostly from the centering prayer, could form the nucleus for working on climate change locally in the future.

THE HOLY FAMILY IN BARCELONA: LORETO COLLEGE 1845

Today I am inviting you to come on a 167-year-long journey in the company of someone very important and very well-known – the Good Father. We are in the year 1845. We have visited the foundation in Madrid where the Founder was offered the opportunity to open a college in Barcelona similar to the one there.

The mother of a pupil in the Madrid College visited the Good Father and Mother Bonnat and brought them a letter from the Consul of Barcelona, Mr. Lesseps, asking them to found a college in Barcelona similar to the one in Madrid. They accepted on one condition, that

Milagros García, comunidad de Anglí 1

there was no other teaching community in Barcelona.

Everything seemed promising but money was a problem. Mother Bonnat approached the Superior General of the Hope Sisters who immediately offered to help her. She said she would bring the money to the stagecoach Mother Bonnat was travelling in. But the first disappointment came when Mother Bonnat arrived at the agreed meeting place to find a note which read, "Due to unforeseen circumstances, I had to cancel my journey". There was no mention of the money.

They arrived at Montpellier sad and downcast.



Mother Saint Paul, the superior of the community, offered to accompany them to the border. This encouraged them to continue their journey and they finally arrived in Barcelona. They went to visit Mr. Lesseps and Mr. Villasequia and got an unpleasant surprise. When Mr. Villasequia, saw them, he was very embarrassed and exclaimed, "When you did not arrive before September we thought you were not coming, and yesterday our daughters left for the Sacred Heart college in Perpignan".

Inwardly outraged, Mother Bonnat resolved to begin the Work without any money, friends or help. They knew nobody. But Mother Bonnat was not one to do nothing. She had publicity leaflets printed, asked Mr. Lesseps, who wanted to help, to provide transport and went to visit the Bishop who promised to help them.

One day Mr. Lesseps came to tell them that the Religious of the Sacred Heart had founded a house in Barcelona. Another blow for them! In spite of all this, they continued to send out leaflets announcing the opening of Loreto College. They trusted in Providence, and a lot of people supported them. The house was opened on 1 November 1845. So the *Holy Family* was established in the Loreto College in Barcelona on the Feast of All Saints.

In March 1846, the Good Father visited Barcelona and the girls from Loreto College made a very good impression on him. "*The ecclesiastical authorities received me very well. I think they are in favour of all our Works...*" But very shortly afterwards, things changed suddenly causing the Good Father

great suffering. Mataro was a dark cloud blocking out the horizon.

In 1851, the college was going very well and a new building was needed. There was an article about it in the daily newspaper of Barcelona, praising the educational work of the Sisters and inviting families to visit the college where they would be received by the Director, Mother de Lesseps.

In October, in order to emphasise the unity among the houses in Spain, the Founder wrote, "The Pinto Orphanage has offered to help the colleges of Barcelona and Madrid".

Nothing much of importance happened between 1851 and 1873. Pupils multiplied and all were imbued with a sense of solidarity. The main difficulty was the inadequate building they were in.

This time, as well as going around searching, they prayed. When they were looking for land outside the city to build a college on, they came across an old country house. It was in a beautiful place in the middle of an orange tree plantation. The only problem was the price; the community couldn't afford it. Providence came to the rescue in the person of some friends who paid the deposit. In less than a year, the Sisters and all the boarders were installed in the house.

On 11 February 1873, the 1st Republic was declared in Spain. The army revolted and the majority sided with the people. The French Consul came to the college to advise them to hoist the French flag if the building was invaded. Communication with France was impossi-



ble. The college chaplain was taken prisoner at the door. Workers went on strike and pupils left until only fourteen or fifteen remained. The Sisters stayed where they were.

In 1878 there was peace again in Spain. The number of pupils increased and the building became too small. Once again, they had to think about moving house or building something that would be suitable for a boarding college.

Such was their faith in Divine Providence that they managed to lay the foundation stone on 31 March of that year. The following day they were able to speak about the new Loreto boarding college of Barcelona which was being built in Sarria.

The college for day pupils continued to grow. Mother de Lesseps looked everywhere for a suitable house but without success. Finally, she gave permission to rent a place in one of the most beautiful areas of Barcelona – la Rambla de los Estudiantes. It was on the first floor of a large modern building and they rented it for five years. It was opened on 2 July, the feast of the Visitation.

In 1931, the Spanish Republic with its anticlerical bent was established. Several friends of the college – men with great vision – advised Mother María José Pouget, Superior of the college, to secularise it. The Sisters dressed in secular clothes and went to live in an apartment in Aragon Street which was given to them by the President of the past pupils who were known in Barcelona as the Christian Mothers.

When the civil war broke out in 1936, Loreto College, like all other such institutions, had to close. The Sisters took refuge wherever they could. The building was respected and looked after properly.

On 27 January 1939, at around 9 a.m., when the Sisters were rejoicing at being liberated, the chaplain of Loreto appeared. Since there was no one with a legal entitlement to the building, he was considered to be the owner. The chapel was still intact so he was able to begin saying Mass immediately.

Towards 1960, it was realised that the College needed to be transferred to somewhere less polluted. A school was built in 58, Angli Street and the tower which was bought in 1963, became the Provincial House and the Juniorate.

During the school year 1965/1966, Loreto College was opened in the Angli Street house and continued there until the new college was completed in 1968 in Pearson Avenue.

At the end of the 70's after a lot of reflection on the part of the *Holy Family* Educational Centres in Spain, Loreto College Barcelona was handed over to the St. Paul Trust, known in Barcelona as Abad Oliva. From 1981, it was the Abad Oliva College and no longer belonged to the Holy Family of Bordeaux.

All the lay staff and one Sister continued to work there. The Sister remained until the school year 2002/2003.

We have come to the end of our Pilgrimage. There is another one to be done – THE HOLY FAMILY IN CATALONIA. SO, GET READY TO SET OFF AGAIN.

THE ORDINARY LIFE - A SOURCE OF FRATERNAL JOY

Sr. Teresita ECHAVARRI - Contemplative community of the Solitude



My hidden life has all its meaning in God, like leaven in the dough. It finds its fruitfulness in God, through abandonment, simplicity, humility...

This life lived not in isolation but with others amazes me and gives me joy. Thanksgiving rises in me when I see the gift of each of my sisters. Different from one another, we welcome each one in faith and love. Although sometimes our characters irritate us, I notice that with the grace of God we live this family spirit, anchored in each one. We carry communion within us despite our differences.

Self-effacement, discretion, humility, invite me to live for God alone in the service of my brothers and sisters without making a show of myself for nothing. It is a source of joy for me to know that my life serves someone.

The above helps me to integrate the positive aspects that give life, growth... and the other (my sister) in the same way; thus, we enrich one another. I would say that in everything it is love that counts.

In community I find that in the silence, there is mutual help - for example, in the diversity we experience - one is pleasant and helpful; another is attentive and available or another facilitates the work and so on.

All these small fraternal gestures help the community to flourish, to realize itself and

move forward. Goodness in the small things experienced in what is ordinary, has value and remains significant.

My (our) life has a universal dimension. There is a tendency to dwell on our small difficulties, personal and interpersonal sufferings which are worth nothing. Yet listening to what is happening in the world, especially during this time when all our lives are affected by the present health crisis, I feel an

invitation to play things down, to accept things in a lighter vein. In trust, the family spirit helps me, helps us, to put things into perspective, to allow ourselves to be purified and to have a positive outlook to life.

Personally, I carry within me the ministries of my apostolic sisters: all that I hear in the international news that reach us through the 'Inter-Connections' magazine and those of the Units. Their echo makes me participate in their mission, which is also mine, while being here in the Solitude. It is as if I were the one doing and living all this. This is also supported by the closeness of our priest associates, the sharing of life experiences with the lay associates and the secular members during their stay at the Solitude. We all live the missionary, apostolic spirit and share the common mission.

So, this crisis that is being lived at present I see, as a growth in humanity. Not only spiritually, but at a very human level, seeing the suffering of others, of the world, brings me closer to the people who really live it.

At the moment, during this time of Pandemic, great solidarity is being lived: it is a source of joy; and I hope that this will continue in the future (after the Pandemic). We ask the Lord's grace, so that the collaboration and mutual help experienced now, may continue always, so that we can build a new, just and more fraternal world.

3 February
199th



Anniversary of the Miraculous Benediction

BENEDICTION

On Wednesday 3 February 2021, we entered the year of the Bicentenary of the Miraculous Benediction.

On the initiative of the small group of Lay Associates of Bar-le-Duc (a small town in the North-East of France), about twenty people met to celebrate this anniversary, thanks to their good will in joining; thanks to the technique of telephone conferencing, simple and accessible to those who only have a telephone.

Indeed, this year, the health situation did not allow us to meet "face to face" for a time of prayer and Adoration, as we had been used to for many years, first at the Sisters' home and then in the parish, since their departure.

This deprived us of the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament but it allowed us to open our group to different members of the Family, across France: members of four vocations - Apostolic Sisters, several of whom had stayed in Bar-le-Duc, a Secular, a priest Associate from Bordeaux, Lay Associates from Metz and Bar-le-Duc - were present. Fr. Jean-Pierre Guéry - a priest from Bar-le-Duc parish, who welcomed us every year during the time of Adoration - and some parishioners also joined us by telephone.

This time of prayer had been prepared and sent

Sylvie Tangre and Anne-Marie Sibille,
Lay Associates of France

in advance to each participant.

The words of welcome, brought us such joy in this meeting; and after a time of exchanging and getting to know one other, we entered into prayer.

Jean-Pierre Guéry shared with us, the following short reflection.

"BENEDICTION" is the theme, and the word often used during this time of shared prayer!

Blessing means "something good" and also the verb "to say". A blessing is to say something good, even in circumstances such as what we live in these times of health risks.

In the Bible, blessing is primarily an act of God. The God presented to us in the Bible, wills the good of humans, desires that they be good to creation that surrounds and shapes them. This blessing is rooted in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, where Creation is described as "good" and even "very good" by the Creator. We are invited to see Creation as a blessing. This creative impulse presented in Genesis leads to another central, historically important event, namely the Death and Resurrection of Jesus – a future that is inaugurated by Christ, promised to the whole of humanity.

The word "blessing" also carries the meaning of gratitude, praise, thanksgiving.

Before meals we pray the 'grace' thanking God for the food we have and also for those who have laboured to prepare it for us. At important moments, events of our life journey – like a birthday, a milestone in the life of a couple, a religious festival – we thank God for bringing us together and for our faith that animates us.

As believing communities when we gather in churches, we express our thanks and praise to God in songs and prayer. 'Blessing' affirms the presence of God, the presence of God's love already at work in a person's life. The Eucharist reminds us of the gift of God in Jesus, who gives himself to free us. Thus, Eucharist becomes our deepest encounter of communion with God, in our history, through the new and eternal covenant sealed by Christ. In this mutual exchange, God makes us God's people and brothers and sisters of one another. We are invited to be become more aware of this

blessing and live in the Spirit!

Here are the testimonies of two Lay Associates from Bar-le-Duc:

Malika: "It was wonderful to be able to communicate with new people, all gathered around what is essential to us, the Holy Family, and to see all these people come out of their solitude, or even their confinement in a retirement home, to share and express what they feel. A beautiful experience to be repeated; it is a support in these difficult times."

Marie-Sylvie: "This virtual meeting allowed me to share the Word of God and the words of Father Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. It gave me the strength to understand, to move forward, to give, to share in this world turned upside down by this Pandemic. I hope that future meetings can be held face-to-face.

Later, Father Guéry shared: "I found the quality of listening remarkable and as a result, we were in communion.

I AM WHO I AM, FEBRUARY 3

Pre-Novices of Gikongoro, Rwanda/Uganda



The Feast of the Miraculous Benediction in our community of Gikongoro was a day of great joy for us as Pre-novices of the Holy Family. This feast was preceded by various preparations. We had time to prepare songs, poems, drama and dances for the commemorative evening of this event. As a community we had a Triduum of night adoration from 9:00 pm - 5:00 am. In turn, each member of the community spent an hour

before the Blessed Sacrament, to thank the Lord for all the blessings granted to our Family, our Unit and our community. Being aware of, and taking common formation into account we also organized adoration with the Associates during the day, from 3 pm to 4 pm. We did this in small groups, as the regulations of Covid 19 in our country do not allow us to meet in big groups. This prayer of thanksgiving for the gift received by Pierre Bienvenu Noailles,

helped us to return to the sources of our Holy Family life. We felt renewed, and we were encouraged by Jesus who blessed us from the beginning, who tells us "I am who I am, and there is no other". In this prayer we carried the current situation of the people who suffer from Coronavirus, praying that the Lord may deliver us from this Pandemic that is invading the whole world.

The Eucharistic celebration of 3 February was

presided over by our Bishop HAKIZIMANA Celestin, with Scripture readings for the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, to underline the importance of the Eucharist in our Holy Family. We are in the process of preparing for the Bicentenary of the Miraculous Benediction. To underline this preparation, we spend half hour every morning in adoration before the Lord and have night adoration every Thursday. We also read the book on “Eucharistic Miracle” written by Bernard Peyrous.

We continue to thank the Lord for this great gift, which has been our comfort and encouragement in this difficult time. We are convinced that in this very difficult and critical moment of COVID 19, the spirit of God Alone that animated our first mothers encourages us and gives us hope to move forward. May Jesus who has blessed us, be our glory, our friend, our wealth and our pleasure. May he be all things to us!

UPLIFT THE GIRL CHILD - VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

Holy Family Sisters – Benga Parish - Malawi

On the 11th of January 2021, we began our 6th ‘Uplift the Girl Child’ Training Process in Mthasewe, one of the centers in Benga Parish. It is here that we began our first training program two years ago, that we really, practically learned the culture and the needs of the girls. The first group of girls of Thasewe laid the foundation of ‘Uplift the Girl Child’ Process. They encouraged us to be more creative in responding to the needs of the rest of the girls. This encouragement pushed us to move forward courageously into other centers of the parish.

Considering the Covid 19 Pandemic, we selected 12 girls to follow the course in order to comply with the restrictions. In the process of the course we had to close down for two weeks adhering to the request of the government, as the number of Covid patients were on the increase in the country. It was a challenge, not knowing exactly when we would be able to continue..... With the blessings of God, things returned to normal and after consulting the Parish Priest Fr Manolo, we were able to continue after two exactly weeks. We experienced the eagerness and joy of the 12 young women who came back to continue the process.

And so we began our Training Program, being conscious of the blessings of the Risen Lord by lighting the Paschal Candle.

January to April is the rainy season in Malawi.....Time for cultivation. The whole family is involved in the field. Yet, giving priority to this Vocational Training, the parents of these young women encouraged their daughters to follow the one month course in the midst of their economic challenges.

Meditation and concentration are the tools for a life of serenity and tranquility. The young women were trained daily on different methods of meditation.

They dedicated themselves fully to learning to sew various types of dresses and bags, looking forward to brightening their future through self-employment

During the training they were also encourage to save money so that they may learn to save a little from what they earn in future.

This group had the opportunity to prepare a different forms of Model Home Garden and cultivate various kinds of green leaves that could be used as vegetables. On the Final day the harvest was shared with Fr. Fernando

The food items introduced in this course were snacks made out of maize flour, tomato jam and banana flower as a vegetable, to encourage them for self-employment.

The young women were trained to think, plan and act in order to uplift themselves and their



families. Self-Awareness, Conflict management, Time Management, Communication Skills and Social Awareness are been taught to build up their mental and Spiritual life through various activities and discussions.

The Awarding Ceremony was held on the 27th February 2021. The girls welcomed the guests, as well as the parents of the young women and friends. The ceremony began thanking and praising God at the Eucharistic celebration. Later, all were invited for the entertainment, It was a great day for the village Mthasewe. The program was conducted by the young women. A presentation of the one month program was presented by Sr. Matilda Lazarus, and Sudarshani Fernando gave the Vote of Thanks. The 12 women were honored with certificates distributed by Rev. Fr. Fernando Aguirre, along a sewing kit, and Vegetable seeds to begin Home Garden.

Our sincere Thanks to God Almighty, and to all who contributed to the success of this Programme.

EXPERIENCE OF THE PROCESS TOWARDS THE TWENTIETH GENERAL CHAPTER, LIVING IN A MISSION LAND

Fingila Wosaya Sylvie , BURKINA FASO

A few lines to express my gratitude for the experience I had during the collective discernment process towards the twentieth General Chapter, a very special chapter, unlike others, a chapter that moves the whole body (structure, purpose, role, system, context)

Firstly, I thank the Lord for giving us this opportunity to look at the reality of our history, which reveals both our richness and fragility. Thanks to the Chapter preparatory Commission who allowed themselves to be touched and guided by the Spirit in this work. Thank you for your availability, your sense of sacrifice, your reflections and this great initiative, enabling participation of all the members via Zoom. I'm thankful because I

truly felt the concern of each one of us for bearing and continuing to live our charism of communion. I am happy because this process helped me to be closely in touch with the reality, recognizing where we are 'sick' as an Institute.

At this moment, I feel connected with the whole body, aware of the urgency to be healed of that which is 'sick' in me before looking at others. In fact, to look at my life in relation to: dysfunctionality, living leadership, initial and ongoing formation, intercultural communities, human and financial resources, the decrease in members, the fear of risking, individualism, indifference, lack of dialogue, collaboration, lukewarmness in prayer and so many other challenges. These urge me to look deeply at

my initial motivation and invite me to a radical change for mission. I realize that in one way or another I am at the heart of this sickness which affects the whole Institute and so the importance of my way of being and doing that requires focused care and attention.

I hear an invitation to leave my comfort zones, to express my availability, to strengthen the life of the whole where needed - in other parts of the world where the family is beginning to disappear for many reasons. I felt the importance of learning other languages, to live in openness to share myself, my knowledge for the sake of our mission and the vitality of our charism of communion. It is vital to take care of the quality of my life-witness and to live

letting go, detachment, change of mentality, with a sense of responsibility and simplicity, learning and receiving a diversified formation.

Beyond the fear of dying that floods the heart, I keep hope, trust and solid faith in God who is the master of our history. God will help me to be "in the boat" and cross over with him "to the other shore", to leave the baggage that holds me back in order to put myself effectively at his service without reserve. The texts of the calming of the storm and the blind man of Jericho become my support and encouragement in my daily life.

May Jesus, Mary and Joseph give us the grace to live this change without being afraid or troubled!

THE EXPERIENCE OF ASH WEDNESDAY / FEBRUARY 2021

Burkina Faso



Ash Wednesday was lived in a special way in Burkina Faso, our mission land, where with the present reduced mobility, the local Church organized for us to go out and meet all the people to offer them the blessed ashes at the beginning of the Lenten season. At the invitation of Father Marcel COMPAORE, parish priest of Baskouré, we joined the team going to Ganpoungdo, a village on the outskirts, to meet the people and strengthen their faith life.

Feeling very happy in having this opportunity,

we did not hesitate to offer our availability despite the language barrier.

The theme of the General Chapter 2014 encouraged us in this new experience: "If not now, when? None of us was unaware of the *harmattan* period we were in: full of dust, wind and heat. We braved going out of our comfort zones to meet the 'little ones' and it has made a big impact on our parish community in Baskouré.

However, before committing ourselves, we took the time to learn in Mooré (the vernacular) the liturgical words that accompany this gesture of ashes: "têeg ti f ya têng, tom la f na n leba têeg tomê" which means: "Man, remember that you are dust and that you will return to dust."

We were accompanied by Mr. Henry YOUNGMA, our gardener, and Mr. Macaire POUYA, leader of our Basic Living Church Community, CEVB in short.

When we arrived, we met some Christians already gathered around Mr. Roger

ZOUGMORE, leader of the Basic Living Church Community of the said village. However, some could not join us because of their state of health, so we were obliged to meet them in their own houses. This experience left a strong impression on me. I was amazed and at the same time edified by the greatness of the faith of these people - the young and old alike. The joy of their hearts shone on their faces.



Expressing his happiness, an elderly man said: "Ah, I have followed your broadcasts on Radio Marie Burkina several times, your missionary presence in Burkina Faso. Being blind, I could not come to greet you. Thank you for coming to meet us. May God bless you and your mission in our country."

This experience was a challenge for our whole community. It stimulated us and encouraged us to go forward with zeal witnessing to our faith in the midst of God's little ones, where God reveals Godself as Father. Our joy was so great in bringing the Good News by our presence, our closeness to the most needy, poor and vulnerable which is a priority for us.

Walking in the footsteps of our Founder, we recalled his words: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news of salvation" and were happy to share with everyone the Lenten message: "Be converted and believe in the good news".

AN OPPORTUNITY TO HARNESS THE ENERGIES OF LOVE IN NEW WAYS

Shanthi Simon , Jaffna - Sri Lanka

An aspect of ministry became adapting isolation to contemplative solitude in solidarity with suffering humanity and the planet. Holistic caregiving during Pandemic requires special skills. During these days we have learned that creativity and dialogue are partners of hearts desiring to respond concretely to the invitations of love and solidarity.

We have experienced that our capacity for compassion grows as we unite with and enter into the suffering of others. I would like to bring two experiences of our community here at Muhandiram Lane Deiwela.

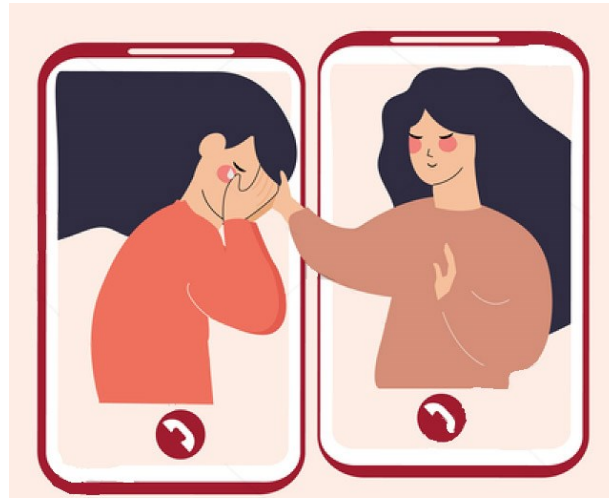
It was in July 2020 Mr. Ramalingam who is the husband of Our Asian Lay Associates leader Mrs. Regina Ramalingam was brought to Colombo from Mannar, their home town, for

medical treatment. Regina expressed their desire to receive Holy Communion whenever possible. From the 1st visit , we felt even in the midst of Pandemic restrictions with all safety measures we have to take Communion to Mr.Ram. The days we visited and prayed with him and receiving communion brightened his face and the inner joy of Mr.Ramalingam was expressing his gratitude he held up both his hands in prayer and thanked many a time voluntarily for bringing the energizing presence of God to him when he is in utter helplessness. It was 18th July just after a few days from his birthday 13th July we visited him with Communion and nobody knew that it was last time he was receiving the Lord. He was also blessed to have received the Anointing of the Sick, and he was in a hurry to receive communion without long prayers to be united

with Jesus and be united to the Virgin Mary who was his inseparable companions. Next day he peacefully passed away; his family is so grateful for bringing Communion to Mr. Ram. During this time of Pandemic we had no other ministry to get involved in, but we chose to do this act of mercy.

Another incident was the sudden death of Miss Christa Kingsley, a 25 year-old university student who passed away in Germany on the 21st April 2020. She had already lost her father, and Harriet, her mother was falling into a deep depression over the loss of her dear daughter. I knew Harriet during the 1990 “Exodus” in Jaffna. Her two brothers were shot dead on the same day, and after this ordeal I accompanied her till the family left the country for Germany. I lost contact until 2019 when she and her daughter Christa met me in Sri Lanka. That was the first and last time I met Christa Kingsley. She died from a mysterious lung infection. Thank God for the Internet: it was through WhatsApp I was able to accompany Harriet and her 28-year old son for almost a year. We as a Holy Family community at Dehiwela empathized with her through a very consoling and energizing prayer service where Annie and Jessica joined from Rome. We were continuously connected through prayer and by listening to their

grieving process. Harriet’s faith is remarkable; her son is still left with unanswered questions. I believe that time will heal them.



Without denying how difficult this period has been for all of us — our deeper connectedness through internet was very consoling and life-giving. I humbly say that Providence is manifested in the countless generous acts of self-giving. We do know that there is no life, no love, no beauty without suffering.

From these two experiences I learnt that there’s beauty in darkness. As Celtic wisdom says, “beauty is not that something extra; for those who can see, it emerges from the deepest mystery of every creature”.

SPREAD THE FRAGRANCE OF OUR CHARISM

Sr. Arockia Mari FRANCIS - India

This article was received before the recent, devastating wave of the Coronavirus exploded in India. (Ed.)

Flowers are the miracles of the world with their sweet beauty and fragrance that stimulate our senses. In the same way, our Charism of Communion is a spiral which unites and connects everyone to form one Family. I am called to spread the fragrance of communion to everyone, and to gather together all into one family, where I can make alive the Spirit of our Founder PBN. As the entire global community has gone through the crisis of Covid-19, many have suffered with the loss of their family members; there is still

fear, anxiety and the lack of medical facilities. At this Pandemic situation I felt,

“The power of Virus can kill

The power of Fire can Burn

The power of Care and a Smile can heal a frozen heart

The power of our Commitment can give life to everyone and Hope to the Hopeless”.

I am a Nurse doing my health ministry in our Dispensary in Keela Uchani. I am able to be courageous to treat the people who are sick,



especially during the Covid-19 Pandemic. There are 19 substations surrounding our village Keela Uchani, and from all these villages, many come to our Dispensary for treatment for fever, cold, cough and other ordinary sicknesses, as well as more serious illnesses such as lung problems, asthma, breathing difficulties and heart problems.. Since the Covid-19 is threatening the people, all are frightened to go to other hospitals, which have become a business. For simple fever, cough and cold people are diagnosed as Covid-19, asked to pay more money, and will be isolated. In the hospital they have to keep distance, not allowed to be touched and given care. So when people come to our dispensary they share their painful experiences and worry a lot. At that moment I am challenged and courageous enough to touch them and to give care for them. I am able to give hope to the hopeless.

Through my acceptance of the people, with care, a smile and consoling words, I assure them that they will be healed. I make them

deepen their faith in God rather than in science and technology. I give free medicine to the poor people; teach them the preventive measures and home remedies. Also I give psychological support to many who come with their fear and anxiety of Covid-19. Many of these people have said, “We see God in you as you are saving our lives especially at this cruel situation. So we are grateful to you and to your service.” So I am happy to render my service to this poor people as a Holy Family Sister. As my purpose is to give life, I try to give life to its fullness in my mission.

As Jesus says, **“whatsoever you do to the least of my people that you do unto me”**. I feel the sacredness of Jesus in everyone who comes for the treatment. So I feel I need to spread the fragrance of our Charism and make alive the spirit of our Founder is my mission especially at this difficult situation. Now I like to conclude my article with the words of our Founder which is a real strength and encouragement for my life, **“Go Forward there is nothing to check your course”**.

WE ALL ARE ONE SO WHERE IS MY SHARE

Sr. Saima Iqbal Pakistan

We all are children of God and are created in His image. We have equal rights to contribute and to receive our basic needs like education, food and clothes. After seeing all around I feel that the above-mentioned are only words. Many people are lacking even basic needs for a good life.

During this Pandemic life has brought many

challenges and hardships to all, especially the poor who are living hand-to-mouth. During this Pandemic I got chance to visit an area of Bolochistan, 207 km away from Quetta. We went to visit this area with some of the members of Caritas, Father Renard OMI, Father Jeremiah, Sister Josephine Khushi and myself. This area is full of apple-orchards. We



felt blessed as we were on the way to see the beauty of nature, different colors of mountains and green trees full of fruit. Everything was beautiful and pleasant.

As we entered the village people welcomed us and invited us to sit in a small hall made of mud. Then they offered us tea and biscuits. After some time children came from the school, which we saw was very far. Some of the young boys separated the school-going children from the others. We met them and tried to talk but neither we nor they could understand what we were saying. It was cold and due to Covid 19 we all had masks but those children were without, so after some time we also removed them, in order to feel and let them feel the oneness. They were full of dirt; dirty clothes and around them were so many flies.

Seeing the situation I was sad, questioning myself on what is their future, why they are deprived of their basic needs. When the school bags were given to the school children they were so happy, but those who were not going to school did not receive gifts. I can't express what I saw in their faces and in their eyes. There are many who don't come out of their houses during the scorching heat but these children were in open ground waiting for something. I appreciate the efforts of Caritas and Father Renard Remindran, OMI to pay attention to these children, and for having given me this opportunity to meet them. May God help them and bless generous people to show them their Love.

MUTHURAJAWELA, SRI LANKA

Colombo - Sri Lanka

Muthurajawela, Sri Lanka, a formerly a fertile rice-growing land was made a protected wetland sanctuary under the Flora and Fauna Protection Act. This was done in recognition of its vast biodiversity. The internationally acclaimed wetland, located between Colombo and Negombo, is being undermined by unauthorized and illegal human activities. These activities are taking place despite the sanctuary boasting environmental, economic and regenerative values. According to records at the Agrarian Development Department office, there are 635 acres of paddy fields in the Muthurajawela area. Marshland and man-

groves in the area amount to 7000 acres. The 'Society for the Protection of Muthurajawela Sanctuary', a leading and active environmental society in the areas surrounding Muthurajawela, is keeping a close watch on what is happening in Muthurajawela.

The destruction taking place within the sanctuary was brought to light by a small group of committed residents. They formed the Organization for the protection of Muthurajawela in a bid to expose the racket that was being carried out under the guise of a development project.

“This has led to threats to our lives and our families, but once we committed ourselves to the task, we did not stop till we brought it to the attention of the President,” said the head of the organization.

We as Holy Family Sisters have been inserted in the beautiful area of Bopitiya and more deeply we have rooted ourselves in the hearts of the people of this soil and identified ourselves with them.

In April, 2017 the news suddenly came from Colombo that the Municipal Council had decided to dump garbage in Muthurajawela. Muthurajawela is a marshy land, habitat for so many water creatures. This marshy land contributes a lot to balance the ecosystem, so any sort of disturbance cause the collapse of the whole eco-Biological system.

When this shocking news reached our ears, we all gathered to the church to discuss how we could overcome this predicament.

We all went to the place where the garbage dumping process had been initiated. We blocked the road and many people gathered with us irrespective of their religious differences to stop this threat.

So we began the protest against the dumping. First we did an active protest to stop the dumping, but they were continuing dumping. Then we began the silent protest with prayers. After three days they stopped the dumping. Later all the educated people in the village gathered to take decisions to protect the place. They decided to file a case against the filling of the Muthurajawela. As Sisters we too went to the courts every time. It was an

advantage that the hearing was postponed.

Then our core group met former President Sirisena. He stopped all the filling inside of this land. However, a secret passage was prepared to enter and continue dumping. When the new Environment Minister was appointed we took the chance to meet him and discussed this issue. He visited the area and got a broader understanding of this issue.

Very recently, our Cardinal and the bishops paid their attention to this problem and took some measures to stop this destruction. They had press conferences. Bishop J.D Anthony visited various parishes and created awareness among the people about this problem. The printed poster and banner were pasted everywhere to protect this marshy land. With all these actions Bopitiya parish took initiatives such as awareness programs, meeting people and organizing vehicle parade to create awareness among people and to stop this destruction.



Muthurajawela is a paradise and a treasure of the people. We all should join our hands to stop this dumping and the destruction of this sanctuary. The struggle continues.

MARATHON PRAYER RALLY AGAINST GLOBAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING

& OUR SOLIDARITY ACTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Human Trafficking is a global problem affecting people at all ages. It is subjecting people to forced labor for little or no pay. Human trafficking as defined is a form of slavery involving the illegal transport of individuals by force or deception for the purpose of labour, sexual exploitation or activities in which others benefit financially. Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation against humanity. In an effort to deal with the problem, the Philippines passed Republic Act 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003: a penal law against human trafficking, sex tourism, sex slavery and child prostitution. This is a significant issue in the Philippines as well as prostitution and Child Abuse. Human trafficking is the second fastest-growing crime in the world. It is a heinous crime that shatters lives, families and dreams.

In the Philippines, cybersex is one of the prevailing forms of human trafficking: the live-streaming of the sexual exploitation of children, which is viewed over the internet. Young boys and girls are being sexually exploited in images or videos online in the so called pornography. Almost 55% of the victims are twelve years old or younger and the youngest is two months old. Snapshots of naked children are retailed to pedophiles for fifty to one hundred dollars. According to End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) an International NGO, 100,000 Filipino children are exploited every year.

One possible reason why the Philippines is a hotspot for this kind of trafficking is because of the wide access of internet and English is widely-spoken. This makes it a lot easier for pedophiles to set up shows. The internet is a major source for predators' hunting, recruit-

ment and trapping of innocent victims. To protect children from the sex trade, the Philippines continues to establish policies especially with social media networks, internet service providers and remittance agencies.

Across the world, millions of women and young girls live in the long shadows of human trafficking as it operates in darkness. This is quite alarming, so let us initiate and join advocacy and media campaigns to promote awareness of this crime that preys on society's most vulnerable people. The cause stems from the adverse circumstances in origin countries and the main cause is massive poverty, unemployment and lack of basic needs. Thus, wherever there is poverty, women and young girls' lives are at risk for exploitation.

It is unimaginable how some parents sell their children even online through cybersex, how husbands allow their wives to engage in this trade. Parents who should be protectors become their offenders. Poverty deprives the poor of good education; people lack education and knowledge on their rights; this leads them to the hands of the traffickers who take advantage of their ignorance and vulnerability.



February 8, 2021 was the International Day of prayer and awareness against Human Trafficking. It was also the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, who herself was the victim of slavery and abuse and who is now declared as Patron for Human Trafficking.



We, the Holy Family of Bordeaux in the Philippines are blessed with the direct involvement in Trafficking Ministry: Sr. Vivian Fernando is the National Coordinator for this new ministry called TALITHA KUM – a mission entrusted by the AMRSP – The Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines. The Talitha Kum Team in the Philippines is kept very active under the leadership of Sr. Vivian and Sr. Subhashini Raj as Project Fund Coordinator for the funds generously shared by our PBN Foundation for this year 2021. Several activities relating to Awareness Programs are undertaken frequently and regularly, reaching out to all sectors of the society here in the Philippines. The Talitha Kum Team has conducted prayer rallies, protest marches, poster distributions, seminars to parents in general, students in all secondary and college levels, and special programs for women, religious groups in the past. Now due to the Pandemic the work continues with on-line seminars, webinars, and virtual seminars at village level. A great sense of awareness has been created as the situation of Trafficking in the Philippines in its numerous and various forms is very much present and is actively operational even during this Pandemic.

February 8th 2021, on the International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, a program named GLOBAL MARATHON PRAYER was prepared by “Talitha Kum” International to highlight the Theme for this year 2021 that focused on ‘**An Economy without Human Trafficking**’ in line with Pope Francis’ call for a total sustainability plan beginning 2021-2030.

We the Holy Family Communities in Bulan and

Rizal took the opportunity to make it possible for the Lay Associates and Lay Leaders, Mothers’ Groups and Youth Groups to participate in the well-planned program. We also created room and space for chats in dyads and groups. Group activities were based on the Video Presentation. The participants were able to see for themselves the horrifying reality of human trafficking and all other issues related to it, not only in the Philippines but also in other countries as well.

In RIZAL SORSOGON we had this program on February 8th with our Kapilya (chapel) Cluster 1 Youth Group – youth comprising of 07 Barangays (villages). More than 60 Youth participated in it. Sr Merita Fernando welcomed the youth; she introduced the program and outlined what is concerned in Human Trafficking. After performing a dance with the theme song “Heal our land’ the youth watched almost all the sequences of the global Video Presentation.



They were taken by surprise to know and to view that Trafficking is really an International serious situation that calls for urgent and immediate Action against it. Time was given for Personal and Group reflection, sharing, expression of concerns and identification of the same problems and situations prevailing in their

own homes, villages, schools and in society. There was free sharing of the real situation they themselves are familiar and concerned with. After a fruitful time spent in prayer, reflection, discussions and sharing, the Youth came forward to pledge themselves against Trafficking. The lighted candle in their hands was a symbol of radiating Christ to the Trafficking world and solidarity with the victims of this modern slavery. They vowed to fight against this crime against humanity and against the children and youth who fall victims to this heinous crime. We wish to follow this up with other similar seminar, video presentations and workshops and to extend it to the other sectors at the Barangay level.

In BULAN SORSOGON we gathered the Mothers and the Youth, the Lay Leaders and the Lay Associates to participate on the International Day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking. It was a fruitful participation where all the participants were actively involved in dialogue, group activity, creative presentations, freedom of expression and opinion to feel free to share their own and environmental situation related to areas of abuse and the category of the victims fallen prey to this crime.



After hearing and seeing the actual situations in the video presentation, and after a fruitful interaction among the groups, they were asked to write how each one would commit to eradicate this situation and protect the children, women and even the men. It was a very moving moment each participant remembering those affected, lighted the candles, and read how they are going to

commit to safeguard the victims and how they would react to the situation. Some of their resolutions were:

- ⇒ to be an attentive parent
- ⇒ to pray for the victims
- ⇒ through prayer, not only to reflect on the experiences of those who have suffered through this at the level of human dignity, but also to find ways to heal, to comfort, to strengthen, to help and to empower the survivors.
- ⇒ to pray for the people who are working and fighting to end this issue
- ⇒ to be vigilant and report to those who can do something
- ⇒ to work and to join groups that fight for human rights and many more....

Some of the hard but realistic comments and questions raised to us during the symposium:

It's very alarming and heart-breaking to become aware of the situation in the Philippines. What can we do as women leaders, mothers and as Lay Associates to contribute our share of support to curb this sinful situation in this society. How can we



help to end human trafficking and this modern day slavery? What commitment can we make to help to end this issue even in our own places?

These efforts have raised awareness that human trafficking can happen anytime, anywhere even at home, especially now

that the need for online schooling has meant that social media is available to all. It is challenging to be vigilant and be attentive to the children's' use of social media. Empowerment through educating parents as well as children about human rights and human trafficking is needed. We will continue to prioritize educating the people around us to keep them aware of the dangers they face.