



Interconnections

NO. 66

MARCH 2024

INFO/COM SERVICE



“Let us do good
Without being discouraged”

(Galatians 6:9)

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“Being Holy Family in a synodal key today: *with the inheritance we have received since God granted the Charism of the Holy Family to Fr. Noailles, all of us, who are called to live this free gift in the Church, yesterday, today and in the coming decades, have the duty and responsibility to transmit to the world, by our lives and our actions, the happiness of feeling called”*

(Meeting Point 7)



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EDITORIAL

"Let us do good without being discouraged" (Galatians 6:9)

The world today is a threatening and scary place. The ongoing wars in some countries (internal and external) make us sad, cause fear of death, and along with climate change contribute to poverty, joblessness, migration, anxiety about the future, etc.

In the midst of these realities, the season of Lent began on St. Valentine's Day, emphasizing the true love of God for humanity. Walking with Jesus on the journey of the Paschal Mystery, the season of Lent invites us to a personal and collective transformation through fasting, praying, and almsgiving, even as we work to protect our world from all kinds of destruction. It is also a time of solidarity, a time to renew the bonds that unite us with God, creation, and others. True solidarity is not just a feeling; the feeling should drive action. Solidarity demands that we take our time and listen to the cries of our sisters, brothers and creation.

Our Founder, Pierre Bienvenu, always invites us to ***"Go often in spirit to the foot of the Cross; how many lessons you will receive there! There you will learn that sufferings are a blessing..."*** As we look at the global reality, our hearts undergo pain and suffering. Let us believe that our sufferings will become blessings from the greater glory of God and that everything will pass away...

Today we are happy to see our Big Family spreading to many countries and living the



Charism as one Family in solidarity with the people through our ministries and various initiatives. ***"Let us do good without being discouraged"*** in the context where we are. May our presence, words, and deeds bring solidarity to the neglected and unnoticed people in the society.

Our Lord Jesus, whose words were heard by Sister Marie Louis Francoise Peychaud on February 3, 1822, during the Miraculous Benediction, will heal our broken humanity...

***"I am the One who is
and there is no other.
Honour and the esteem of creatures
are but smoke
and I am the One who is.
Their friendship is but dust
and I am the One who is.
Wealth and pleasure
are but mud
and I am the One who is
and there is no other."***

Mercy Rani Jebamalai

HERE IN ROME



We gratefully thank **Maria Kinga Bartos**, who worked as a Secretary General for the past 10 years, in the service of the Institute and the Family. We appreciate her dedication, availability, and selflessness for the smooth running of the work. We wish her every blessing and pray for her new journey as she

GENERALATE

joins the Province of Italy in October 2024 to continue her service.

Marie Pierre Otiba, one of the members of the Generalate Local Community, has been appointed as the new Secretary General. We congratulate her, and thank her for her yes to this ministry. May the Holy Family guide and accompany her always.



THE GRACE OF A NEW BEGINNING

The celebration of our **20th General Chapter**, with its theme: **"Can we still live our purpose as we begin our third century?"**, challenged our minds to the point of awakening our conscience to the imperative of a new beginning, based on certain calls such as: **"Cross over to the other side!"** **"Let go!"** **"Throw off the mantle!"**. This demands that we take visible and concrete steps, and commit ourselves to transformation.

To get this new beginning off to a good start, we were also called upon to evaluate personally and as a community our Holy Family presence in our communities, our Units, our Institute, in the Church and in the world. This encouraged a deep introspection to free ourselves (letting go) and commit (take daring steps).

To do this, we, the Sisters of the Generalate Local Community, aware of our specific mission to collaborate with the Superior General and her Council, felt the call to take concrete steps to open ourselves as a community to the context in which we live: to get out of our physical "isolation" and to open ourselves up more to the Parish and to other communities. The aim is to live and share our mission of **"being and creating family among ourselves and around us..."**, and above all to bear witness to our Holy Family presence here in Rome. Encouraged by the General Council, it was time to put the project into practice, **but how?**

While we were reflecting on

the possibilities of opening up more in our context, the grace of God intervened. Before beginning his ministry, the new Parish Priest of Our Lady of Guadalupe/Rome called together all the Religious Congregations in the area. He wanted to find out about the Mission, the participation and commitment of each Congregation in this parish, and how they planned to get involved in the future. Two members of our community took part in the meeting, and certain proposals were made in relation to the celebration of the day dedicated to Consecrated Life where each congregation should choose a Saturday or Sunday Mass, during which it would lead the liturgy (songs, readings, intentions...) and speak about its Congregation.

This planning was for us the grace of a new beginning and we welcomed it enthusiastically. After reflection in community, we chose the date of 4 February, which was accepted by the Parish Priest. To this end, the programme of songs was drawn up and practised, the text to present the Holy Family was prepared with great care with the desire to make Pierre Bienvenu NOAILLES and his work widely known.

On 2 February 2024, we

divided up into communities: some went to the Vatican to join the many consecrated persons who had come from all over Rome, from other parts of Italy and even from different countries around the world. Others went to the Parish to unite with the consecrated persons of our Parish, and a group of Sisters stayed for Mass in the community. This experience of meeting, of fraternity and of joining so many men and women who, like us, have freely embraced this special way of walking with Jesus and responding to the needs of the world has strengthened our joy of being a gift to others and of belonging to a Church-family of God.

On 4 February 2024, we were hosts at the 11.00am Mass for young people, which some adults also attend. One of us presented our Charismatic Family, and at the end of the service we distributed to the parishioners some of the booklets and leaflets we had received from our Sisters in Marino and those we ourselves had prepared. With our diverse cultures and despite not yet having mastered the local language, we were able to bear witness to the fact that in Jesus Christ, communion is truly possible.





We did not imagine that the Church would be so full. We were amazed at the people's joy as they took part in the Eucharist, and at their sustained attention to our presence, to the presentation and the sharing about the PBN family, which expressed their gratitude for the gift that we are for them, for the church. This event rekindled in us the desire to be close to them and to involve ourselves in parish life and activities.

The next day, the Parish Priest sent us the following message of gratitude and encouragement: ***"Dear Sisters, after this weekend when you have been more present in the Parish, bearing witness to your religious life and sharing your Charism, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Let us continue to walk in unity, in diversity. Unity which, in the Church, is called Communion. We are sure that God will always bless us with this communion. We would like to take this opportunity to ask you to pray that the parish community's Lenten retreat, on Sunday, 25 February, will bear fruit. Thank you very much".*** (Fr.Claudio Maria Gracias)

We should also mention that

this call to be more open in the context of our lives had already prompted us to plan various visits to our Sisters in the Province of Italy, including visits to the burial places of those who had died.

We began by visiting the Provincial Community (Via Dei Gracchi) and the cemeteries of our Sisters. On 25 January 2024, it was the turn of the community of Marino, where our elderly and sick Sisters of the Province of Italy live. Our Sisters gave us a warm and affectionate welcome. In a family atmosphere, we exchanged stories, sang, shared an aperitif around the same table, took souvenir photos, and so on.

We were moved by the joy they felt at having us with them, and by the attention they paid to each of us, especially those they didn't yet know. We were edified by their words, and their sisterly warmth, and imbued with a sense of belonging to one Family. We were also touched by their sense of common mission, when in our discussions we shared with them our plan to lead Mass in the Parish and present our Family, and

that we needed some documents on PBN and his work. With promptness and joy, they offered us everything we needed. And we could see on their faces that they were happy to participate in the mission carried out by one or other member of the Family.

This visit to our Sisters was a very beautiful and profound experience of ***"being and creating Family"***, which rekindled in us the conviction that: our commitment to the following of Christ or the living out of our mission of communion does not depend on age, state of health, specific apostolate or any other responsibility... but on openness to God and to others.

Openness to others has helped us to recognise and welcome the grace of a fresh start in responding to God's call. The Holy Family has now relaunched its journey with the people of God of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and is ready to share the grace of unity in diversity in this very context. May the Lord continue to help us open our eyes to recognise his graces and welcome them for the mission.

"Can we still live our purpose as we begin our third century?"

Sr. Claudine GAYONGO THAMBWE
Generalate Local Community, Rome

TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Inspired by our Founder, the First Sisters of the Holy Family and by so many more of our Sisters and Brothers through the years since our founding, we the Lay Members in Ireland together with some of the Sisters decided to reach out and help some of the most vulnerable in our society.

And who could be more vulnerable than pre-mature babies? The proposal to knit hats and blankets for them (as recommended by Staff at most hospitals) was put to those present at the close of the Annual Lay Members Gathering on September 1st, 2023. It seemed like a great idea and there was enthusiasm and agreement around the initiative.

A sheet of paper was provided requesting names of volunteer knitters. An abundance of colourful wool, needles and knitting patterns was made available. All together there were twenty-two volunteers and a deadline was set for the collection of the finished work. The wool, needles and patterns quickly disappeared and the Group dispersed with not only the need to care for the Earth in mind (for this had been the main theme of the day) but also to care for some of the most vulnerable on the Earth!

Chat around the initiative spilled out over the local community with the result that friends and work mates became involved and the work took off quietly in a variety of venues. Then boxes and bags of completed work began to arrive at the Convent as planned. What an amazing outcome! The final total realised four hundred and sixty-eight hats and two hundred and twenty-eight blankets. What a colourful display and what joy it brought to the Staff at the Coombe and Rotunda hospitals in Dublin, when it was delivered there just before Christmas. In an email from the Coombe the feedback read, **“The knitting is beautiful and the presentation is lovely. Many thanks for all the love and work put into them. They are greatly appreciated and will be put to good use.”**

Without a doubt this small communal effort to reach out to some of the most vulnerable in our society will surely make a difference. If even one baby is comforted and saved because of our love and concern then all the time and effort to knit those hats and blankets has been worthwhile.



Sr. Margaret Bradley
Britain and Ireland

FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF LOVE WITH JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

In October 2023, five young couples from the "Holy Family Lay Associates of Canada" and two others interested in the Holy Family charism of communion spent three days in spiritual renewal, led by Father Claude Musimar, and with the support of Sisters Aldegonde, Dolcita and Marcelline.



It was a rich time of formation, reflection and exchange on the daily life of couples inspired by the Holy Family of Nazareth. The teachings took place in three stages.

The first was an introduction, inviting each participant to step aside (Mark 6:31), to leave behind his/her habitual preoccupations to focus **on Christ, and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.**

The second stage, Saturday, began with a word of welcome from Sister Paulette, (Provincial) via video link, to all the participants.

After the Opening Prayer, the couples expressed their expectations of the meeting. Emphasis was placed on the desire to learn to communicate better, to dialogue, to learn the art of living together, to listen to each other, to receive the teachings with humility and to understand the major challenges in the life of a couple.

With these expectations in mind, the moderator invited the audience to watch John Gray's film entitled "**Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus**", which highlights in a very caricatured way the psychological difference between men and women: the

way they function, act and react.

This presentation raised the awareness of these couples and broadened their understanding of living together. The method consisted of sub-dividing into small groups of two couples, to permit conversations around the discoveries made thanks to the film.

During the pooling of ideas, a number of participants highlighted the discovery of the best way to manage the waves (moments of turbulence), to take the time to work on oneself, to get to know each other better, to become aware of the difference in the way men and women function and to show patience.

Following the film, Abbé Claude explored with them the need to discover the love language of one's partner.

A meal at which the couples were served at table by the hosts (the Sisters and Abbé Claude) in a romantic and welcoming setting. At each stage of the meal, the host analysed with them the 5 languages of love according to Gary Chapman (American pastor, theologian and anthro-

pologist), which are: moments of quality, words of appreciation, service rendered, gifts and physical touch.

By developing each language in turn, the couples reflected, exchanged and dialogued in all sincerity, face to face, on each language in relation to the reality they were experiencing.

In the evening, a testimonial couple was invited to share their experiences of life as a couple over the last 28 years, followed by a question and answer session.

During the third stage, the young couples worked on "feelings, emotions and needs".

They reflected on the importance of decoding the feelings and emotions that run through their partner's life, learning to communicate and tell each other their feelings, and transforming quarrels into opportunities for coming closer together.

Abbé Musimar invited us to go beyond the image we have built up of the other person, to always feel positive and to consider the other person's presence as a gift.

In fact, this time out allowed the participants to introspect, to say things to each other, to

make amends for certain mistakes and to be enlightened in their choices as couples and Holy Family Lay Associates.

At the end of the meeting, everyone expressed:

- ☞ *Their thanks to the Holy Family Sisters for this important initiative to share their Charism (the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth.)*
- ☞ *Their greatest desire is to follow up on the rich teachings they have received.*
- ☞ *To organise a time of renewal on a similar scale every year.*



- ☞ *To invite other couples to benefit from this opportunity offered by the Charism of the Holy Family.*

The Retreat ended with a Mass of thanksgiving and a family meal in a pleasant atmosphere

full of joy and laughter. Since then, two other young couples have asked to join the Holy Family couples.

Sr. Dolcita
Canada

“LET US CROSS TO THE OTHER SHORE” (MK4:35-41)



The Assembly of the Latin American Network was held from 26-30 January 2024, with the theme, "**Cross over to the other shore**", Mk.4, 35-41. Ana María Álvarez, animator of the Network, and her Council convened the Assembly, which took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil. This was a very important event for all the Sisters as it was the first "**in-presence**" Assembly after COVID. The facilitator was Marist Brother José Augusto Junior. In addition, we were accompanied by two Sisters as resource persons who shared formative

topics for our consecrated Holy Family life.

Speaker: Sr. Helena Corazza. Pauline Sisters. **Theme:** *Communication. Relational Process In the Contemporary Context*

Speaker. Holy Family General Councillor Geni Dos Santos. **Theme:** *What do we understand by Participative Leadership?*

They helped us to deepen the themes of our community life, to reflect on how we are relating to one another as Holy Family Sisters, to look at our common mission and at work with young people. It also helped us to understand the motto "**Let us cross to the other shore**".

The Spirit of God alone, who invites us to live radically, urges us to live as Sisters of the Holy Family.

The words of our Good Father still echo: Go forward...grow in numbers and in virtues!

By the end of the Assembly we had identified three very important priorities to work on:

- ☞ **Community life**
- ☞ **Presence and ministries**
- ☞ **Work with young people**

This was a very beautiful time to live "the culture of encounter" as Sisters, sharing experiences, prayer, concerns, culture, mission... a lot of encouragement, expansion... We note that we have decreased in number, but we have several strengths such as involvement in Popular education and Social and charitable assistance; we are enriched by our Spirituality, International communities, Ongoing Formation for our members, adaptation to local needs. Inter-congregational collaboration and the witness of consecrated life. So let us continue...

The meeting was attended by most of the Sisters, of the Network, except 5 who for different reasons could not be present physically, but were connected virtually: Elsa, Hilda, Delfina, Vinna (Argentina) and Karina (Peru) participated by giving their

work and contributions.

We took time out together by visiting the shrine of the Virgin Mary under the patronage of Our Lady of Aparecida.

Our heartfelt thanks to all the Sisters and especially to our Brazilian hosts: Vanda, Fátima,

Luiza, Joselyn and Gisele who did so much to make it possible for us to meet.

Sr. Rubeni Pejerrey
Peru, Latin America



OUR HOLY FAMILY PRESENCE BRINGING COMMUNION IN SOUTH AFRICA



Yes, there are some efforts being made for Communion in South Africa, slowly but surely and small but with potential to grow. Below I mention three such efforts:

The first, in solidarity with the people in our Vosloorus Community neighbourhood and parish we are planning a course of ten sessions, facilitated from Cape Town, for what is generally known as Non-Violent Communication and here in South Africa called Compassionate Communication.

In South Africa, as in any society with a history of discrimination and gross injustice, the level of violence is very high. Compassionate Communication is more than a

very valuable skill - it is something we become to make the world a better place. Last year in a sharing of our charism in our local parish we mentioned the possibility of offering this course. There was great interest.

A course in '**Compassionate Communication**' will also take place in Durban, in collaboration with the Denis Hurley Centre. Our need for learning Compassionate Communication is great. It's a wonderful opportunity for learning to be people of communion.

Another area of growing in Communion is our PBN Family. Since Rose Mary Garland (Contemplative) joined our Unit in November '23 we are delighted to be able to say that

our five Holy Family Vocations are now present here. The Intervocation Team is working on how, together, we can show the Family Face of the Holy Family here. We'd be happy to hear from other Units about Family efforts at sharing the Charism.

A small international effort within our African Holy Family, and surely another living of our gift of communion, was initiated by Micheline Kenda for the Unit of Rwanda-Uganda. Sent from the South African Unit I accepted to give the retreat for all the Sisters in Rwanda-Uganda. I admit that I went there wondering where the meeting-point might be – such diversity of cultures, languages, ages, and stages. As always, the Spirit, working in many ways and in generous Sisters, was the uniting and guiding force among us.

The rich tropical vegetation and natural beauty surrounding our community house in Kitumba shared with all of us its inexpressible word on Communion. Enjoy a little taste.

Sr. Colleen Moore
South Africa

A MINUTE'S ATTENTION... CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE!

"Well, I too can be considered a person!

The story of a little family ...
Our next-door neighbour ...
Jeanne, Justine and Aphrodis.

We didn't know that next door to our big, beautiful novitiate house lived a small, destitute family: a woman with her two children, a young teenage boy and a 3-year-old girl. This family had never come to us, as other poor people do, to ask for help.

And then suddenly, one day, when we took a quick tour of our neighbourhood, we discovered them, abandoned to themselves, in a situation of such blatant and alarming misery that it was as if we were in the Tondu district at the time of the Founder, or even in our shantytowns. A family disfigured by misery and suffering... Mama Jeanne was bent over, couldn't even lift her head, a sad look in her eyes.

It was **"a shock"** ... could it be true that we hadn't seen this misery right next to us? Sometimes we go to visit people who are far away, children and people in the TARE detention centre or other people and families we know.

Mama Jeanne's reality shook us to the core, challenging us to **"leave our comfort zones"**

and work together as a community to respond to this urgent need.

So the novices, Verdiane and I began a community dialogue and discernment with a view to finding ways of **"restoring dignity to this family"**:

☞ To share a little of our midday meal each day with them;



☞ To take an interest in each person in the family: the mother, the young boy and the little girl.

☞ To offer half a day's manual labour/work in the fields to enable the mother to earn a little money and give her more value as a "human person".

☞ To alert the civil authorities to the precarious situation and danger facing this family, given the dilapidated state of their

house and the bad weather.

Surprised by this show of attention, Mama Jeanne couldn't believe her eyes, she cried out with joy, exclaiming "So...I too can be considered a person! Soon her smile returned, she held herself upright, able to converse with us and to do a little work.

Yes, we have learnt to **"open our eyes more"** and **"listen more with our hearts to the cries of those in need"**, so that we can truly walk in the footsteps of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, who listened to the cries of their people and worked with others to meet the needs of their society.

It is at the heart of this suffering and misery that God calls us as consecrated women to "give birth to life in a new way ... by learning to put others back on their feet by offering them a little minute of attention ... a little smile ... a little gesture of sharing ... a little look of love or a kind word".

We continue our reflection as a community, looking for ways to find "a little place for her, a place where she can cultivate the land, plant her own field so that she can live and take care of her family in a more autonomous, effective and sustainable way.

"Listen more with our hearts to the cries of those in need"

Sr. Pauline MANZUETO
Gikongoro, Rwanda

THE ART OF CONVERSATION LIES IN LISTENING



On September 2023, I was privileged to be part of the RSDO (Refugee Status Decision Officers) panel at the United Nations House Maseru. The panel consisted of eight members: the Representative from the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees), the CCJP (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace), the Lesotho Commissioner of Refugees and his Secretary, Director Immigration, Home Affairs Passport Department, and the Law Society Lesotho. The main aim of this assembly was to interview the applicants and deliberate on whether the asylum seekers qualify for refugee status in Lesotho or not, based on the credibility of their stories after thorough investigations. We interviewed seventeen applicants in those two days who shared their heartbreaking stories of how they ended up seeking refuge in Lesotho. There are still over three hundred applicants that need to undergo the same process, so there is still a long way to go.

The interviews were very hard for all of us (panelists), as we shared stories among ourselves because they

touched our souls as emotional human beings. Many of the applicants are from **Congo, Uganda, Cameroon, and Zimbabwe**. To my surprise, 99.2% of them are highly educated people, even doctors! This made me realize that diaspora migration is real and can happen to anyone at any time. If they are found unworthy of such a certificate after the panel's deliberation, they will be repatriated back to their respective countries or any other country that will welcome them. It is a sad reality, but the process has terms and conditions, as some of them make up stories and later find that all that they said was just their search for opportunities.

I would like us to first of all explain what REFUGEE is, based on the research I conducted as I was preparing for this piece. The 1951 Refugee Convention is a key document and defines a refugee as *someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion*. During our recent workshop as the

Temporary Professed Sisters in Africa, Sr. Pauline Manzueto HFB invited us to be women who listen with head, heart, and consciousness; thus, this experience helped me a lot to put all this into practice as a Holy Family Sister. This experience saddened me a lot because I was also connected with my vulnerability: Sr. Pauline also advised us not to deprive ourselves of our vulnerability as we work with people at the margin. Hopelessness, fear, anxiety, torture, and desperation were displayed on their faces as they narrated their different experiences. I could sometimes find myself shedding tears when I am alone as I recalled these experiences shared by the applicants, but I am grateful that provision of psychosocial support has been provided for all the panelists. I am very humbled to have been part of this assembly that helps me promote our **Charism of Communion**.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Sisters for their support through prayers and the sharing of clothes and shoes for these vulnerable souls.

Sr. Julia Maeane
Lesotho



HELPING TO SAFEGUARD CREATION

God created the heavens and the earth and entrusted them to humans to manage and guard. Humans are therefore stewards of creation in accordance with the Creator's will.

Creation according to God's plan

From the time of our birth, we discover every day that everything is given to us: the heavens, the earth and everything in them. Everything we need to live is given to us free of charge: our parents, our family, our ethnic group, our region, our country, our continent.... In fact, we receive ourselves from God. We are learning to enjoy these gifts with gratitude. Since the preparations for the Holy Family General Chapter held in Rome in 2008, our conscience has been awakened to the need to safeguard creation. We are being made aware of this through certain key meetings on the dangers facing our planet. For his part, Pope Francis is speaking out and inviting everyone to stop and think about the challenges of climate change (**cf. Laudato Si**), and the threat to Mother Earth. Our documents speak more and more about safeguarding creation, stressing that without it, we will perish.

Action by the Holy Family in response to the threat to our common home:

As part of the preparations for our Diamond Jubilee, 75 years since the arrival of the Holy Family on Cameroonian soil (1949 to 2024), we have planned to use simple actions to raise awareness among the youngest members of society about the need to protect crea-

tion, beginning with their own environment. We targeted 4 primary schools and two secondary schools. We were able to go to all these places to raise awareness among the children and to provide these schools with garbage bins. Here are the details:

29/11/2023: Awareness raising at OUDKIA Catholic Primary School with 612 pupils.

06/12/2023: Awareness raising at Tada Primary School with 861 children.

11/12/2023: At Application 2 Primary School, which has two branches, we spoke to almost 1,141 pupils.

3/12/2023: The group raised awareness at Mokolo-Mboua Catholic Primary School, which also has two branches, with a total of 1,346 children.

15/12/2023: The team arrived at the Lycée de Mofolé not far from Nazareth, a school that opened its doors in 2010. It currently has a full cycle with 872 pupils.

6/12/2023: we brought the project to a close at Collège Pierre Bienvenu NOAILLES, which has just three levels and 246 pupils.

NB: the Family of Pierre Bienvenu NOAILLES was able to reach 5075 children from 6 to 13 years old, not counting the parish community of Mboua which we estimate at more than 4000 people reached during the Sunday celebration on 28 January 2024. We hope that this message will find its way into their lives.



SUMMARY OF THE MESSAGE

The essence of our message was, on the one hand, to respect the creation received from God, and to thank, respect and praise the Creator. Secondly, we taught how to use/dispose of waste (especially plastic waste) in ways that protect our environment. We stressed the role that trees play in our lives, given that we live in a semi-desert zone, and spoke convincingly to the children of the interconnectedness of all creatures.

In former times, our ancestors respected nature. For example: I need a piece of wood to build my house, but before cutting it down, I say to the tree, I'm cutting you down because I need you and you are useful to me. The younger generation has forgotten this great value, and we are invited to return to our good manners.

In view of all the floods around the world, we are called upon

to protect and safeguard nature, which serves us like a mother. The earth is our provider. There are things in nature that are very important. For example, water: if it runs out, all life comes to a halt.

Conclusion

We have helped children and adults to learn how to appreciate nature and to become aware of our role in its survival, because our survival also

depends on it. If we do not take care of our environment, there can be no life.

Sr. Agnès ONGWISA
Cameroon-Chad



NEW EXPERIENCE IN FORMATION...

I am Sr. Celine Freeda from the community of Nagoda. Last year, I had the opportunity to attend the Sister Formation Course at **Aquinas College of Higher Studies in Colombo, Sri Lanka**. The course lasted one year and was attended by twenty-three sisters from ten different congregations and four nationalities. The theme of the course was **“Envisioning the Journey to See the Face of Jesus,”** and we covered forty subjects.



I am grateful to God for this opportunity. Living with members of different congregations with diverse cultures, languages, and backgrounds was a valuable experience. The lessons on various topics deepened my understanding of scripture and strengthened my love for Jesus. I gained more knowledge about religious life, which has given my life a deeper meaning.

We had residential programmes in various parts of the island. We spent one month in Kandy, one week at Tewatta-Colombo, one week in Jaffna, and an exposure programme in Bandarewella-Upcountry. These programmes were an amazing experience for me and my companions. Belonging to different congregations with different charisms, coming together, and living under one roof was a wonderful experience. The cultural day we had helped us celebrate the richness of each culture. During our visit, we had the opportunity to explore

Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic places of worship. This allowed us to gain insight into different religions and their respective prayer practices.

As a Contemplative Sister, attending daily classes was a new experience for me. During my commute to and from college, I encountered many individuals and witnessed their struggles and difficulties. I pray for them all to God. In accordance with our theme, I endeavored to see the face of Jesus in each of them.

The one-year formation course that I completed was a valuable experience that I greatly appreciate. I am grateful to God for these experiences and to our institute, the Vicariate, and my community for providing me with this opportunity.

Sr. Celine Freeda
Contemplative, Nagoda
Sri Lanka



A TEACHER CAN BRING NEW LIFE TO THE FAMILY...

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world,” said Nelson Mandela.

The rapid development of the digital world has brought a strong focus on individual achievement and competition. Many families in India choose popular schools like Matriculation, Central Board, or international schools, hoping to provide their children with the best possible educational opportunities. However, it's important to remember that there are diverse paths to success and fulfilment, and **“standardized teaching”** doesn't always equate to the best education for every child. Working with students from diverse backgrounds at a primary school in Kaliyakkavilai in Kanyakumari district (South Tamil Nadu) has enriched my teaching journey. Though some families may have limited resources, their aspirations for their children's success remain strong. Our dedicated team of school staff uses our talents to help each student discover their inherent abilities. **As a Holy Family Sister, I see education as a bridge to build understanding and connection between students and parents.** I'm truly grateful for this opportunity to share this rewarding experience.

A student in my third grade was facing a difficult situation. His parents were separated due to unhappy circumstances, and his home life presented some obstacles.

His father has a chronic illness, while his mother works diligently as a hospital cleaner to support the family. Sadly, a recent miscarriage had caused tension within the family, leading to his mother's temporary departure.

Having concern for the boy's well-being, I noticed his academic decline and changes in his behaviour. He is taking on adult responsibilities at home, which has impacted his schoolwork and emotional state. With empathy and understanding, I reached out to his mother, offering support and encouragement. After my school time, I spent time with her and helped her understand the importance of her presence in her son's life, both for his emotional well-being and academic success.

Similarly, I communicated with his grandparents and explained their grandson's needs and the potential benefits of a reunited family. I emphasized the significance of love and understanding in fostering a healthy and supportive environment for the boy's growth.

Finally, their hearts are opened. The grandparents welcomed their daughter-in-law back to their family with open arms. Witnessing this joyous reunion warmed my heart, and I could see brightness in the boy's eyes. A



spark of joy rekindled, replacing the earlier dullness. I remembered the word of God: ***“The Son of man came to seek and save the lost” (Lk. 19:10).***

This newfound happiness transformed the boy's character and behaviour, and I could see a great change in his schoolwork. He became more engaged and focused, and his grades improved. Every day, a bright smile replaced the previous weariness. One morning, he came to me; his eyes were shining with excitement, and he declared, ***“My mom has come back! I am so much happier than ever before!”***

St. Mother Teresa's words echoed in my mind: ***“I would rather make mistakes in kindness and compassion than work miracles in unkindness and hardness.”*** In that moment, I saw the truth in her words. My small gesture of kindness, along with the collective effort of understanding and support, had brought immense joy and transformation to a child's life.

Education, at its core, is not just about imparting facts. It's about nurturing empathy, understanding, and the ability to navigate life's complexities. It's about becoming an example of kindness and compassion, even when it's challenging. As a member of the Holy Family, I strive to embody

these values in my teaching, not just through words but through deeds. On seeing the joy return to that young boy's eyes, I learned that it was a powerful reminder of the transformative power of love and understanding.

Perhaps, in our efforts to

become the best, we should not forget the simple gift of making a difference with kindness and compassion as our guiding lights in one's life. I thank God for using me as his instrument to make a profound difference in my students' life.



Sr. Varuvelal Mary Angel Savarimuthu

India

JOURNEY TOGETHER WITH HOPE



Regina, and Nishanthi. Regina has since joined the Martillac community in France, so at present we have our new member, Sr.Perimpamalar.

We are persevering in our search by sharing our strengths

and hopes with each other. Community life is a gift from God. God has chosen each one to journey together. We, as a community, are in the process of building a healthy and genuine relationship among ourselves. We try and support one another to live our membership fully, experiencing inner joy and giving ourselves fully to the mission. In our ups and downs, strengths and weaknesses, we strongly feel that we belong to one family. Regular evaluation and open and genuine sharing in the community have been very helpful in growing towards oneness. We listen to each other and give respectable

space to understand each other. We make use of our dining table to share our apostolic experiences, the way we spend the day, and our likes and dislikes. We have taken time to write our personal project as well as our community project.

Since we are energetic members, we give our time to the people who need our presence. Teaching, pastoral work, visiting the sick, awareness program for students, house visits in six different places, joining the faith animation group, adult catechism, conducting meetings for Holy Family children, youth, Holy Childhood, English classes, and helping slow learners. The youth and children are very close to us.

We come together for our contemplative prayers, and through our gospel sharing, we enrich each other. The rhythm of life helps us come together and get to know each other. As a community,

“Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God” (Pope Francis).

Since we have finished our nine-month journey together towards fullness, as the intercultural community in Kurinjampitiya, we are happy to share with you our experience.

As a result of our **20th Provincial Chapter in 2022, the cross-cultural Tamil-Singhalese community at Kurinjampitiya was installed on April 15, 2023.** The community consists of 4 members, namely Srs. Anusha, Priyadarshani,

we visit a rural area once a month, and we realize the need to work with mothers to create a healthy society. In the community, we are very open and have space to share. Once a month, we celebrate our community day.

When we face difficulties and misunderstandings, we feel that “love makes everything easy. “Self-awareness leads to a change in our attitude. Our personal projects, our daily activities, and the experiences of people around us have made us aware of the

needs of this time. We strongly feel that our presence is very much needed here, and we freely and joyfully commit ourselves to building communion our charism and for the continuation of Jesus’ mission.



Kurinjampitiya Community Colombo, Sri Lanka

HOLY FAMILY LAY ASSOCIATES IN A SYNODAL CHURCH

The Church of God is convoked in Synod. The three dimensions of the theme of the Synod are **communion, participation, and mission**.

These dimensions are interrelated; each of them enriches and orients the other two. There is a dynamic relationship between them; when one is articulated, all three must be kept in mind. Synod invites the laity to participate in helping God’s work to flourish. In this modern era, the role of the laity or lay leadership has become more important as the people of God are now facing more spiritual, economic, and family-related challenges than in past years. It is a great joy and pleasure for me to work and contribute to the Synodal church as a Lay Associate of the Holy Family. The journey started when **Holy Family Sisters came into our parish in 2014**. They invited us to work with them to promote Holy Family spirituality. With the kind support and guidance of Holy Family Sisters, we started our journey as

Holy Family Lay Associates, as Lay Associate and member of a local youth group. As Associates, we have been taking many initiatives to serve humanity and support the local church.

Adoration of the Holy Eucharist:

As Holy Family Lay Associates, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is integral and a central part of our mission. That is why we organize and arrange Eucharistic Adoration along with Holy Family Sisters in different areas and especially participate in holy hour and the Novena of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the 1st Friday of every month. We believe that through adoration and meditation, people, especially youth, find their calling and reason to come into this world.

Care of the elderly and those with special needs:

Our Holy Family charism always inspires us to care for and help the weak and marginalized. In our society, there are very limited recrea-

tional activities for the elderly and persons with disabilities. They are generally ignored and have no fun in their lives. As Holy Family Associates, we organize different programs with the elderly and PWD (persons with disabilities) throughout the year. We pray, eat, and have fun together. We welcome them with roses and sweets to show our love for them.

Praising the Lord through Music and Singing: “Singing is praying. When one sings, one prays “twice”- Saint Augustine.

We believe that music plays an essential part in our prayers. It leaves an indelible impression on the mind that increases faith, promotes peace, and motivates people to seek out social services and later become witnesses to Christ. That is why, while singing in front of the Lord, we are in touch with the deepest centre of our hearts. We always choose appropriate songs while preparing for a liturgy.



Hyphenate Peace-building:

We organized different events and met people of different faiths and denominations to promote a culture of peace and acceptance to promote peace and harmony.

Care for creation:

Inspired by the Encyclical of His Holiness, Pope Francis "Laudato Si", we organize tree plantations and create awareness to save the natural resources of the world, 'our common home'.

Visiting sick and elderly people:

We visit sick and elderly people along with our Holy Family Sisters. During these visits, we give hope to the hopeless and help them live better lives by sharing.

Career Counselling and Education Promotion:

We give the opportunity of

career counselling to the youth in choosing their future careers. We also create awareness among people about the importance of education through awareness sessions and individual meetings with children, youth, and their parents.

Exploring new vocations:

"There is such a big harvest of people to bring in. But there are only a few workers to help harvest them. (Matthew 9:37). Some years ago, a Dominican priest shared that there is now an intense need for new Catholic priests in Pakistan. So we started our mission to help and support many young boys and girls to find their vocation and become priests or nuns. We were successful in helping some boys join seminary for the priesthood.

Create awareness through sports: "Today's young people need three key

foundations: education, sports, and culture." (Pope Francis).

Sport is a great source of togetherness, motivation, and sharing the gospel among the youth. We encourage the youth to use their talents to bring others to Christ and make them faithful Christians. We organize sports events to encourage them to engage in healthy activities that develop their personalities.

Telling the story of Jesus in an informal way:

Theatre and drama can be a very powerful tool to lead people to Christ, convey God's messages, and teach His principles in a fun way that appeals to people of all ages. By performing dramas on different occasions throughout the year, we promote Christian values among people in an informal way.

In the end, we want to thank almighty God for His special grace upon us and make an instrument to work for His glory. We express our deep gratitude to all the Holy Family Sisters, Lay Associates, and especially Sr.Parveen for her great support and cooperation in achieving the mission of the Holy Family in Pakistan. **Glory to God Alone!**

**Farhan Lawrence
Lay Associate, Pakistan**

THE STORY OF THE PBN YOUTH PROGRAM

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND:

On **October 27, 2022** the **Birthday of our Founder Pierre Bienvenu Noailles**, the PBN Foundation released a Call for Funding for Humanitarian and Charity Action which is open to all Branches of the Family. As a Priest Associate, through the recommendation of Sr. Maria Goretti Peries, our Unit Leader, I have submitted the Proposal for the Youth Empowerment and Formation Program in view of the Volunteerism Program **“FORMED TO SERVE”**.

THE LOCATION: The Philippines, Gubat, Sorsogon

Gubat, Sorsogon is one of the 14 Municipalities of Sorsogon, 538 km. away from the Capital City of Manila, Philippines. The Municipality is in an agricultural area but due to the priorities of the Government, agriculture is not given much attention and this has given rise to poverty. With poverty come the Four expressed needs reflected in the Youth Forum and this is what the Project aims to respond to.

THE BASE EXPERIENCE

In the recently conducted “Youth Forum” in **Bulusan** last January 21, 2023, with 47 Youth Participants from 19 Barangays (villages), the Youth Situationer was given and discussed and in the workshop that followed, the

participants were asked about the Four Basic Themes that affect the Youth, which are:

- ☞ **Survival**
- ☞ **Developmental**
- ☞ **Protection**
- ☞ **Participation**

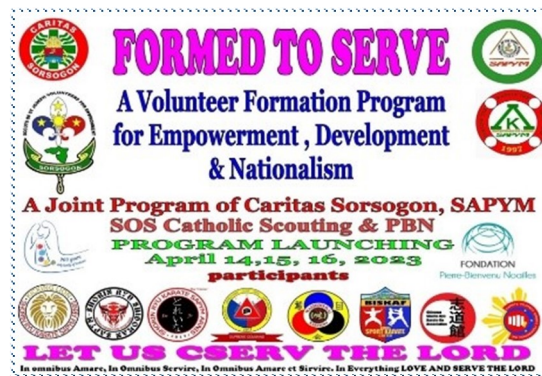
The Response of the Youth which were divided into groups were collated and the visible Expressed Situations and Needs are the following according to priority:

- ☞ **Financial Hardship**
- ☞ **Skill Inadequacy**
- ☞ **Fear and Insecurity**
- ☞ **Climate Problems**

creating risks to life and properties due to the calamities brought by Climate change.

ANALYSIS AND RESPONSES

The Government has a Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) with Programs for Skill Development. The lures of consumerism and social media make the youth money-conscious with values and priorities that revolve around money. Hence, service orientation has become outmoded, and participation in the community is no longer a priority since earning money is the main thing. The money oriented/superior mentality brought out another problem: gender-based violence manifested in bullying, harassment



and discrimination even inside the family, the victims to be found especially among dependents. It is in this kind of situation that good Youth Leadership and Moral, Spiritual Development is necessary to bring back the youth and help them to become active and participative in their local communities.

In the recent development for the programs of the Violence Against Women and Children at National Level, aside from empowering the women regarding their rights, and financial stability, physical training on Martial Arts for Self Defence has been integrated. This is to build self-confidence among women, youth and children and for them to be able to face challenges for their protection and survival.

2. THE HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND SUPPORT/PARTNERS:

The Main Objective of this Project is to provide a Youth Formation Program that will make them aware of their life-situation and potential in order that they may better Respond to the needs of the times especially for the Devel-

opment of their Local Communities, and the Care of our Common Home. This can be done through capacitation and organization of the Youth to become active and participative in their communities along the lines of what Pope St John Paul II in His World Youth Day Address said, that **“the Youth should become agent of change in their situations”**.

The SAPYM is one of the Partners of this Project. SAPYM is a Youth Organization of Martial Arts of Arnis and Karate registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission and is recognized by the Local Government Units and Member of the Government Local Special Bodies that crafts/makes policies with regard to health, youth and environment.

SAPYM, which was organized as a project of the Saint Anthony Parish (Gubat) Youth Ministry on April 17, 1994 incorporated the Scouting Leadership Training with the physical Arnis and Karate Training and has earned provincial and national awards and medals through their activities. The emphasis of SAPYM is the physical, environmental and spiritual training/formation through martial arts system.

Another PARTNER is Caritas Sorsogon: which is the Social Arm of the Diocese of Sorsogon. Caritas Sorsogon encourages volunteerism and help in the Formation of the youth for volunteer work. Such program of Caritas Sorsogon has helped mobilize youth volunteers in times of emergencies, as well as for

the Political Elections as heralds for good governance and nationalism..

With these Two Partners of the HFB, it is assured that the PBN Youth Program will have its sustainability. Actually, from the Formation/ Training done, there are Municipalities that have accepted/adopted the program, and the Leaders/ Coordinators form part of the Collaboration at Provincial Level.

The PBN Youth Program is enshrined in the Statute of the Lay Associates and is reflected in the activities undertaken. It is hoped that these activities of the program help achieve the Dream of the PBN Family especially here in the Philippines.



Fr. George Fajardo
Priest Associate, Sorsogon, Philippines