



interconnections

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A New Year... a new me... a new you ...

Content	Page number
Editorial	02
Here in Rome	03
A Joy for All the Earth	05
Beauty is already contained in the seed!	06
Farewell	08
A time to count my blessings!	09
Peace marches lead to death	11
Strong Families: Love and Limitations	12
I'm filled with gratitude...	14
To Go Beyond	15

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Editorial

Another year is added to the “story” of the universe thus to the story of our Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, and as well as to our own story. This year we as Holy Family members enter into the second year of the preparation for the bicentenary. The preparatory team has already announced that ***“The year 2018 will be devoted to a deep spiritual renewal within our Big Family”***.

In the present times, all consecrated men and women, including ourselves, generally talk much about re-visiting, re-imagining, re-visioning, re-structuring and renewing.

Renewing makes something more valuable - to make that happen, first I need to understand what renewal means! We all have experienced the ‘aha’ moments, the moment of truth: when I’m connected with my life at a deeper level than ever before. This experience awakens new vision in me. I’ve understood and been awakened to something and been given a new opportunity to live by it, and I take it on me to live my life based on that vision, which brings some newness into my life.

"Newness" seems to be familiar in our vocabulary, very prevalent in our society today. Everyone gets tired of

seeing or doing the "same old thing". We desire challenge, a long for surprises, and some form of renewal in everything we do. Why is this so?

"What good is life, without any struggle, without any challenge?" But life with struggle and conflict will only keep the mind occupied; make life interesting and so less monotonous! We lose interest in life when we act out of habit, with nothing to ponder on.

BUT

When we practice contemplative listening, it enables us to see the truth of things in their wholeness. It is more than a mental discipline – it is seeing with eyes of Love, seeing as God sees; it is Gift. This frees us from our addiction to our habitual ways of thinking, and seeing. It takes us beyond our habits, revitalizing them with a unique “newness”, offering us the possibility of living with a spontaneous and ever renewing joy!



This is the message of Pope Francis; this is what Jesus says so forcefully: ‘New wine in new wineskins.’ Habits/our old mental framework must be renewed in the newness of the Spirit, in the surprises of God.”

A New Year... a new me... a new you ... and everything New with the promise of new life in Christ present in all of life!

Here in Rome

The Sisters in Italy had their Visit of animation here in the Generalate, from 24 – 26 November. 19 sisters participated. Eithne Hughes and Micheline Kenda guided and accompanied them in their reflections.



After participating in the visit of animation in Belgium, France, and Italy; the European Network Council met in Rome from 27 to 30 November 2017. They expressed that they were able to reread together this phase filled with richness, their choices to support and begin to have a look at their options for the next years.



The General Council shared their discoveries and joy when visiting the EHPADS (Establishment of Accommodation for Dependent Elderly) and the missionary commitment that continues to be lived in the various places of our insertions.

"The year 2017 is over, that had been filled with the blessings, joy, challenges and complications. To these bounties, there were two pearls - with whom we lived, laughed, and shared our joy and sorrows. They are the gracious gifts TO OUR COMMUNITY.



One is the Gift in the person of Giovanna Papa – who lived in the Generalate local community for 5 years- served in many ways to both the General leadership team and the local community and who extended a welcoming spirit to all the members who came to our home, from every part of the world for one reason or other. We reverently and gratefully remember and appreciate her.

The other Gift is Gertie Peiris – we owe you a BIG “thank you” for your BIG service! It is believed that in the world, the two healthiest emotions are generosity and gratitude. We are indeed GRATEFUL because Gertie was so generous that she gave herself abundantly as Assistant to the General Bursar for a period of 17 long years.

“Persons are Gifts from God to us, that come all wrapped so differently.....” We hold these treasures in our hearts, thanking God’s Goodness mirrored in them. We wish you God’s abundant blessings dear Giovanna and Gertie and may you be ever accompanied by the loving Presence of God in this new phase of your life!

The joy of living...

Change title

This letter is our annual Christmas effort to bring you news of some of the main events of the past year. Starting on home territory, one of the major events for our community was the celebration on 11 November of the 100th birthday of a



member of our community, Sr. Paul. It was a great occasion for all of us and it was lovely that so many members of Sr. Paul's family were able to be with us. The main celebrant of our Mass was Bishop Denis Nulty (NULTY) of our diocese. We also had the joy of welcoming sisters from our other communities, including some from Sri Lanka and Pakistan. On 15 November – the actual day - we had a community celebration. It was an opportunity for members of our devoted staff to share in the festivities.

The big event for our diocese – i.e. Kildare & Leighlin – was the Family Picnic Day which took place on Sunday 27 August at Punchestown Racecourse. It was a lovely, joyful celebration – a real 'family' gathering – in anticipation of the 'World Meeting of Families' Congress to be

hosted by Ireland next August. We are looking forward to this great event – an opportunity for us too, as Holy Family members, to celebrate our own expression of 'family'. The highlight of the visit will be, we hope, the presence of Pope Francis.

Our community was involved in the World Record Knitting Competition. The present record – for the largest knitted blanket in the world – is held by Nelson Mandela Foundation. It was our opportunity to take out our knitting needles and renew our skills! Some of the knitting was on display in different parts of our town and used even to 'dress' the trees. It was a great success and attracted the attention of a few celebrities too! Eventually, the knitted pieces will be assembled and will form blankets for the poor and needy people in communities around Ireland and even farther afield. It was a heart-warming experience of our community coming together to create



something new and beautiful for those in need.

Our annual pilgrimage to Knock took place in July. We always feel that Knock is a real 'Holy Family' venue. It is unique in the sense that it is the only recorded pilgrimage where all members of the '**Holy Family**' were present. A priest remarked that things were so bad in Ireland at the time of the apparition that Mary needed to bring the whole family to help her in her mission!

On 2 June we had a lovely service of thanksgiving in the village of Moneenroe, Co. Kilkenny. A small community of our Sisters had ministered in that parish for over forty years. The celebration was one of thanksgiving and included a visit to the local cemetery where some of our Sisters who had ministered there were buried. The altar, made of rock, was brought from a distant quarry. It remains as a symbol of the rock-like faith of the people of Moneenroe and in memory of the Sisters of the Holy Family.

Our contact with the local schools continues. The children from the Infants' School have come on a couple of occasions to charm us with their lovely singing. The pupils from the Holy Family

Secondary School next door come to visit us also and to use our premises for retreat days. The choir gave us a special performance to help us celebrate Sr. Paul's birthday. They concluded with the singing of the anthem for the Congress of the Worldwide Meeting of Families – '**A Joy for All the Earth.**'

A few of us had the privilege of attending the ceremony in Dublin for the beatification of Fr. John Sullivan SJ on Sunday, 13 May. It was a great occasion for the Jesuit order and for the people who came from many parts of Ireland and beyond. Over a number of years, leading up to the beatification ceremony, the members of our community in Clane, Co. Kildare were involved in helping to promote the cause for beatification by preparing 60,000 special cards with a relic!

We lost one lovely member of our community this last year. Sr. Evelyn Courtney who had suffered from Multiple Sclerosis for a number of years, died on 13th February. R.I.P. We have great memories of her cheerful acceptance of suffering and we trust that she continues to accompany us with her prayer.

Letter - Newbridge

Beauty is already contained in the seed!

ANSE (The Association of South-eastern Environmentalists) Spain is working to recover natural spaces in order to improve the quality of human life in the Carthage area. The members are deeply committed to defending nature. The Coordinator of the neighbourhood of Los Mateos supports and

promotes many of the activities of this Association – campaigns, projects, protests etc. as well as its work in environmental education.

We have spent years in this area working in the environmental education of children and families. We all worked together to

clean up places that had been turned into dumps years ago. We removed rubbish and furniture that had been thrown near the bins. We are gradually managing to clean up the place. There are plants and flowers in some of the streets now, something never seen here before.

One of the things we are doing this year is recovering native vegetation in desert places and planting trees there together. In this way we are minimising the process of erosion and improving biodiversity by sowing shrub saplings as well as plants and trees native to this climate.

Los Mateos is situated on the eastern side of a wood near the ruins of a castle. Hundreds of people live there in more or less reasonable living conditions. The opposite side – the west – is steep and arid without even a blade of grass. If the wind ever left a small seed in this place damaged by erosion, the sea breeze swept it away without trace. The neighbourhood Coordinator encouraged us to transform this western slope into a beautiful place which would be life-giving for the people. We will plant shrubs and native trees. “Beauty is already contained in the seed” said a wise man. This metaphor for what we are trying to do in this marginalised neighbourhood. “In the mystery of the earth, new life gestates in the grain of wheat”. Also, time is moving on. We are



getting older and we have to carry out the mandate to “plant one tree” before we leave this world.

Taking all this into account, the residents of the area decided to meet on 3 December at 10 a.m. The land had been prepared by volunteers who had turned it into tiered terraces ready to be planted. Families with children, a group of scouts and some experienced adults turned up. We found ourselves with lots of plants, water, straw, hoes etc.

The sun shone all the time and nobody was left idle. We pulled and dragged, dug holes and planted, happily sharing in the work. We were very grateful for the *paella* which we ate together in the open air when the work was done.

And we thought: these new ways of working together lead us to be attentive to all that is being born today and to all seeds of life as expressions of the Kingdom which makes all things new.

We want to commit ourselves to the seeds of life.
“We want to take a risk just like the water which trusts
in the power of the seed, in the sun which brings it to full growth,
in the earth which feeds it tirelessly.
We take a risk with the seed
like you, like the water of life”.
(G.Buelta)

Bulletin of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, Spain.

Farewell...

...To Rheims , France

What was happening in the Church of St. Thomas on November 25, 2017?

The church was unusually full. Parishioners, neighbours and friends had come to show their affection and gratitude to the Holy Family Sisters who were leaving Rheims – Srs. Andrée, Marie-Madeleine, Marie-Gabriel, Kathleen and Marie-Eline. The Gospel of the Feast of Christ the King set the tone for this warm-hearted celebration. “I was hungry and you gave me to drink ... I was thirsty... what you did to the least of these, you did to me”.

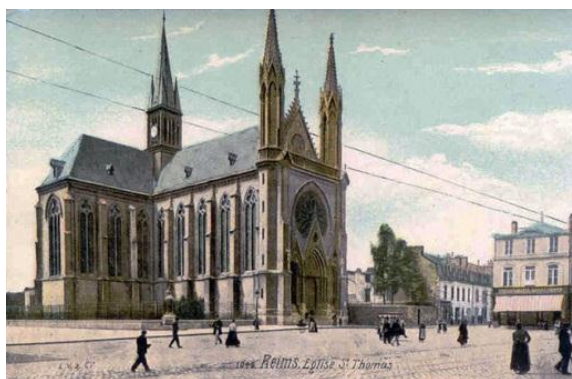
Weren't these the words that kept so many Sisters going since 1837? There was so much love given to the smallest people – children, the sick, parishioners – in daily encounters with the residents of the neighbourhood.

The Eucharist gathered everything together in thanksgiving – life given for others and received from others, the bonds that were forged, all the affection and love shown to the Sisters by those present as well as by those who could not be there. The presence of the Sisters who are leaving their mark on the place: “We will not forget you”; “we will miss you”.

A praying presence: the community was the place of the Eucharistic gathering; **“You have left us an inheritance which is now in our hands”** said a member of the parish Pastoral Team.

“You will continue these relationships forged by the Sisters” insisted the Auxiliary Bishop of Rheims, Bruno Feillet.

At the end of Mass, Bishop Bruno invited the Sisters to come forward to receive a solemn blessing as they were sent to their new mission. That was how the Lord sent his disciples out.



The final hymn of the African choir resounded:

“Let us give thanks to the Lord who has done marvels for us.”

All those present happily shared memories during an informal drinks party prepared by the parishioners.

Jean Vanier's L'Arche will take over the house and use it as a day centre.

To Saint Savin...

Two tributes were paid to the Holy Family Sisters by the residents of Saint Savin in the Gironde on November 18 and 19 as they prepared to leave.

On 18th, the tribute was given by the Town Council in the Town Hall where the former Mayor who had welcomed them, the present Mayor and about fifty members of the public expressed their gratitude. Among the gifts each Sister received were the official Town Medal and a copy of “Cahiers du Vitrezais” featuring Saint Savin.

On 19th, the parishioners and friends from other pastoral areas expressed their deep gratitude for the human, spiritual and sisterly presence of the Sisters. During a Eucharistic celebration concelebrated by eight priests and two deacons, Fr. Gérard Faure, Vicar General and a priest of the area, recalled the importance of the consecrated life. He also reminded the parishioners that each one has a vocation to be part of Church life. "Religious life does not mean that others live the baptismal life on our behalf; religious life is a prophetic sign of what we should be – disciples of Christ in every dimension of our lives, disciples of the Lord for the sake of the kingdom."



That provided an opportunity to highlight the different commitments the Sisters had undertaken during the twenty four years they had been there: youth work, family ministry, working with marginalised people, people in difficulty and the sick.

A time to count my blessings!

Looking back on my life as a Missionary in Pakistan gives me the opportunity to reflect on the many graces and blessings I have received over the past 42 years and how the Lord has been working in my life, whether I recognized it or not at the

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul which is very active in this vulnerable area expressed their concern about their ability to be able to continue their work of service without the Sisters

This is the second time that the Sisters have left Saint-Savin. In 1858, the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception opened a small school there but left after the separation of Church and State in 1905.

Srs. Claire, Geneviève, Simone and Thérèse will join other Holy Family communities leaving a beautiful legacy of apostolic community commitment in Saint Savin.

To Camille Godard

The departure of Sr. Cécile Mallet and Sr. Janine Denamiel who now belong to the Sablonat will mean that the Protestant community will be able to extend their work by receiving women in difficulty in the apartment the Sisters were living in.

As the Good Father said to Mother Conception Perille on May 20 1825:

"If God wants others to do this work, we should rejoice."

France (Information/Communication)

moment. The following words bear out my experience:

"Blessings" What are they? All of creation is sacred because it is made by God. To bless anything of creation is to acknowledge the touch of the Creator

upon that object or person. Attentiveness to the present moment is essential for a blessing to truly communicate the life and beauty of God. Blessings are not always immediately felt. Sometimes these blessings come disguised in the pain, struggle and hardship of the unwanted parts of our lives. It is only later, with hindsight that we see what a gift those times or those events were for us." (Joyce Rupp)

In 1975 when I first arrived in this land, I was greeted by the people of Chak 6-4/L as Sr. Tofa (gift). On the first Sunday after my arrival the parish priest announced that three *Holy Family* Sisters from Rome, Sr. Marie Paule Chauvin, Sr. Mary Slaven and Sr. Pierrette Demontigny, had come to visit the sisters and had brought with them a gift (TOFA in Urdu,) namely myself. So immediately I was nicknamed, Sr. Tofa. As I started my missionary venture, I was more conscious of what I had to give to the people of Pakistan. However, over the past 42 years I have come to realize that I have received more than I have given. My life has been enriched many ways.

Learning a new language and culture was not easy. I am most grateful to all who encouraged and supported me in the first five years to ground myself. Children are very easy to relate to and from them I gained courage to pick up and pronounce the strange sounding words of the Urdu language. In fact, it was by communicating with them and through them, that I overcame my shyness to speak. In the villages people mostly speak Punjabi, which I barely understood or spoke; with the help of a child as a translator, I visited the families and got to know their

situation. Like Abraham, who welcomed the three guests, I too experienced hospitality and welcome from the people, and learned how to welcome others, whether the time was right or not how often I used to get angry when someone came to see me mid-afternoon, usually when I was resting. The three visitors disturbed Abraham but he welcomed them graciously and offered them hospitality.



The animation received from the General Leadership Team, has been a great blessing for me. Besides deepening my awareness of who I am in the Institute of the *Holy Family*, I have come to a deeper desire to share this GIFT with others. Involvement in the work of formation is certainly not an easy task but it has been a blessing for me. Having to prepare lessons for the candidates, pre-novices and temporary professed sisters has increased my knowledge of, and deepened my love for the Family, besides affording me the opportunity to share this with others. I have touched the lives of many sisters, priests and lay people, who are now living the spirituality of the *Holy Family*, some of whom have committed themselves in the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.

Over the past years, as I moved from one community to the other, I have interacted with sisters of different nationalities and personalities. This, too, has become a blessing in disguise as I reflect on it, though I must admit it was not always easy at the time. I have come to accept differentiation through the hard way.



Martillac holds a special place in my heart. Over the past 5 years I have had the blessing of participating twice in the sessions where the THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE UNIVERSE was one of the topics

Peace marches lead to death

On 31 December 2017, the Feast of St Sylvester, Joseph KABILA President of the DR Congo, lost the legal status bestowed on him by a global agreement which had been signed a year earlier through the mediation of CENCO (The National Conference of the Bishops of Congo). That day the Lay Coordinating Committee (CLC) of the Catholic Church in an attempt to discourage passivity, called on all Catholics to demonstrate and to reclaim

touched on. In October, 2016, I came to understand this topic a little more clearly and on my return to Pakistan was able to share it with the Priest Associates and sisters. It has also helped me to go deeper in my relationships in Community.

The Bicentenary of the foundation of our family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles is truly a blessing. I am sure our first Mothers, who were so discouraged after the first two years, are rejoicing now as we celebrate the year of preparation, 2017, looking back and counting the blessings over the past 200 years. Today, as I look back on my missionary life, I realize I am a richer person now than when I first came here. I thank the Lord for his goodness to me and sing, 'Oh! Give thanks to the Lord for God is good Yes, eternal is God's love'.

*Sheila Griffiths
Britain & Ireland*

in a peaceful way the full application of that agreement as well as valid elections so that a new start could be made. The



Catholics marched waving palm branches of peace, Bibles, Rosary Beads and Crucifixes in an attempt to save Congo – their common patrimony - in a way that would respect the sacredness of both people and property. In a democratic country the security forces should guarantee the safety of demonstrators and protect the basic rights of citizens while maintaining public order.

Unfortunately the march of 31 December was suppressed violently. Instead of protecting the demonstrators the police and security forces entered the churches where the Catholics were praying before the marches. They interrupted Mass and disperse the people with tear gas. Internet access was cut off throughout the whole country.

Only Catholics took part in the march of 31 December. Protestants and even some Muslims joined the Catholics for a second bigger march on 21 January 2018. This march was also suppressed violently. Even worse, tear gas was used on a nursery school and some children were killed.

Strong Families: Love and Limitations

Ramona Chappe & Selva Encina, Community of Ñemby – Paraguay

That is the name of the training programme we took part in Lima, Peru from 8 to 11 October 2017. We were invited by the National Anti-Drugs Secretary (SENAD) of Paraguay in conjunction with DEVIDA (The National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs), Peru.

The severe tension was palpable in the capital. The demonstrators seemed determined to continue their protest against the regime of President Kabila. “Our march will continue until our rights are respected. Our dignity as women, men and believers obliges us to do this.”

We feel powerless in the face of this outbreak of violence and the growing human misery. Our Sisters walked with the people in the two marches. Some of them were caught up in the tear gas but we continue to struggle with our people with the lamps of our hearts alight.

A child was killed by tear gas on 21 January 2018.

Thérèse KAPANGALA MWANZA an aspirant of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bergame who was trying to protect children at the end of Mass, was killed in front of the Church of St. Francis in Kitambo before the march on 21 January. Many others were also killed. May they rest in peace.

*Sr. Elodie IBWILAKWINGI
Community of Kinshasa*

The work is evidence based and was first begun in the U.S. in 1992. It was later adapted to our context in Latin America by the Pan-American Health Organisation (OPS/OMS) and was brought to Peru in 2005.



This programme is very much in line with the work that we began in Paraguay in March for the prevention of drug abuse and it gave us great encouragement as well as the motivation to continue.

The aim of this programme is to work for the prevention of drug abuse and to empower children and teenagers to deal with the peer pressure they are under on a daily basis. It also helps families to talk about this matter.

In Paraguay, drug abuse is increasing and the age at which children are beginning to use is becoming lower all the time. It is a problem which brings suffering not only to the users but also to their families. It is a cry for help which demands a response. Here we can call to mind Genesis 4. *“Where is your brother?” “Am I my brother’s keeper?”* Our Charism of communion reminds us that we are all sisters and brothers in the big cosmic family, that we are all interconnected and that what I do or neglect to do affects everyone else.

Our project for the prevention of drug abuse arises from the distress of the many families, especially mothers, who come to us for advice and help. Some teenagers also come.

It was not easy in the beginning because it is something that was never spoken about even in our own community. Sometimes we saw the fear and uncertainty caused by the unknown. Today, several months later, we are learning by doing. We receive funding from the Pierre Bienvenu Foundation and many people, professional and non-professional, give their services. It all adds up.

The following is some of the work we do:

- We set up a coordinating team comprising young people and adults and we meet with them every Saturday.
- We also have three guitar groups (beginners and advanced) which meet three times a week.



- We work in conjunction with the Cerrito School of football which has 300 members between 7 and 17 years of age.
- In all of these groups we work on topics such as values, self-knowledge, self-respect, and peer pressure.

- We are asked by both colleges and youth groups to give days on those kinds of topics.
- We have also facilitated psycho-pedagogical and psychological care for children and teenagers as well as psychology for adults. A lawyer and a social worker have also given us their services.
- We accompany mothers (while their children are having guitar lessons).
- The Programme also allows time for pastoral listening.

None of this would have been possible without the collaboration of so many people around us. We realise that the project is a big challenge even though it is just a grain of sand in the struggle against this social epidemic. It is certainly a very complex problem which has many causes, unemployment, lack of education etc. Society encourages unbridled consumerism while denying young people the opportunity to develop their potential. We can add too that up to a few

years ago, Paraguay was just a transit country for drugs. Now we know that it both produces and uses them. And the situation is getting worse.

In this situation, the Spirit who inspired our Founder urges us on. So do our Founder's own words, *"Nothing can now hold you back. Go forward."*

The formation which we received in Peru provided us with new tools for working with families in our own context, with parents or tutors and with children from 10 to 14 years of age.

We are very grateful for the opportunity to take part in this training programme. We have made the commitment to continue working with families, using what we have learned. We know that the families will teach us too.

We thank the Sisters of Peru for all their kindness to us. As we say in Paraguay, Ñande Jara tapende rovasá jo'a jo'a (May God bless them abundantly).

I'm filled with gratitude...

"Give yourself to God totally and unreservedly. He alone deserves our heart and He alone can make us happy." (Selected text # 64). I find light in these profound words of our Founder in giving my life to God fully and joyfully. 18 December 2017 was a memorable day of experience for me and to the PBN family in the Philippines. Being the first Filipina, I experienced the grace



of God flowing into my life, bringing more meaning to surrendering myself to God. I was able to see life in a wider view specially the commitment I had in Religious life. My final profession was so touching and energizing. I felt overwhelmed by the presence, love and support of so many - specially my

family, our Sisters, the Associates, relatives and the neighbors who braved the bad weather and the typhoon. The presence and the inspiring words of Bishop of our diocese, Rev. Arturo Bastes added to my joy. The celebration was so meaningful connecting to our Charism “being family and building family, as I felt more my belonging to a wider family. Every gesture during the celebration – especially prostrating during the litany of Saints - was very meaningful as surrendering myself, owning nothing but having everything for the glory of God Alone. It will be my reminder and a grace as I continue my journey to strengthen my relationship to God every day. The joy I experienced cannot be put into words. I experienced God’s love in different ways in my life. This is not the

end, only the beginning in searching, discovering and experiencing God’s unconditional love. Indeed the presence of God is everywhere.

I’m filled with gratitude to our loving God who called and journeys with me every day. A big ‘thank you’ to my sisters in the Holy Family who helped me to find meaning in life, for all their support and sisterly love. To all who worked behind the scenes to make this celebration memorable. Thank you PBN family all over the world, who sent assurance of prayers, wishes and love which made me feel belong to the big family.

Liezl Esteves– Philippines

To Go Beyond Our Boundaries

Since the last General Chapter we, the members of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, are trying our best to understand and deepen the emerging world view which urges us to think anew of who we are on this Earth, our relationship to God, to others and the whole of creation.

We the sisters working in St. Joseph’s school and college in Kohat (Pakistan) have tried” to go beyond our boundaries” and help a person who was in great need of our help. We are blessed to have the presence of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Christians – the four major religions - in our school and live as a family in spite of our different beliefs. The story below is written by one of our Muslim teachers.



The story of sympathy and kindness

In our school Sharif Baba is a prominent figure. He has been serving here for about 18 years. He is very kind, caring, polite and cordial. Everybody in the school likes him. He is equally popular among teachers and students. But at the same time, if we peep into the heart of Sharif Baba, we see wounds and bruises. His daughter has recently passed away. Before her demise she was bed-ridden for quite a long time. During his daughter's treatment Sharif Baba faced severe financial problems. In those difficult times students and teachers came forward for help and they generously contributed. Sharif Baba left no stone unturned for the recovery of his daughter's health but it was not to be. His daughter left this world forever to meet

her creator. His daughter's demise brought deep grief and pain in Sharif Baba's life. This was the time when he needed nothing but a consoling shoulder. Students and Teachers once again stood together to give him courage to face this thorny times. They supported Sharif Baba not only emotionally but also financially. After collecting money from all students the Head Boy Shazaib ur Rehman and Chief Proctor Sir, Abdul Malik handed over Rs. 49000/- to Sharif Baba as a token of their love.

"We believe that in our school we are ONE Family, we support one another in Love".

Sir. Abdul Malik

*St. Joseph Convent School and college,
Kohat, Pakistan*

