

INTERCONNECTIONS

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2017 Editorial

Every New Year is a gracious time, which is accompanied by a spirit of good will and joy that can only be experienced, never fully explained. It brings many resolutions, some that we had failed to keep the previous year, and some very new; it is also a time to recall with gratitude the goodness of God in our lives while experiencing the kindness of God in our vulnerabilities and welcoming the new, the different with eagerness!

During the Christmas season, we marked many celebrations, including the opening of our Bicentenary preparations, as we begin to look forward to celebrating our Jubilee in 2020. At Christmas time we pondered over our God who is LOVE, coming to understand a love that is not manipulative, not demanding, but is self-giving, inviting, and attracting. Thus living the Gospel, the Good news, is not a way of propagating or an empty proclamation of Jesus' way, calling others to be Christians or follow us but it is a commitment to a simple living of our ordinary life in the spirit of Jesus, which will become a "naked attraction" through the flow of love.

One morning as Francis of Assisi was praying he received an inspiration for that day - to preach in nearby village. He expressed this to the rest of the brothers. Brother Philip excitedly joined him for the day's task, thinking that by preaching he will work for the glory of God and God would surely be pleased. No sooner had they left, they found a poor man with an overturned load; they helped him to put

things back again and made him happy. Then entering the village they met an old friend with his wife and 12 children. Francis greeted them by calling each by name; in turn they enjoyed the baked buns which the wife offered to both of them. Having given them their blessing, they walked towards the village; Philip noticed that they were already late, and started to frown. While going on again, they saved a small kitten trapped in a



tree; fed a lame dog and bandaged its wounds, sang for a blind man making him laugh; helped a farmer to deliver a calf; played with some kids in the park and rejoiced with them. Shadows grew dark as the sun began to set and on the way back home Philip was worried saying - "we haven't had time for preaching" and Francis replied - "but Philip we have preached all the way, what people need most is to see an example."

In a similar way, through the contents of this publication, we share with you some experiences of how our Family members lived and witnessed being good news and a joyful presence to the hopeless and the needy. It also offers us some ways of planning for the bicentenary jubilee year

in 2020. Holy Family Members have shared the opening event of the jubilee year in different parts of Holy Family world. It is often said, "People without a history have no right to a future". The Jubilee year reminds us of who we are – that we are part of the whole creation, inter-related to all life; that we are all children of God and as Holy Family, belonging to the big Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles giving glory to God as

we live in right relationship with God, with one another and with the whole of creation.

Looking forward to the Jubilee Year of our foundation, may we strive to do away with everything that separates, discriminates! Nobody is to hold another in bondage. Nobody is to exploit another but welcome and respect all differences building new relationships of equality for we all are one in God!



Here in Rome

Generalate Calendar

16 - December 2016

A group of Italian sisters from four communities gathered at the Generalate in preparation for the renewal of vows on 18th December. Micheline Kenda the Link-councillor animated the session. This meeting was an important event as they shared the joy of living communion, and giving witness to it in their own context. Putting their sentiments into words they said, "It is really enriching as we, all members meet together in one place and share our life experiences."



17 - December 2016



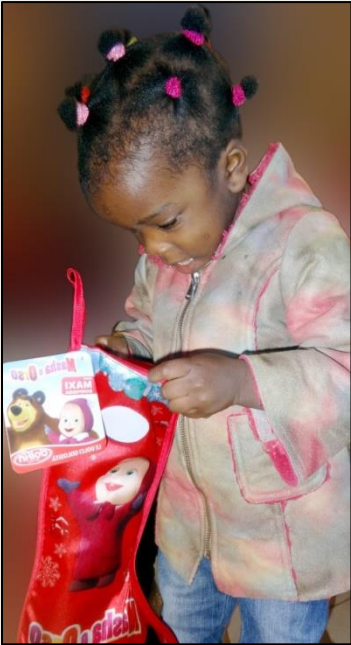
The Sisters of Italy, from the communities of Marino, Orta Di Atella, Campobasso, Montenevoso and Via Dei Gracchi were here in the Generalate for our Christmas get-together. Among those participated were about 38 Sisters and a Secular member. It was a moment of celebration and joy. The day began with the Eucharistic celebration, followed by a time of enjoyment with carol singing. The beauty was that all sang in Italian and also in their own mother tongue which included eight languages - Italian, French, Spanish, Kikongo, Portuguese, Sinhalese, Tamil and English. After exchanging gifts, the festive meal brought the day to a close. We thank God for the life gift of our sisters for mission, in the Holy Family!

29 - December 2016



We had the joy of welcoming the family of Taylor Philip for lunch. Taylor and his family as we all know are refugees from Nigeria, who have occupied our small front house – “Casetta” since 5 April 2016. It is very interesting to know the family by their names – very Biblical, very inspiring and hope-giving - Philip, the father, his wife – Joy; the elder boys – Favour and Promise; the little

daughter - Blessing and the new arrival Mercy Grace – a baby girl born last October 2016! Having lost their homeland, shelter, relatives, jobs, education, security.... yes, everything they had struggled to arrive on a new shore where they also went through hard times initially. Though such is their reality, being faithful to their names they indeed live a life of hope, simplicity and joy trusting in the Goodness of God coming to them in many different ways!



Blessing

30 - December 2016



We, in the Generalate, celebrated today the Feast of the Holy Family, joined by four religious Congregations, who are our neighbours; Jerosin - one of our Priest Associates who works in Italy and especially our brother Oblates. The Oblate brothers gave us a surprise by preparing for the Eucharist, hymns with their own choir to the accompaniment of guitar music. It was a joy!

We marked the beginning of the preparatory time for the bi-centenary celebrations during the offertory procession and praying the bicentenary prayer after communion. The "aperitif" that followed the Mass added the extended “family” sense and joy to the occasion.

13 - January 2017

The Church established a day - (15 January) to remember the Migrants and refugees, this is the 103rd day, dedicated for migrant - children. Remembering this, the Society of Jesus in the form of Jesuit Refugee Service -organized a gathering on the 13th of January this year. Many refugees, volunteers, religious members and friends participated in this.

At this gathering, two boys and two girls from Afghanistan, Albania, Syria and Ethiopia shared their experiences of life with the Assembly. 20 refugees and migrants of various nationalities also shared their message of peace in their respective languages. Michelin Kenda, Marie Pierre Otiba and Annie Anthonipillai from the Generalate also joined this moving event.



A letter to all!

Holy Family Convent
Naas Road
NEWBRIDGE Co. Kildare
December 2016

Dear all!

It's that lovely time of year again when we send you our greetings and good wishes for a very happy Christmas and God's blessings in abundance throughout the coming year and beyond. This letter, too, is our annual effort to share with you some of the events of the past year in our community.

In July a group of us, including some Lay Members of the Holy Family, went on pilgrimage to Martillac, Bordeaux where our order was founded. We had the opportunity of meeting up with a group from Britain. Some of us also enjoyed a day's pilgrimage to Lourdes - a journey of two hours from Bordeaux. The weather was exceptionally warm which ensured that we arrived home with a few mosquito bites!

At the end of June we enjoyed an outing to the Cistercian Abbey at Moone, Co. Kildare. The monks were very welcoming and after Mass which was celebrated by the Abbot in the monastery church, we had a cup of tea and a chat with the monks. Some of our enthusiastic gardeners also paid a visit the gardens.

The official opening of the year in preparation for the International Family Congress or the World Meeting of Families took place in Dublin on 22 October. It is a

wonderful privilege that Ireland has been selected to host this event in 2018. Pope Francis said this Congress is a gift to the Irish Church.

The big event of our year was the closure on 29 October of one of our houses in Ireland - Moneenroe, Co. Kilkenny. While we were very sorry to be withdrawing from there it was also very heartening to realize how much the people of Moneenroe had appreciated the work and commitment of all the Sisters who had been part of the community over its 45 years. The Holy Family mission will continue through the Lay Members of the Holy Family and the parishioners who are very involved in pastoral ministry there.

Although we are living in a 'retirement' home, most of the members have found alternative ways of continuing missionary activity. Sr. Paul, who spent many years in South Africa, has celebrated her 99th birthday recently and in her 'retirement', has raised €1,800.00 for our missionary work in Pakistan. Sr. Margaret - also 'retired' - holds regular raffies for dolls etc. the proceeds of which go to a local project 'Meals on Wheels'. More recently the Sisters helped to raise funds to cover the expenses of young people who travelled to Poland to meet the Pope.

Who ever thought that busy knitting needles and crochet hooks could be the humble instruments to contribute to a world record? We are so happy to be involved with this project not only for the poor in the world but for thousands in Ireland to help break a world record, which at the moment is held by the women of India. Their gigantic quilt can cover two football pitches. We hope that our Irish project will exceed that, but, more importantly, the finished quilt will be divided into sections and shared among the homeless of our towns and cities.

Our annual pilgrimage to Knock took place in June. The celebrant of our Mass in the Chapel of the Apparition was Brian Kavanagh, who gave a very inspiring homily. More recently, we had a gathering of all our Irish Lay Members at a local venue. Fr. Willie Purcell, a Priest member of the Holy Family, was the main speaker.

On 17 September, we had a Jubilee Celebration for 7 Sisters from various communities in Ireland. The Mass was celebrated by our Parish priest, Fr. Paul Dempsey. We were happy to be able to accommodate all the visitors in our extended dining room. We also hope to continue our pastoral outreach towards our parish and in particular to the pupils of Holy Family Secondary School next door. In January, sadly, a well-loved member of our community, Sr. Benignus, died. She had spent all her Religious life here in Newbridge, having taught boys in the local Infants' school. She will be remembered also for her kindness to those most in need. We also lost some of our Lay Members - both in Ireland, Scotland and England.

It is always lovely to renew contact with all our friends. We assure you that we pray for you, and we hope that you will also remember us in your prayer.

Beannachtai na Nollag! From all!



Nun's work for peace brings her MBE award!

Headlines such as *Nun's work for peace brings her MBE award*



Sr. Rose

and *Former Ballinascreen nun receives MBE* stood out boldly on local newspapers in Ulster early in the year when the New Year Honours List was published in 2017. The nun in question is *Holy Family Sister Rose Devlin*, currently a member of the Magherafelt community. The MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) is awarded by Queen Elizabeth of England for an outstanding achievement or service to the community that will have had a long-term, significant impact and stand out as an example to others.

Sr. Rose has been awarded an MBE for her cross-community work in schools across Northern Ireland. She became involved in peace and reconciliation work more than 20 years ago. In the Christian Education Movement (CEM), she worked alongside Presbyterian Ministers organizing, facilitating and delivering conferences for secondary school children from different religious backgrounds. Exploring difference and celebrating diversity were the overarching themes of these conferences as they tried to break down community tensions. During the dark days of the "the troubles" she was often on the road as early as 6.30 am travelling to schools across the province. The welcome extended to her by Principals and Heads of Religious Education, as well as the mutual understanding and friendships that developed made it all worthwhile.

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Another bonus was the welcome extended to her, a woman and a Catholic religious sister, by a group that, up to then, had only had men involved. The award came as an unexpected, but pleasant, surprise to Rose. She accepted it on behalf of those who had supported her in her work, among them her own *Holy Family* sisters and Lay Associates, the people of Ballinascreen, and the SPRED (Special Needs Religious Education) helpers.

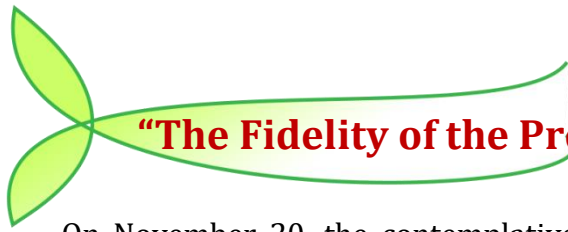
Although no longer involved in cross-community work in schools, Rose believes it needs to continue. "I pray daily," she says, "for greater mutual understanding, not only among the youth but especially among adults, whose influence is immense."



Sr. Rose with Bishop Donal McKeown

We rejoice with Rose and thank God for her giftedness as we await the Award Ceremony which will take place in Buckingham Palace on 2 March 2017.

(Adapted from *Derry Post* and *Mid Ulster Mail*; from the publication produced by *Holy Family of Bordeaux – Britain and Ireland*)



“The Fidelity of the Present has its roots in the past”

On November 20, the contemplative community celebrated the 50th anniversary of its return to The Solitude. Three Sisters who lived through that event share the joy of the experience.

Sr. Teresa describes the return to The Solitude.

The community of Sainte Hélène was delighted when Sr. Claire Julien, Superior General, announced her intention of bringing “The Solitaires” back to The Solitude where they were founded and which was the first home of the first little *Holy*

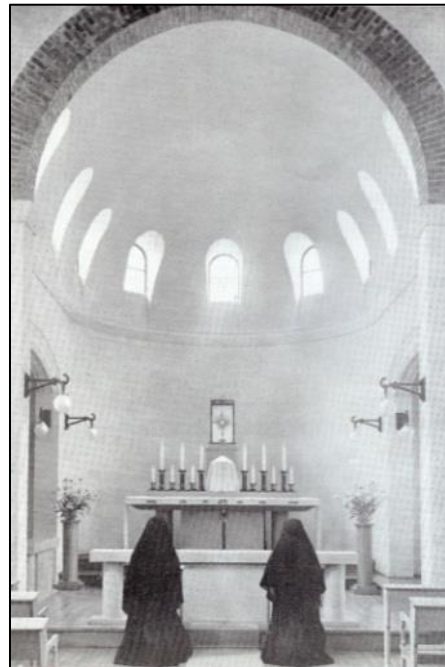


Family contemplative community. The date was settled. The move would take place on 28 October 1966, the eve of the Feast of Christ the King.

The Solitude was still being renovated but that didn't matter. There was so much to see in this holy place which the Good Father intended to be home for all the members of his Family. Gradually, normal life began. We had to get used to the kitchen, the store-room, the laundry, gardening, picking and storing vegetables and fruit, looking after the house and caring for the sacristy to ensure the smooth running of our liturgical prayer and Eucharistic adoration. There were lots of changes but we were so happy!

The first year, we helped to harvest the grapes. As “well-formed” young Religious we applied ourselves to the work

seriously. We had to learn a different rhythm of work because working as a team means adapting to others' abilities! It was a good formation for community life. I remember marvelling each morning at the sun rising on the red grapes covered with dew drops. They were like



pearls inviting us to work with joy.

We were freer to make jam and conserve vegetables using the produce of the garden. We could also make cakes. There were no rules and regulations like there are today! Sr. Marie-Mélanie used to go to the international market of Brienne in Bordeaux very early in the morning. Sr. Félicité worked with some of us in the kitchen and helped us with her amazing calmness and patience whenever something unexpected happened at the last minute – larger-than-expected groups arriving, or not turning up at all! Today we wonder how we were able to do all that work and still have time for prayer.

But everything was so different – space, rhythm, atmosphere etc!

We also had times of recreation. These were very different from what we had in our lovely little garden in Sainte-Hélène – walks, picnics in the woods, in the “Valley of the Angels”, having a boat ride around the Island in the “Good Angel”. Each one was also able to have a day of solitude on the Island in the company of the Good Father and Our Lady of All Graces. There was no bridge there then. The only way we could get to the island was to pull ourselves over in the boat using the chain that was attached to the hulk.

How could we not be happy and grateful to our Good Father for having created this “holy place” of The Solitude with the Island of Our Lady of All Graces? Our roots had been here since the foundation of the first community of Solitaries in 1859.

We had been very happy in Sainte Hélène and we were just as happy during our first years in The Solitude even if they brought great changes, the need to adapt, abandonment and hope for each one and for the community as a whole.

A Few Words from Sr. Teresita:

From the time I entered the community of Sainte-Hélène I was always convinced of my call to Holy *Family* contemplative life. I was as happy as a fish in water. When I came to The Solitude I needed time to



adapt, through humble prayer, in order to get to the essential

and not lose my way. It was a time when the Church was inviting

Religious to return to their

sources and come to the understanding that our life, with all its demands, could be lived only from the heart.

Today I love Sunday Mass because it brings us close to other Christians from the Graves region. When I see the way they greet one another before the celebration, I say to myself, “This is a *family gathered in the name of the Lord.*”

When we were in Sainte-Hélène, our belonging and communion with the life and mission of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles were expressed more through information, news and visits from the Sisters of the Generalate. Here in The Solitude we meet different members of the *Holy Family* from all over the world. We have lots of different meetings. We are close to the whole world through our prayer and through the people who come here, and that draws us into the contemplative missionary dimension of our life.

50 years of life in The Solitude? I am still as happy as a fish in water, happier than ever! And I thank the Lord because he journeyed with each one of us who came from Sainte-Hélène and with those who joined us over the years. To young people I say, “Trust in God because everything is grace. The Lord will be with you always and will make you happy.”



Sr. Elena tells a Happy Story



Like Abraham who set out without knowing where he was going, we arrived at The Solitude. It was a new living space for all of us. We did not know how or where to begin settling in to our new home. The Solitude was a new experience for all of us.

I had a strong sense of the Good Father's presence and a call to live even more deeply as his daughter in the *Holy Family* in this place where our contemplative life began.

It was like a rebirth, a time to trust in the Lord and abandon ourselves to him. Our days were filled doing all the different things needed to live our vocation in everyday community life – community and personal prayer, perpetual adoration and times of work and recreation lived in a prayerful way. Every moment was different and enriching. I experienced God as Love leading us on a sure path as individuals and as a community. God needed us.

Soon I will have been 50 years in The Solitude! Today, in my room in the infirmary surrounded by my Sisters, I



abandon myself to the Lord. And I thank him for the strength and the life that he has given me which enabled me to follow him daily with joy and gratitude.

I offer you three little phrases

- Live God's life
- Live for God
- Live with God

That is the way of life for everyone.

“To inherit a history means having the desire and the will to prolong it creatively and fruitfully.”



The Holy Family in Los Mateos, Cartagena

In 1993, some communities reflected on **what we had actually done to get close to the world of marginalised people.** At

the same time, we tried to see what we could do to be more credible in keeping with our option. The reason for this reflection was that the Provincial Council had decided to open a new community in a marginalised area, possibly Los Mateos in Cartagena. After some research,

dialogue with several Sisters and renovating a small one-storey house, the Province sent four Sisters to live in Los Mateos. The *Holy Family* arrived in that disadvantaged neighbourhood in October 1994. Since then, Sisters have succeeded one another there, always trying to share life, faith, work, joys and sorrows with their neighbours following the lifestyle of Nazareth which our Founder proposed to us. In recent years



the neighbourhood has changed. The old people have either died or have gone to live in care homes when they have not been able to live with their children. Their own houses have fallen into ruin since being left vacant and have been taken over by migrant families, for the most part Moroccans. The men had come to Spain quite some years ago and had found work on the farms. Even though their wages and conditions of work were pitiful, they brought their families and now make up a third of the population of Los Mateos. Another third is made up of ethnic gypsies and the rest are from Cartagena itself. The Sisters did not have a community apostolate. Each one had her own job. One was a teacher in a state school in the area; another looked after child health and hygiene in the school and in homes. Those who had a nursing qualification helped in a centre for people who were terminally ill from AIDS and in a day care centre for those who were mentally ill. The Sisters also supported a workshop for the promotion of gypsy women in the area. In their free time they

taught catechetics, helped in the parish, provided pastoral care for the sick and were tireless volunteers in Rascasa (an NGO concerned with the social inclusion of disadvantaged areas) the “Telephone of Hope” etc. They took part in movements

in the neighbourhood or in Cartagena which worked for the dignity of underprivileged people. That is the way it was until the Sisters reached retirement age and their activities changed as their physical strength

declined. But the *Holy Family* community continued there in the midst of families that had been “discarded”, to quote Pope Francis, evangelising the poor people and being evangelised by them. They describe their everyday life: Although we live in an urban area we have the privilege of being woken up by roosters. They are the first to break the silence of the night with their cheerful and strident crowing. But when all is said and done, suburban roosters are not strong enough to wake up the whole neighbourhood. The pickup vans are louder. They rev up with their cargo of migrants who will spend the day bent over the earth which is almost always dry in this region. Those who are lucky enough to have found work or who hope to find it leave very early in the morning. The others stay in bed. They will have gone to bed late because night-time offers more possibilities of “making a living”. They collect waste paper or junk and wait until the security people leave in order to gather up bits and pieces in the light of the moon. Otherwise what would they and their families live on? They have

another alternative – selling drugs. That brings in more money but it is more dangerous too and sooner or later they end up in gaol. Many have already been there.



The sun rises behind the mountains which are burned up by the drought. Then the first signs of life appear. Dogs come out of their hiding places without collars or leads. They go to the bins and root around happily in the rubbish on the ground looking for their breakfast. The siren of a boat can be heard. The port is close by and you can see the sea between

the last houses in the neighbourhood. The sun continues to rise and shines strongly on the highest part of the hill where the worst shanties are to be found and where the sun will have a lot of work to do all day long – heating, drying, healing and giving life and happiness. What would happen to these poor people without the generous sun from the East? Then girls and boys appear on their way to school. If they arrive early they can have a hot a nourishing breakfast provided by the school. A group of women arrive from Cartagena where they have been cleaning offices and other premises or caring for a sick person. By this time we have finished our prayer in community and are ready to begin the day with the surprises and challenges it will bring, trying, as Pope Francis says, to be “constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.” (Evangelii gaudium, 127).

La Community of Los Mateos.



Opening of the Bicentenary celebrations in Idiofa

On 30 December, feast of the Holy Family, all the members of the large Family of P.B.N who work in Idiofa (Lay Associates, a Secular and the three apostolic communities) gathered with the parishioners of the Cathedral parish of St. KIZITO. They praised the Lord for the gift of the wonderful Family of Jesus, **Mary and Joseph** in a beautiful sung Eucharist during which the celebrant solemnly opened our bicentenary celebrations.





At the beginning of the Eucharist, Sr. Brigitte NZIATA explained the meaning of “Jubilee” and officially announced the opening of our bicentenary celebrations. She also gave a brief history of our religious Family, its aim of spreading and strengthening the faith and its presence in the world in general and the D.R. Congo in particular. She concluded by inviting all the Christians, young and old, to open their hearts to God’s grace and God’s call to share in the beautiful and rich Charism of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.

After Mass, Sr. Claudine THAMBWE, Léonard MBEMBE, a Lay Associate, and the Secular, Marie-Claire MUPENDE, gave an interview to a journalist from the diocesan radio (R.T.D.I.). They spoke about the five Vocations of the large Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles in order to make us better known and emphasise being and creating family and our mission of communion.

In the afternoon, we gathered in the Noailles Hall for a prayer of thanksgiving, the sharing of experiences and a sketch on the life of our Founder organised and presented by the Novices and some Sisters and young Lay Associates. The

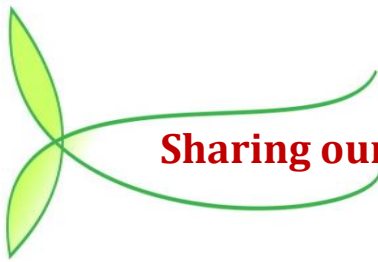
sketch helped us to return to our sources as we remembered our Founder’s childhood, the beginning of the foundation etc. because celebrating a Jubilee means taking time to look at our past with gratitude, to live the present joyfully and to look towards the future with hope.

With the aim of spreading the news of the opening of our bicentenary celebrations to the various parishes of the city of Idiofa, Sr. Georgine MUFUGOTO asked us to divide into groups of three or four to go into each parish on the following Sunday to spread the same good news.

The day ended with refreshments. So let us live this time of preparation with joy and thanksgiving and, above all, in an attitude of personal conversion by rooting ourselves more in our Charism so that we may be effective, visible signs of God’ love and show forth the family face of the Church in a changing world with its wars, aggression, violence, divisions, individualism and selfishness.

May *Jesus, Mary and Joseph* be with us always.

**Sr. Alphonsine MFWANKAMA
(R.D. Congo)**



Sharing our energy joyfully

It is with the theme of the 2014 General Chapter in mind “Sent on Mission; if we don’t dare now then, when?” that I want to share this little experience at Yaoundé which opened my eyes to the ordinary things of life.

After being refused a VISA for England, I went to study English in a parish of the diocese of MAMFE where the Oblates of Mary Immaculate work.

On November 20 I returned to our house in Oliga, Yaoundé. I often got very tired reading or listening to cassettes in English all day. One day when we were coming from Mass, we met one of our neighbours called Martha who said to me, “Sister, I have to rush; we have a lot of work to do!” “What work?” I asked. “We are harvesting our peanuts and the ground is hard.”

When I got back to the community I told the Sisters about this and suggested that I should go to help Martha and Madeleine. “Of course” they said, “If you have time.”

So off I went to my neighbours with my work clothes on and an empty bucket in my hand. They were not expecting me and exclaimed in chorus, “Sister, are you coming to the farm?” “Yes” I replied, “I am coming to help you.” Madeleine said, “Wait for me, Sister. I am just going to see to the hens.” It was only then I discovered

that our neighbours had over a hundred hens. After that we set out for the farm which was five kilometres from the village. However since we chatted along the way, I didn’t feel the distance.

Also, on the way to the farm we passed through “Little Paris” which is a new neighbourhood with beautiful big houses. I was amazed because ten years ago this neighbourhood did not exist!

We worked until the afternoon. When we returned from the farm Martha put a large pile of fresh peanuts into my bucket for the community who enjoyed them. We also shared them with some neighbours who visited us.

Since Martha and Madeleine were pleased that I worked on the peanut farm I went four more times. They were grateful for the gift of my time and energy.

The Sisters were also happy about my work and the peanuts I brought back to them. If we had to buy them they would have cost at least a thousand francs per day. I learned from this simple little experience how we can give our time and energy to others. *“Members of a specific local Church and human community, we share the joys and sorrows of those around us ...” (Constitutions, Art 85)*

The people we met were amazed to see me coming back from the farm carrying a large bucket of peanuts on my head.



In *VOWED FOR MISSION* No. 7, we read, “We feel called to learn to be with ‘the poor’ to share life with simplicity.” Then in 7.1 “Humanity could not exist without the contribution of the rest of nature which works according to the law of giving and receiving.”

“We live in a gift economy, not one of ownership. We offer our vow of poverty to help one another live consciously in an interdependent world with sensitivity and gratitude.” *VFM* 7.2

I had learned something positive for my life. First of all I had to go out of myself

and think of the women I went to work with and then how pleased the Sisters were to enjoy the fruit of my labour.

It is through the giving and sharing of life that relationships grow and joy is spread. Our presence (the help given) made Martha and Madeleine happy because they had to spend less time at work. We thank the Lord for his gift which helps us, in our turn, to be a gift for others.

Sr. Agnès ONGWISA
Cameroon-Chad



A window on the young people of the mission of our Lady of Africa

I have just had the beautiful experience of a first retreat with forty young people between the ages of fifteen and thirty. The theme of the retreat was Inner Transformation.

We left our normal activities to go away and be alone with Jesus – to listen, to pray, to meditate and to share our experiences of God. It was a time of grace and renewal for us. As I listened to the sharing of the young people, I felt the presence of God at work in their lives. That encouraged me greatly and made me happy to continue the mission with young people. The topics we prayed with, meditated on and shared were:

- ◆ Healing
- ◆ Fears
- ◆ Overcoming our fears
- ◆ Core needs

When we spoke about healing we became aware that it is fear that blocks it. We need to go to Christ, the source of all, in prayer. The young people spoke about crisis situations in their lives. I was moved by their simplicity, their depth, their experience of God and the awareness of the fact that prayer must be at the centre of their lives. We also learned about the different types of fear that we can carry within us.



- ◆ Fear of being controlled
- ◆ Fear of hurt pride
- ◆ Fear of being abandoned
- ◆ Fear of being humiliated
- ◆ Fear of suffering.

If we want to change our lives we have to be true to ourselves, accept humiliations, trust in GOD and let go. Then we will be able to move forward. At the end, we spoke about what we need to find meaning in our lives: to be recognised, to be loved and to be organised. We finished with a beautiful Eucharistic celebration led by the young people and myself. I felt I had a good rapport with them as they felt at ease asking me questions about life. I remain open to these young people in order to be and create family with them.



My heartfelt thanks for the support of your prayers. May Jesus, Mary and Joseph be with us always.

Sr. Marceline Woyo, Community of 2414 Nicole.



The launching of the Bicentenary

The days ahead of the Launching of the Bicentenary Celebration were days urging us to trust in God Alone and Providence to make our celebration meaningful participative. The Bicol Region was again visited by Typhoon NINA on December 24th, 2016 that left the whole of Bicol Region without electricity indefinitely. All our high level planning was brought to a simple but very meaningful gathering of the Three Vocations present in the Bicol Region – The Apostolic Sisters, The Lay and Priest Associates of Rizal, Bulan and Sorsogon – to the launching of the Bicentenary Celebration on December 30, 2016. The Three Holy Family Vocations present in the Diocese of Sorsogon gathered in Rizal, Gubat, for the



Launching Celebration. The Holy Family was given the privilege to organize the Eucharistic Celebration as the Launching day was the Feast of the Holy Family. The Parish of St. Anthony of Padua, Gubat, gave us a free hand to organize our Launching Celebration having Fr. Benedicto FURO our Priest Associate as the Main Celebrant.

The introduction given by Mr. Albano ESTAVILLO resembled a short summary of the History of the Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in order for our Parishioners to know the specialty of the Day. It was also an opportune moment to introduce our Association. It was followed by the unveiling of the THEME for the BICENTENARY Celebration:

“LIVE COMMUNION; CELEBRATE FAMILY” which was rolled down by the Lay Associate Couple- Haider Cecil and Milagros MENESES, while all gathered in the Kapilya of St. John the Baptist acclaimed with round of applause:
“Mabuhay Sagrada Familia Sa Pilipinas!”

And the lighting of the Candle for our Beloved Founder was done by Sr. Bernadette de SILVA. Fr. Benedicto FURO our Main Celebrant and the Homilist further expounded on the Theme, meaningfully connecting it to the Life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph who „loved, sought and desired nothing but God Alone“. It was a story-telling too of the History of the Association – especially beginnings, growth and its beginnings, growth and it“s Missionary Journey through the years and the FAMILY TREE NOW. He also emphasized on Family and Values that are essential for Vocations to spring from Families. The invitation stood clear that how beautiful it is if every Family be like the FAMILY of NAZARETH – Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

The Renewal of Commitment of the Priest and Lay Associates made the Eucharistic Celebration of the Day solemn, and the Prayer of the Faithful shared by the Lay Associates connected us to all our sisters and brothers throughout the world who are in need of our solidarity through prayer and to join our PBN Family

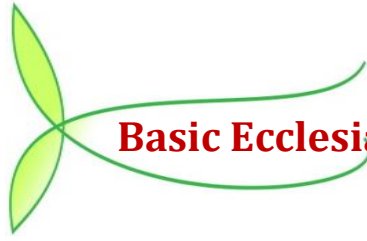


Members who are celebrating the Bicentenary Launching in the Holy Family World. After Communion we all knelt down to join in the Prayer for Bicentenary.

The last but the more exciting event as a Family was the “Bingo Social” that brought the roof of the Holy Family Hall down as the generator of the Apostolic Sisters operated by the Kapilya Chairman Carlos PURA experienced “Barado” – gasoline block every now and then that hindered the Game. No one moved until the three Games were over. Delighted with the Prizes, the winners were cheered by all. If not for the power-cut, we would have enjoyed the day much longer to our hearts content.

The Launching Celebration of the Bicentenary has evoked in us gratitude for the continued and countless Blessings of the “Miraculous Benediction” and the Dream of our Beloved Founder that is being realized in LIVING COMMUNION and CELEBRATING FAMILY among ourselves, with our Sisters and Brothers and with the Community of Life of all Species. BEING AND BUILDING FAMILY is a joyful experience that is ever new and exciting!

Sr. Ida JOSEPH, Rizal-Philippines



Basic Ecclesial Community

The decision of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines to declare Year 2017 as the year of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) with the Theme “The Parish – “Communion of Communities” was welcomed whole heartedly throughout Philippines. The Diocese of Sorsogon is very much concerned in forming Parishes to form “Small Groups of Christian Communities” and it is part of the Diocesan Ecclesial and Evangelization Pastoral Plan.

In Bulan, our Parish started forming Leaders from 42 Kapilyas to facilitate the BEC Groups in each Kapilya. Three full days were set aside for formation and one day was for recollection. After the formation program „sending off” took place during the Sunday Mass. It was amazing how people are eager to take the leadership for this purpose. We were altogether 105 leaders including HFB Sisters and five Holy Family Lay Associates.

Though we have already formed Bible sharing groups in our Kapilya this will take another form and we started to meet groups on each Block Level. We learnt „spot-mapping” so that we will know the families living on each area. There are 4 pilot areas selected by the Parish in Bulan. Ours „Obrero” is also a pilot area.

I am thankful to God that God called me and us Holy Family members to be part of the program which is so close to our Charism, to bring together the scattered children of God, to spread and strengthen the faith in all milieus, Communion our Mission.

The BEC program will help the communities for transformation and for a change of mind set, preferring Communion rather than individualism and be closer to God, getting to know each other to form Family, and experience to live and love the Word of God as our way of life.



**Fe Oseo, Lay Associates
Bulan, Philippines.**



Exposure program at Thurnjikollai, INDIA

I am surprised and very grateful for the way Loyola College functions. In the middle of the second semester all the first year PG students had the plan to go for rural camp. We the department of English and Bio-Technology were sent to the village, 'Thurnjikollai' which belongs to the Diocese of Pondicherry, from 28 November to 3 December 2016.

On 28th morning we began our journey together with 4 staff and 66 students to that village. We reached there in the noon and the Parish Priest Fr. Arockiya Dass welcomed us, some of the people and children from the village were eagerly waiting to meet us. We had the interest to know about the life of the people in this village.



It was a different experience for all of us. The inaugural ceremony of the Rural Camp Visit began at 4.30 pm in the church

hall. The Chief Guest Rev. Fr. Arockiya Dass – Parish Priest, Panchayat President, and Parish council members were present for this function. The Priest and the staff explained about the objective and the importance of the rural camp visit by the students. Everybody wished the success of this camp by their inspiration and words of motivation. The students were divided into several committees to organize our stay. Every day we had yoga and prayer in the morning; following that we worked in the paddy, sugarcane field and we helped to clean the church and Hindu Temple. It helped us to understand the pain and suffering of the farmers. It was an amazing experience for all of us.

More than 300 families, Christians and Hindus are living in this village. But we could experience that they have a deep bond and understanding between them. People are very simple, affectionate and approachable. Whenever we visited the families they shared whatever they had. Most of the people depend on their daily wages. The children go to Government village school but they have no hospital and toilet facilities. Last year, they were affected by the flood and lost everything, they became prone to sickness. Their houses are mostly huts; some others were built by the government after the flooding.

We were given a questionnaire to take a survey about the families and villages. We were able to cover 4 villages through our camping programme. At the end of each day we had an evaluation about our day's work. We all were enriched by the other's sharing. On the final day we organized

competition for women and children and distributed prizes for the winners, also prepared cultural programs, through which we awakened the villagers to become more aware of cleanliness and prevention for sickness.

I personally profited much from this exposure. It gave me passion for my committed life and a flow to my service.

Sr. Mercy Rani
Chennai



Short History of our Life in Chak 6

5th of February 1975 marked a red letter day for our Holy Family Institute as our the first Holy Family Sisters set foot in Pakistan to start the missionary life. Five Sisters, Stephanie Ranasinghe, Murine Fernando, Benedicta Pathinather, Tarsila and Anne Perera were from Sri Lanka and Sister Catherine Counihan and Sr. Brigid Davis were from Ireland.

Escorted by our Oblate brothers, they met his Excellency Bishop Cialio OP, the Bishop of Faisalabad and received Chak 6/4-L as the first mission station. Each Sister was equipped with the skills and enthusiasm to live and fulfil the mission given to them. Our humble beginnings started with the renovation of the dilapidated mud house which was abandoned 10 years prior to our arrival. Till the building was ready, our Sisters took shelter at the Franciscan Convent, Renala and visited Chak 6/4-L daily. The parish priest was Fr. Giles and he supported our Sisters in every way. Soon, the Sisters were familiar with the surroundings; and were welcomed by the children and the simple people of the village.

As the Sisters concentrated visiting the families and seeing the need of health care they opened one little room of the building they were living in as a little dispensary. They gave importance to both preventive and curative health care. People received free medication and vitamins. Many sick people from far and near came for treatment and thus a lot of contacts were made.

With regular family visits, the Sisters motivated the parents regarding the importance of education. The people started sending the children to the Sisters and so we began teaching them under the tree, and later made use of the old parish house till the present building came to existence.

In 1979 a new leaf was turned in the village of Chak6/4-L when the Oblates and the Holy Family Sisters pooled their resources and started the housing project for 200 families. It was really directed towards the families of the Jugian, a small settlement close to Chak 6/4L. Since the people living there were reluctant to come forward and benefit from this, it was opened to other villages and soon it was realized. So the new colony was born,

of which we are a part. Sisters also carried out in many villages Adult Basic Education programmes, Child Care Centres and needle-work classes which brought in an income to the young women. Along with these they were also involved with youth, women, Legion of Mary, Holy Family Children, Holy Family Associates, regular family visits and pastoral care supporting the priest in every way.

In 1980 the new convent was built. As the middle school took root, the building was put up by Rev. Fr. Amato.O.P. and the Holy Family Sisters were the first to bring the standard up from its beginning. Sisters Doreen Amerasinghe, Rita Gunawardena, Benedicta Pathinather, and Rosita Kurusumuthu were the leading figures



who gave their time, energy, skill and expertise in developing the children's academic studies and their talents.

As the education was coming up, the people from the nearby villages

expressed their desire to educate their young daughters and asked for accommodation, since they did not have facilities in their schools for higher studies. Reflecting on this the sisters saw the possibility of accommodating the young girls in the old church and so in 1987 the girls were accepted and cared by the Sisters in this old building, till the hostel was built in 1995 by Fr. Amato. Since then this apostolate has been carried on by the Holy Family Sisters. Our dispensary, which was built later on, was catering to many patients. In 2002 Fr. Amato built the Rosary Christian Hospital where Sr. Maria Rani Anthonypillai and Mrs. Shamim cared for the patients in the O.P.D. Later, Sr. Elaine D' Almeida came in as the first Nursing Superintendent and started from scratch, to get everything organized to facilitate the running of the hospital. We are happy that it is functioning very well with the present administration.

In 2010 Fr. Amato built the hostel, for Christian blind boys and asked for one of the Sisters to care for that. Sr. Mariam Boota willingly accepted to help out and so from its start this noble task was also taken care of, by the Holy Family Sisters till April this year. We still continue to render service in the parish in a hidden way and we are active in the pastoral field and hostel, as well as animating the youth, women and Associates.

**Sr. Thresa Perera H.F. (Chak 6/4-L)
Pakistan.**



Holy Family of Bordeaux
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