

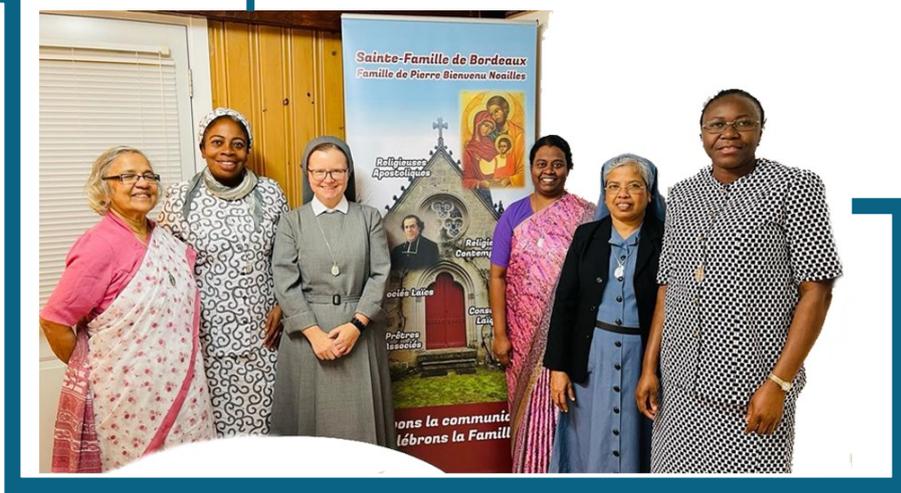


# Interconnections

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**Living our purpose**

**Leads to transformation ...**

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As Pope Francis invited us to journey the path of Synod on synodality with the theme **'Communion, Participation and Mission.'** We journey as a church together to accomplish Christ's mission by collaborating and making the Gospel heard in our time.



*'Christianity is a **transformational force**. We have the **transforming power** within us. Each one of us has the responsibility to incarnate the Charism. The Charism is common to all, but its flavour comes from the way each individual makes it his / her own and lives it in depth.*

**(Meeting Point 6)**

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

**FACEBOOK:** Sainte-Famille Bordeaux

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

## EDITORIAL

Once, a girl had the freedom to do anything she wanted. Therefore, she did what made her heart happy - painting! She spent years painting. However, one day, when she finished painting one of her masterpieces, she got anxious. So she went on a break and stopped painting for a while. It was then that she realized her life was meaningless. Sure, she painted beautiful artwork. Her paintings were excellent, and she knew it. Beyond these paintings, however, she had no life. So from that moment, she began delving into other areas, too. And she started to sell her art and donate the funds to charitable organizations.



Transformation can occur to anybody, anywhere, anytime... COVID-19, the war between Russia and Ukraine and the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, are showing us the need to transform our way of living, to stretch our hands to our sisters and brothers in need. The theme of our 20th General Chapter echoes in our hearts: **"Can we still live our purpose as we begin our third century?"** It calls for a *personal and collective transformation* to live the 'Charism of Communion' to cross to the other shore with new hope and courage in the third millennium. We are interconnected, interrelated, and interdependent with cosmic creation. The purpose of our being in this Charismatic Family leads to transformation to spread the fragrance of the Holy Family in and around us.

## HERE IN ROME



The crosses, blessed by Pope Pius IX, were brought from Rome by our Founder and presented to our Early Mothers. They evoke the memory of these first Sisters, and all

## GENERALATE

New beginnings are part of the history of the evolution of our Holy Family, where we know that every end is at the same time a new beginning. On 5th March, with grateful hearts, the Generalate community gathered for a special prayer marking the end of the *"handing over"* process from one Council to the other. The incoming Council members each received one of the crosses handed down through the generations. The

those who have gone before us, giving their lives for the common mission in the service of animation and leadership. We congratulate our dear Sr. Ana Maria Alcalde the Superior General, Sr Malini Joseph, the Vicar for the Contemplatives, Srs. Geni Dos Santos, Jesmin Fernando, Christa Mariathas and Georgine Mufogoto the Councillors who said 'Yes' for the will of God and for the common mission.



On 1<sup>st</sup> May, *the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker*, during a prayer service, Sr. Veronica Rapitso took her place as the new General Bursar of our Institute. The introductory reflection on transformation took its inspiration from the 20th General Chapter experience. Sr. Ana Maria Alcalde then presented her with the one of the Crosses. Finally, the GLT members and Sr. Malinie, representing the Institute, blessed and welcomed Veronica to her new ministry and the new community.

## THANK YOU SO MUCH

We gratefully thank the members of the outgoing Council: **Ma Dolores Sanzberro, Eithne Hughes, Kumudinie Dassanayake, Micheline Kenda and Malinie Jayamanne** for their dedication and selfless service to our Institute and the Family. Srs. Kumudinie and Micheline have already returned to their Units of Sri Lanka and Congo.



We also thank Monika Kopacz, who has worked with commitment for the past years in the Information service. We wish her all the best as she moves on.

## WELCOME

Sisters **Vinisriya Perera and Daniela Muzzachi Lopez** from the Units of Colombo, Sri Lanka and Latin America (Paraguay), have joined the Generalate Local Community to work as Assistant Bursar and Spanish Secretary. We welcome them for this important service.



Vinisriya



Daniela

## LAUDATO SI: AT THE SCHOOL OF MOTHER EARTH

Sr. Claudine GAYONGO,

Local Community, Generalate, Rome

The Laudato Si Movement is a worldwide movement that seeks to respond to the call of Pope Francis to protect our common home, the Earth (Encyclical LAUDATO SI). It seeks to inspire and mobilise the Catholic community on this issue, through sessions, training, study days, actions and prayers.

I had the chance to participate in one of its training sessions, during which we reflected on the **What? Why? How? Where? and With Whom?** re protecting our Mother Earth. Several reflections and shared experiences have awakened my consciousness to the fact that every contact and every relationship experienced, every action carried out in full awareness and deep listening, become opportunities that carry the teachings that God wants to transmit to us. In other words, through everything, God always has something to teach us.

This awakening of consciousness has changed my vision of gardening and plant care. I no longer work with only the results in mind, but contact with the earth becomes for me an excellent **"Mother Earth school"**. I am learning to know her to better love and protect her, and she teaches me values that would help me to better love and protect myself, and do the same with other creatures.

As a good collaborator and agent of interdependence, she is willing to offer me what I need, and at the same time, she is willing to receive my contribution for her protection and enhancement.

Approaching her now with greater awareness of her existence as a companion in my life's journey, I discover that the earth does not resist diversity or difference. She generously and respectfully welcomes all the creation. She makes herself available to all, offering availability without discrimination or partiality; she humbly and simply offers herself at any time and to all for the fulfilment of each one. On an open floor or in any pot, it remains ready to play its role for which it exists.

In the face of contrary winds, rain, heat, threats from other beings, the earth can become agitated, but she is constant and enduring, and slowly and surely returns to her tranquillity and calm, and continues her mission.

When I dig or hoe, sow or uproot, plant or transplant, weed, water... carry some soil from one place to another, add some seed... I realise that the earth is undergoing a change. She is flexible, allowing herself to be worked. She does not control my action, nor does she seem to be afraid of whoever or whatever comes. She has neither fear nor resistance to the various changes that are taking place within her or that others



are making her undergo. In her unconditional love she accepts them with patience; and in her silence she seems to whisper: "I must change in order to create harmony, and to play my part in the universal community with peace of mind". Thus, at times she accepts to free herself from the old, to make room for the new, allowing all that surrounds her to manifest and move her, so that something more beautiful grows within her.

**"Let us go often by thought to the humble house of Nazareth"**, our Founder tells us; in the same way, together, let us enter the school of our Common Home, the Earth, to look at, listen to, deepen and internalise what she transmits to us.

## A SENSELESS WAR

Sr. Olga SACCOCCIO  
Monte Trina - Italy, Rome

*Pope Francis has repeatedly said that this invasion of Ukraine was madness!*



These medicines come from the parishes; people have contributed money to buy emergency medicines, and medicines for various illnesses.

speedily as possible, because the requests for surgical material, bandages, gauze, etc. are pressing.

Satisfaction and emotion arise when we see that there are so many packages leaving for Ukraine (in the space of two weeks we sent 161 shipments) The thing that moves us most of all is to see that many elderly women, perhaps with a small pension, bring their "offering" full of medicines, but they also think of the new-borns, with baby food, creams and even talcum powder, to perfume the skin of children: a delicate and kind thought.

This "senseless" war has a positive aspect: that of having generated so much care, solicitude, communion and such heartfelt participation, realities that almost manifest the birth of a "New Humanity".

While every day we helplessly witness the destruction not only of homes, of peoples and of humanity, the suffering of helpless, defenceless people has almost sparked off another 'war' – this time, of solidarity and brotherhood.

One of the most active groups in this endeavour is the Community of Sant'Egidio, based in Trastevere, Rome, where I volunteer; it has organised a collection not only of foodstuffs, but also of medicines to be sent to the hospitals in Lviv and Kiev... where they are in turn distributed to the areas of greatest need and urgency.

The work for us volunteers consists of selecting the medicines according to their use, filling in an information form where the active ingredient is recorded, with the name of the medicine, the dosage and the quantity: a painstaking and responsible job.

In this collection centre, we take turns with men, professional women, pensioners, mothers of families, doctors, nurses and young people who offer their time on a weekly basis, completely free of charge. Unfortunately, this time is often limited as they already have a job or family commitments. We carry out our service all together as

## 'ALL THE DARKNESS OF THE WORLD CAN NEVER EXTINGUISH THE LIGHT OF A SINGLE CANDLE'

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ." (GS 1) and we, as the Holy Family in Spain, have felt called to help our brothers and sisters who are fleeing their homes because of the terrible war.

Thus, different initiatives have arisen throughout the world, and also of course in Spain, of welcome, support and help, of collective mobilisation in which we, as members of the Holy Family, are collaborating. We would like to share some of them with you by way of example:

The Apostolic Community of San Sebastian lives in the Seminary where, at the moment, there are a good number of free rooms. Our Sisters received a call from the Diocese of Tarazona asking them to host for one night a group of Ukrainian refugees who were travelling. They told us about it themselves:

What an experience! It is not the same to see on TV or listen to the news from Ukraine on the radio, as it is to welcome among us the people from that country and embrace them in a tearful embrace. No one remembered Covid, because we had been infected by their pain and suffering, which was greater than any virus. What a joyful opportunity to meet and to share with them, and how painful, too, to see our brothers and sisters crying and suffering the consequences of this cruel war.

So, what did we experience? 12 March, we were asked to welcome a group of Ukrainians who were on their way to Tarazona and needed to spend the night somewhere. First we were told that they would arrive for dinner, sleep and breakfast. Later they told us that they had had to stop several times during the journey and were very late and would have dinner on the way on French soil.

The seminarians and some of us offered to wait for them. Twelve o'clock, one o'clock, three o'clock...; at four o'clock in the morning the phone rang to let us know that they were already close.

The drivers and five families (mothers with their young children and some teenagers; the husbands and older children have stayed in the war...) were accommodated here. The rest, up to 80, were transferred to a shelter near here. They all had breakfast here together, what hugs and gestures of gratitude! We are grateful for this opportunity to 'touch' at close quarters the terrible suffering that these brothers and sisters of ours are experiencing and to see the situation from their eyes. After breakfast they spent some time together in the courtyards of the seminary; many were also amazed to see the sea for the first time. When they arrived it was raining torrentially but then it was sunny and they were able to enjoy the scenery. The photos we sent are from that moment.



All this was an initiative of a group from the Diocese of Tarazona. One of them, asking himself "what can we do to offer humanitarian aid in this situation", spoke with others and so 18 drivers got together with their vans to go to Warsaw (2,800 kilometres one way and the same number of kilometres back). They prepared 9 vans with the necessary permits and authorisations and with two drivers for each one. They told us that the diocese of Tarazona had thrown itself into this situation. It was impressive to see the dedication and interest of these men. They also told us

that when they finished filling the nine vans, a mother appeared with three daughters and some other people who were anxious to get into the vans. They rented another van there and were able to bring them in as well - how great these men were! They have to go back there in order to deliver it.

They did not know how to thank us and we repeated that we were the ones who were grateful for being able to offer this small service. After this stop in Donostia, at around eleven o'clock they left for Tarazona where they were to receive an official welcome. They will be staying at the Diocesan Seminary.

We could not fail to recount *this experience because it has touched us all very deeply*. When you ask us what do you do in the seminary? We can answer that we try to welcome what each day brings, and do whatever we can to respond to the needs that arise, as in this case.

Another experience that we would like to share with you comes from the group of lay associates in Malaga:

The moment the first list of items requested by MAYDAN, an Association of Ukrainians living in Malaga, reached our hands, something stirred inside us and we felt that we had to collaborate with them. We started by proposing to

contribute a part of the money from the Social Fund of the Lay Associates in Spain. Part of it will go to our apostolic sisters in Poland who are hosting so many refugees and part will be used to help the Oblate communities who continue to work in Ukraine.

We soon realised however, that in addition to this economic collaboration, much more was needed, and we began to act and to contribute individually, encouraging our relatives to do the same.

We wanted to make the most of every penny we had collected, so for the medicines, we decided to turn to a well-known pharmacist to find the best price for the items, and to our surprise, not only did she decide to help, but she did so by doubling the amount we had paid her.

When everything was bought and packed, we took it to the facilities made available to the Association: a few spaces in a motorhome car park. And how much gratitude, how much affection and how much helpfulness there was in that place! Dozens of people working in a chain, sorting clothes or packing food, but in all their faces you could see a smile under the mask, similar to ours when several men approached our car to unload the boxes and bags with food, medicines, blankets and some stuffed animals for the little ones. When we asked them

what else they needed, they responded with infinite gratitude and recounted the stories that they heard from their relatives in Ukraine, so of course our hearts were moved and we set off again in search of more boxes, more help.

For many months we have been helping families in the neighbourhood who have scarce resources, and collaborating with the St John of God Brothers; now we have seen another way to collaborate with the refugees arriving in our country.

In this situation, we place more than ever our faith and our hope in the Risen Christ, asking him to free humanity and the universe so that peace may spring up again, so that it may be established in our hearts and in the hearts of all humanity, created by God in his image and likeness.

For this reason, the whole Family of Pierre Bienvenu in Spain, with its five vocations, came together on the Second Sunday of Easter in an online prayer for peace, as a Family that is united, with one heart and one soul. Jesus sends us out always, but especially on this Bicentenary of the Miraculous Benediction and in this common prayer we prayed together for peace and reconciliation. Peace for our world, peace in the heart of every man and every woman, peace for our common home.

As the Holy Family in Spain we want to continue to live what Ana María Alcalde has bidden us to do: *"to get as close as possible to the world of pain, poverty, marginalisation... in real life, and let these situations affect us"* (Circular 319).

## THE STORY OF OUR GUESTS...

Agnieszka Bura - Poland

The war in Ukraine has forced many Ukrainians to seek refuge and shelter outside their country. As we informed you earlier in the Flash, several Ukrainian women and their children have found refuge in our communities. The elderly Sisters' home in Konstanyńów, Lodz took two Ukrainian women with their children. Our guests were welcomed with a warm meal and then went to rooms to rest for a while after a long journey. The next day, the two women, Nadia and Jula, rolled up their sleeves and said, "*Give us some work.*"

The neighbours also began to join in organizing help for our guests. Some brought a portable stove, others clothes, still others food, and toys for

the children; someone else took them to the cinema for a film for Ukrainian children... Therefore, day by day, we could see their courage and daring.

When one of the women offered to bake a cake, an idea was born to do a small activity called "*Cakes for Easter*". On the Facebook group of our housing estate, there was an announcement that we were collecting orders for cakes and Ukrainian cakes. After the Mass on Palm Sunday, there was a tasting of the cakes, and whoever wanted could place an order. The list of those willing began to grow, and our women got to work. They prepared cheese-cakes, honey cakes, and "monastery cakes" that came out of the oven, one by one,

and finally appeared on Polish tables for Easter.

For Easter, Yulya and her son went to Lodz to visit her Ukrainian friends, but Nadia and her son stayed with us for Easter. Many Ukrainians (the majority of whom are Orthodox or Greek Catholics) celebrated Easter, and many Ukrainians participated and met other friends who live far away from them.

Every day, our guests say the same thing: they want to go back to their homes and countries. The other day, they changed their minds about staying, seeing the pathetic condition of their country; after two months, they decided to go back. When they said good-bye to us, tears rolled down our cheeks. We wished them to *be safe and to keep in touch* with us.



## TRANSFORMATION

Easter has seen a transformation in the countryside as Spring blossoms in all its glory:

- ☞ from the early dark nights of winter to the gloriously long evenings watching the sunset
- ☞ from the dark silhouetted trees against the cold, bleak sky to the lush appearance of leaves and blossom in the gardens and woods
- ☞ from the bare hilly slopes where sheep braved the winter storms to the birth of baby lambs skipping and frisking on the farmlands and hills.

*What a transformation! But what about our transformation?*

On arriving in Wrexham just over 6 months ago, I had hoped for a new life, welcoming asylum seekers and refugees into the safety of our home. It has been a long journey and maybe now I can see some light at the end of the tunnel.

Over the past four months our contact with two Hosting Groups, Housing for Justice and Hope at Home, has been on-going. We have had training sessions with both groups and are at last hopeful that our application to host a refugee, or two, will come to fruition. Romy, in charge of Housing for Justice in Cardiff, came personally to visit us, getting the opportunity to have a look at the facilities we have to offer. We are hopeful that this group will have a support person, in the near future, in Wrexham itself. This will be a great advantage.

Another transformative incident was the storm which caused two or three of our trees to become dangerous. The tree surgeons came in to cut them down. To see one of these men scaling the heights

of the trees, gradually sawing away branches as he climbed was a frightening spectacle. Finally, piece by piece, he cut the trunk of the tree into 6ft lengths, which were then cut



into smaller chunks, by his fellow workers.

One day, Maria met the Leader of a group of young Girl Guides and Scouts, as they were having their weekly meetings in the ground opposite our house. She invited them over to the house to inspect the wood, to see if they could use it for their camp fires and other activities.

The following week some 10 – 14 young boys and girls arrived to carry the logs over to their camping ground. The next day I saw about ten of these smaller logs positioned around the table in the garden. Perfect stools!

This was a death which led to a transformative encounter. The death of the trees led to new life an opening up to our neighbours. Other families have also been invited to avail of the opportunity to use this wood for fuel for winter and also for another man, as he works as a woodwork teacher in a school. So now our hope is materialising! What seemed to be a 'dying process' has become a symbol of hope. No longer can we say, 'we had hoped' but 'we live in hope'. Alleluia.

The cutting of the trees and the pruning of the bushes around the walls of the garden, have given us the opportunity to have a clearer view of what is on the outside. May the transformative process we are embarking on at our UNIT CHAPTER, give us a clearer vision of the question, 'Can we still live our purpose?'

Sheila Griffiths (Wrexham)  
Britain & Ireland

The principal milieu where we can make our mission of communion possible is by incarnating and witnessing to communion in and through our community life.

**SR. MARIA: An experience in the autumn colours of Canada**

My adventure of religious life in an intercultural community began when I crossed the borders of Canada seven years ago. The Lord calls us and sends us to go out to the whole world to proclaim his love. Canada, Quebec, is a country open to interculturality where everyone can find a place. For me, living in such a community is a new experience with different colours, just like the autumn leaves in Canada. Why I make such a comparison, because it is a great challenge for those who are not totally familiar with the language, the people, the Sisters, the way of life, the reactions and needs of each one in relation to community life. What is most important is the mission entrusted to us, our apostolic commitment, the collaboration and acceptance of one

another, and our availability for others. Something that transcends cultures, customs, formation and traditions is our remaining before the Lord hidden in the Blessed Sacrament. Adoration and prayer teach us to establish relationships of communion and to build the community in the image of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Here I always find the strength to overcome the different barriers. The Eucharist, with its cultural colours, enriches and unites us. The Lord is our strength and power, and it is He Himself who strengthens, sends and puts into our hearts the flame of love that burns for Him by giving ourselves to each other in an intercultural community.

**SR. MARCELINE: A challenge of communion in diversity**

To strengthen the bonds of fraternity and communion in the community always requires me to start again, to overcome, because living in an intercultural community is a richness and at the same time a challenge of communion in diversity. It is not always easy. It requires humility, patience, self-forgetfulness and hope in the grace of God who transforms. When God calls, sends, he gives the grace to live and accompanies each person. In my intercultural experience, I find that it is truly a call, a vocation to feel free, joyful and fulfilled in living with Sisters who are not of the same culture as me. My experience of interculturality helps me to grow and admire the richness of diversity and to make it

my own. The models that support my experience of living in intercultural community are: the diversity in the first Christian community and in the choice that Jesus made of his apostles. I let myself be inspired by their models of simple, united, solid, common life and assiduous prayer.

I consider our differences as a richness. I try to respect and accept each Sister as she is, with her strengths and weaknesses, while recognising my own fragility. I have always had the desire to keep our unity by being patient with myself and with others, while respecting their freedom. I am happy with my experience of living in an intercultural community and I thank the Lord for it.



### SR.ALDÉGONDE: An expression of our reason for being

For me, it is an opportunity and a grace to live this experience of interculturality. In May 2013, I arrived in Canada / Quebec to form an intercultural community. I had no idea and no experience. From 2013-2018, I tried to live according to my understanding and abilities.

It is since 2019, after the session I attended in Rome on this theme, that my understanding has changed. I have a different view. For me, as a Holy Family Sister, living interculturality becomes a more concrete call to communicate our charism of communion not through speeches,

but in daily life.

Living in an intercultural community, in a multicultural environment: I find this a motivation to be a sign of God's presence and above all an expression of our purpose as Holy Family .

Intercultural life is full of challenges, and that is why I rely on Christ, and the support of the Holy Family of Nazareth. It is he, Christ, who has brought us together to witness to his Father's love for all and to bring together in one family all the scattered children of God.

### SR.FRANCINA: The beauty of living in an intercultural community

The beauty of being members of an intercultural community is that we share a diversity of gifts, challenges, joys, and drawbacks. We appreciate the uniqueness of each Sister and offer each other loving companionship and support. If each of us wants the other to think, act and behave as she herself does, this poses challenges within the community. The awareness and continuous learning to live in an intercultural community

helps me to pursue our values and common mission of communion. We celebrate our strengths, accept our weaknesses and recognise our need for healing and reconciliation; this keeps me joyful and active in my community commitments in everyday life. Appreciating other cultures, traditions, languages, interacting with each other requires an openness to the other at all times.

## COME, LET US ADORE THE LORD WHO CREATED US...

The celebration of the Bicentenary of the Miraculous Benediction was open to everyone. The two communities i.e. Novitiate and Pre-novitiate prepared the triduum adoration (three days of preparation) from 31 January to 2 February 2022 in the pre-novitiate community. The Sisters conducted the prayer service in a creative way. Our Holy Family Lay Associates and people from the area around joined us for this important event.

Each day after the adoration, a Sister shared our history, our charism, the spirituality of "God Alone" and the information about the different vocations of our PBN Family. On the

third day, we had traditional drink and donuts to share our joy with them. Everyone thanked us for inviting them for the Triduum, where they could strongly experience the love of God. Finally, they

expressed that they would like to join us often for the community adoration.

As Pre-Novitiate community, we are grateful to everyone who joined us in the celebration of this significant event of the Miraculous Benediction, a great Feast of the big family of PBN.



**Pre-Novitiate community  
Gikongoro, Rwanda.**



Life is a school of many lessons, we never cease to learn and I find this a privilege and grace from God. It is sometimes unbelievable that migrants and refugees exist in our beautiful mountain Kingdom of Lesotho because it is a subject rarely on our lips. There are many reasons why these people are exiled from their countries, it could be war, political instability, human trafficking and many more. The moment you spare some time for them at their camp you will definitely learn the beauty of God's creation, unity in diversity lies in their hub.

Having been granted an opportunity to volunteer at the Lesotho Catholic Bishops' Conference (LCBC) in the department of Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), I have had the privilege to spend some time with asylum seekers

and refugees from different countries who are residing in our country, in a camp that is under supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Lesotho. These are middle aged men and women, youth and children. Many stories are told about them, their sorrows, lamentation and pain because of their longing for their respective motherlands. All this is now in vain because reality really hits hard, life forces them to adapt to different ways and the culture of the Basotho nation, far or almost the same as theirs because we are all Africans.

What has brought refugees to our country is never subject of an interrogation because it might reopen wounds that are not yet healed; what we do as Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) is just to make them feel

loved and accepted in our country in all milieus. Some of them left their home countries as graduates with different qualifications, e.g. teaching, nursing etc. We try our level best to help them find jobs so that they may sustain themselves, we honor human dignity.

The Religious in Lesotho, Holy Family of Bordeaux included, positively responded to the plea of our dearly beloved people [refugees] through the mediation of CCJP, most of them being from Central and East Africa have never experienced the Winter Season which has already began here in Lesotho. The Religious from different congregations donated shoes, blankets and winter clothes in order to alleviate their suffering. Our brothers and sisters' smiles could tell how grateful they were for this phenomenal gesture. Some clothes were even left after being distributed to our sisters and brothers, they all had what they needed and were satisfied. This event took place at the Refugee Camp in Mohalalietoe Lesotho. The Ministry of Home Affairs was present and expressed their gratitude to CCJP and Religious congregations for their generosity.

## FINALLY, THERE ARE LAY ASSOCIATES OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF BORDEAUX IN KINSHASA

At the dawn of the *jubilee year of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in the Democratic Republic of Congo (75 years), Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC*, is vibrating with a new presence of Lay Associates alongside the Apostolic Sisters, who were already there.

Nourished by the Word of God, and especially by the teachings based on the virtues to be developed in the family, some couples are willingly responding to God's call, making their families the place of love, unity and sharing under the inspiration of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

The formation we receive stimulates us and motivates us to enter into religious marriage with conviction, because the blessing of the union is a testimony of faithfulness, a proof of true love.

Now, in our neighbourhoods, we are becoming more and more witnesses of a life of love, unity, forgiveness, and above all compassion.

In two years, the Associates movement has spread to a few parishes: Saint Adrien/Ngaba (6 couples), Saint Dominique/Limete (1 couple), Saint Benoit/Lemba (1 couple), Mary Help of Christians/Masina (1 couple), Mary the Queen of Apostles/Righini (2 couples).

This means that shortly, twelve couples will be committed to live the spirit of God Alone and in communion with the other vocations of the Holy Family, to walk in the light of Christ.

We are proud of this wave that is awakening little by little

some couples to lead our lives following the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

For us couples, the formation we follow transforms our personal, spiritual, social, family and marital life.

One of the most striking experiences among many is that of fidelity between spouses.

In fact, most of our people (like ourselves) get married at an early age, sometimes without any life-experience or emotional maturity. This is not helped



by the lack of self-control.

Very often, these unions are undermined by infidelity, misunderstanding, the complexity of life, selfishness, and so on.

These plagues are often the cause of premature divorces and unexpected separations.

At the beginning of our formation as Lay Associates, a few months after our religious marriage, when the ardour of youth, as well as the affective star was still shining in us, we did not escape this adventure.

Our formator at the time, Mr Eddy MUFIKA, insisted repeatedly on two crucial questions:

*Didn't Joseph, who chose*

*Mary as his fiancée and then wife, see other women more beautiful than Mary? And did not Mary, who was given the grace by God to become the mother of God, find other men more beautiful and richer than Joseph, the carpenter?*

And we, the married couples of today, why can't our choices be enough? Why do we seek to try all the colours of the world?

These are the two questions, although already heard outside of formation, that have contributed to the strengthening of my faith, two questions that I have always considered as the foundation of my affective stability, I would even say of the beginning of my fidelity towards my wife.

Thus, Joseph received the grace to house Jesus, who is God, and he did receive the reward of his faithfulness.

We, today, living this marital fidelity, receive many graces up to enjoying our children who are a gift from God.

I thank the Lord, our God, for having inspired Fr. Pierre Bienvenu Noailles to found the Holy Family with the vocation of Lay Associates. A family where each person, whatever his state, his status can find his place.

Thanks also to Papa Eddy MUFIKA who strengthened me and helped me to take the resolution to implement this new life in the Family.

**Senghor LAZARI**  
**Lay Associate, Congo**

*“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and become my disciples”. (John 15: 8)*

I received this Word of God in 2002 at the inaugural prayer service of my Novitiate formation. It gives me strength and is motivating me in my everyday life.

When I entered the Holy Family, I decided to dedicate myself to provide free education to poor children. Later during my formation period, I realized that God's mission is not limited to education only but I needed to develop a deep desire to commit myself fully for any kind of ministry, which the Lord calls for.

From 2009 to 2020, I was involved in teaching. My aim was not only educating students, but also to concentrate on their unique talents and pass on the Holy Family values in order to help them to be more self-confident and faith-focused in their life. Thus, I was able to create quality relationship with teachers, students, parents and others.

A new turning-point occurred in 2020. When I was teaching in the village school at Sevvapet the deadly virus Covid-19 turned the lives of the people upside down. Days, and months passed, but after two years there is no improvement. Is it the Lord's manifestation? It was hard to stay indoors with so much confusion. It was at that moment I received a call from my Unit Leader – Sr. Jeya Mary Arockiam requesting whether I could work with JRS (Jesuit Refugees service) for Sri Lankan refugees. Though the work is new, I realized that it was the call of the Lord and I responded yes.

From 1980s and 1990s, Sri-Lankan people migrated to India

due to the war. At present nearly one lakh people are living in 126 camps in Tamil Nadu, India. Most of them are registered few are unregistered. The Government provides accommodation; basic needs and monthly dole for every member of the family. There is strict security in the Camp – CID, Revenue Inspector and other officials supervise this project.

I joined the JRS on 10 June 2020 as the Coordinator of the Madurai District. There are 4 camps with 6000 people. Though they are educated, they can take up only the informal sector of the economy – painting houses, street vendors, and domestic workers. Most of the women remain in the house to take care of the children. Many of the men are drunkards addicted to alcohol. I regularly visit the camps and organize motivational sessions for different groups. I pay attention to education and school dropouts and give training to tuition teachers and other awareness programs. Tailoring courses, cosmetology course, spoken English, skills development course, Medical assistance, educational support, counseling for those in need are all provided. Also a special dry food, nutritional powder for the elderly and children are distributed when the need arises.

Once in three months we have the Advocacy Meeting that all the office-bearers attend regularly. We evaluate, plan, discuss and implement our projects. I went through a difficult process to recover our Tuition Centre at



Aanaayur. Due to heavy rain in 2009, the Ration shop collapsed and there was no alternative than to provide our Tuition Center for their purpose until they could replace the Ration Shop. another place. Months and years passed, however; we faced all kinds of challenges but there was no result. Prayer was our only solace. After many oppositions and appointments, the Collector came to our rescue and thank God, after 15years our children are enjoying the hall for their study and other purposes. Mr. Aaron one of our camp members spent Rs.28,000/- to renovate the building. It is a great miracle.

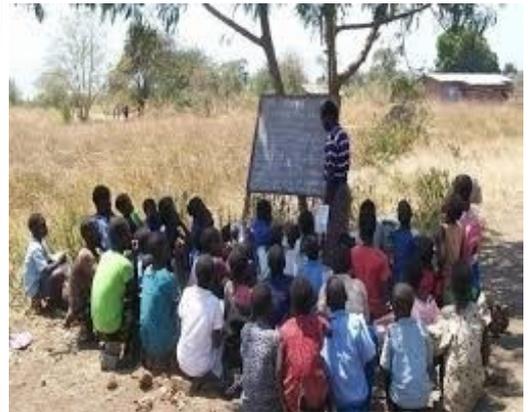
My ministry is to render loving service to the poor Sri Lankan Refugees. I see God's tender face in their helplessness and weaknesses. Their deep trust and confidence amidst their pain is inspiring my faith in God. In this critical situation, I experience God's providential care over his children. This reminds me to bear in mind **“Bear much fruit, and become my disciples”.** John 15: 8.

I would like to conclude my article with this quote from our Good Father's personal retreat notes: *Jesus, how could I not love you? Take my heart; I give it to you because you want it.”*

(Selected Text No.22)

## HOLY FAMILY SPIRIT AND JOURNEY WITH THE PEOPLE

Sr. Janet Perera - Pakistan



Reflecting on the liberate experience of Jesus who gave himself for the struggling humanity, we the Sisters of the Holy Family are called by the Risen Lord to continue the prophetic mission of Jesus. In our Chapter journey we listened deeply to the inner working of the Holy Spirit to dedicate ourselves to the cries of the poor who need to be liberated from their bondage to poverty and ignorance.

Pakistan is predominantly a Muslim country with a small minority of Christians. When our missionaries first stepped into Pakistan in 1975, they felt the dire need for education and healthcare. The Sisters with their bare minimum knowledge of the language started visiting people and telling them of the importance of education. Their untiring commitment and determination made the people respond. The Sisters started schools under trees. It was a

herculean task to gather children, as they had not been used to discipline. After working for some years, small schools were built with the help of the Bishops. Today these schools stand as big educational institutions where many Christian children are educated. Some of the children educated in our schools have become nurses who work in Government hospitals with a lucrative salary. Some have become teachers and others hold very high positions in society.

Since our schools cater to both Muslims and Christians, we find it a great opportunity to build better relations between both religions. Our Sisters are also very enthusiastic in building a big PBN Family. The Associates are working hand-in-hand with the Sisters to promote the Charism of communion. They make regular visits to families and organize programs.

The Holy Family youth and children have become vibrant in trying to live our Charism. They have workshops where they learn and share their experiences. Safeguarding mother earth is an important area to which we feel called to dedicate our efforts, as Pope Francis in his encyclical **“Laudato si”** has called for an ecological, spirituality and ecological catechesis. In our educational programmes we have given an important place to safeguarding mother earth.

Our Holy Family presence has made an impact on the people with our Charism of communion. We have touched many lives, both Muslim and Christian. We also have learned to grow with the genuine values and virtues of people. Our pioneers who worked through many hardships have handed down to us their experiences so as a community on journey we may have a better focus and awareness of our reality in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium.

The path to a Church that listens and walks together starts with you and me. Let us walk forward together to build one Family. It can happen only through and if all have the same goal; listening, reflecting, speaking, sharing with one another in order to feel the pulse of the milieu and to hear what God is saying to all of us. We realize that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone to help us walk forward together on our journey as the People of God. Let us invoke to the Holy Spirit to enkindle God's love in our hearts to walk forward together as one Humanity on our journey

Today we need to go through constructive changes that are needed for individuals, community / family, Institution, Church, Parishes, Society and Nations. At the same time changes are affecting our culture, society, religions and Creation; as a consequence, our understanding of ourselves as human beings is also causing our way of being in the world to evolve. Our Founder was aware of the rapid changes in the society of his time and, therefore inspired by God, he began the Association as a 'new form' in response to the need of a new society. What the Founder said at the beginning of the Foundation continues to be extremely relevant today. We are bound to reflect

and deepen our spirituality to walk forward together with the Church.

Without discrimination, we were all going through the crisis of fighting for freedom, equal opportunity in getting education, jobs, recognition of our language and educational Institutions, Provincial autonomy for ethnic-dominated provinces. For the last two or three years we have experienced the corona virus pandemic; also heavy rain, floods, landslide, devastation and deaths of humans and livestock due to climate changes. No doubt that the people have indescribably been affected psychologically, physically, socially and economically.

Apart from these calamities, at present every citizen of Sri Lanka feels that another curse has befallen our Government; nothing has worked for this country and the opportunist leaders have soiled their hands with blood for their failure to bring about justice. As the administration grapples with the financial and political crisis, dozens of angry protests are breaking out daily across the



nation, away from the main protest venue in Colombo, demanding fuel, gas, food and medical supplies. There are extremists in every community. We gather to demand a new political path for the country. All of us are victims of this country's divisive politics.

The island-wide protests, now prolonged, have drawn international attention, with Sri Lankans overseas organizing similar protests in the Diaspora, demanding the President's resignation and an auditing of

the assets of the powerful Leaders. As far as the 2019 Easter bombings are concerned, human rights defender and writer Ruki Fernando has three demands: truth, reparation and accountability for crimes, “not just for the victims of the Easter Sunday bombings, but for all the citizens”. He also said that there is an opportunity now for Sri Lankan Christians to seek justice for the crimes committed against the country’s various ethnic groups for decades. “What we now need is a united front irrespective of race, language and creed.”

We the Holy Family Sisters of the Jaffna Unit are very conscious of the present situation and its needs. Though we are unable to participate in protest marches, except the few of our Sisters in the South, we are always in solidarity with the people who courageously stand up for justice and freedom of our suffering people. Always ready to take daring steps, to go to the other side and to the peripheries with the Lord Jesus. The Unit Leadership Team is always ready to respond to the aim of ‘Synodality’.

Many are the requests for our ministry from the Parish Priests, and other Local Government Leaders and Officers.

We respect their invitations and commit to do various mobile ministries. We are involved in collaborative ministries with our Sisters, Secular members, Lay Associates and Priest Associates, the Oblate Priest who is the Director for Rehabilitation of drug addicts, Priests of other Congregations, as well as Anglicans, Methodists and our Hindu and Muslim Brethren. We are able to meet the people especially where there is no presence of our Sisters. Some of our Sisters participate in training, Seminars and workshops to work with drug-addict clients. The Resource person from India who is in charge of the ‘Universal Tribute Curriculum’ (UTC) came to ‘Change Centre’ (Rehabilitation for drug addicts), Jaffna. Five Sisters have already followed his programme online. The Sisters also consider the people who are deprived of their day to day living, especially the under-privileged with leprosy, disability, those under the poverty-line, sick and elderly, the abandoned and those who come to our doors every day. Our Sisters visit them; provide dry rations, clothes, and other essential things. The Bicentenary celebrations and 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the of Miraculous Blessing have strongly called us to be ever- thankful

to God and to be with and for the people, to help them also to realize and encourage them to be thankful to the Almighty who takes care of them in every way. These activities help us to form ourselves into a culture of ‘Oneness’ (Brotherhood and Sisterhood) becoming a more effective and credible witness to the Jesus’ Dream – “That they may be ONE” in the Third Millennium.

Yes, it is an invitation as much as a demand for us to walk forward together and to carry the voice of the Church to the local Church, to involve ourselves in prayerful discernment with the People of God. We were able to become aware of the call from God through our Church to review and renew our context, to be near to people and God, to help them become aware of living **communion** and **participation**, and to make them **mission-oriented** in order to build up the families and Parishes aware of their responsibilities. *“In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity”* **Evangelii Gaudium 228.**

“Oh! Holy Spirit of God, lead our Church on our pilgrim path as we listen to you speaking through one another. Enkindle your love in our hearts to walk forward together as a Church that accompanies all of humanity on our common journey to You”.

## THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH AS OUR MODEL

I am Mrs. Lourdes R. Siobal, an Aspirant in Formation to embrace the Vocation as Holy Family Lay Associate. I am married with 3 children and am a teacher by profession. It is my pleasure to share with you my experiences as a member of the Lay Associates.

When the Pandemic started in 2019 and eventually stopped everything and restricted us for going to church, school, workplaces etc. I thought within me how could I help the people, I am not a health worker, nor a nurse nor a doctor who can help the sick and the dying. I prayed to the LORD to show the way, and He answered my prayer. All of a sudden, I thought it would be good if I invited friends and relatives to pray online.

So I created a Facebook group called Jesus and Mama Mary's Cath Shine which is still active today. We pray together every morning before we do our work or household chores. The FB was very helpful to post our events, activities and announcements. By God's grace, the members are increasing and have good re-

sponse. The membership of the group continues to grow.

In the beginning I was hesitant to lead this group, but when I realized the three important 'C's (Conversion, Confession and Communion) in my life and did it, I could see God continuous blessings and guidance was with me all the time.

I asked the Lord in prayer to send people who could guide me spiritually. But I still did not know what to do so that I could be an instrument of peace and love. Then I met Mrs. Judelyn Aguisanda, a dear friend who joined my prayer group. As we were chatting and exchanging news and views in our own activities and participation in our own group, she told me that she is a Member and the group leader of the Lay Associates of the Holy Family of Bordeaux having **Pierre Bienvenu Noailles as their Founder** and they are called **PBN Family**. I have told her that I need spiritual advisers/counsellors to guide me in handling the Prayer group.

She introduced me to Sr. Vivian Fernando, a Sri Lankan Missionary in the

Lourdes R. Siobal  
Lay Associate, Philippines

Philippines, the Unit-leader of the Apostolic Sisters of the Holy Family. I also have met the rest of the Sisters in Cubao, Quezon City. Your love and sacrifices are much appreciated dear Sisters.

From then on until now, Sr. Vivian Fernando and Mrs. Judelyn Agusanda became my spiritual formators. Together with other Lay Associate Members, we had virtual PBN Formation sessions. Topics on the spirituality of THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH as our model together with the teachings, good deeds and the inspirations of our Founder, Fr. Pierre Bienvenu Noailles and our Bible sharing every week has given us the courage to follow his footsteps in our own little ways.

With the help and guidance of my Formators, one by one I am able to handle and manage the prayer group according to the **teachings of our Founder Fr. Pierre Bienvenu Noailles**.

**First**, I was able to encourage them to pray every day at 8:00 in the morning, and added other prayers and bible reflection to our daily

prayers.

Eventually, I was able to include and join with the families and my students every Saturday afternoon for OUR FAMILY PRAYER DAY.

**Second,** Our Founder FR. PBN was able to encourage youth to be active in the community by prayers and utilizing individual's skills and talents in serving the Lord. At present, I am trying to do the same through music. I am teaching our youth every weekend and hoping that someday they are able to perform and play and sing praise songs during Holy Mass. They are from 3 different barrios.

**Third,** I am an active member of different organizations in our Church as pianist and assistant conductor of the St. Isidore Labrador Shrine here in Pulilan, Bulacan.

**Fourth,** our Founder taught catechism in his time that many people were converted and strengthened in their faith. He became my inspiration, for I also teach catechism in the barrios and virtually, teaching them about the Holy Family and how to pray and share the Gospel and encourage families to be baptized and be confirmed.

**Fifth,** our Founder went to the street and helped beggars, fed them and gave food to those who were needy and hungry. Together with my friends in the group of Jesus' and Mama Mary's 'CathShine', we have missions during December to give food, toys, books and feeding programs and visited prisoners and gave them towels and sacks of rice. We donated in kind, cash and goods as our love offerings.

We, as one family are nurtured by God, with His guidance and blessings. We firmly believe that our inspiration and devotion to the HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH through the Charism and good deeds of our Founder Fr. Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, can also overflow to other people, like trees whose branches are growing and bearing much fruit; trees which attract many birds because there they find love, peace and security with the Lord's love and protection

As a member of the Lay Associates, I am so thankful to the Lord, to our Founder Fr. Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, to our Formators, to our friends and families for together as one family we will be able to succeed in our journey to serve and love God. To God be the glory. God bless us all.

