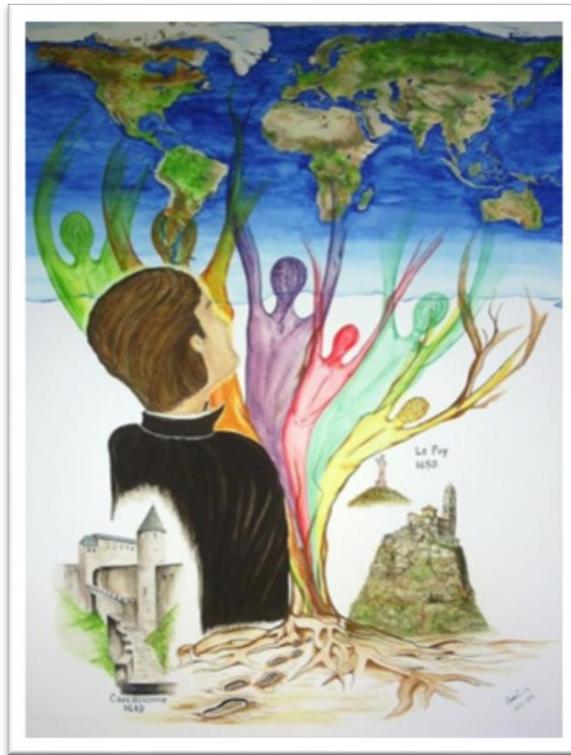


That life may flow...

pour que la vie circule...



para que la vida circule...

« Healing the Church »

This title of an article in the Catholic newspaper La Croix expresses well the hope many people are facing relative to the painful situations encountered in numerous countries, reported by diverse media. We also are affected by these accounts but through all of this, can we not hear a call to improve in being attentive to the person, and in welcoming differences.

At the beginning of this year, the International Union of Major Superiors (UISG) wrote to support the meeting, which Pope Francis organized in Rome with the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences for the Protection of Minors. They invited all the Congregations to also support this initiative and to be watchful regarding these painful issues. Here are some excerpts: " ...the common issue of all these problems is vulnerability. Children are the most vulnerable within our societies... some are considered as objects, which we can use and abuse. The meeting put the emphasis on sexual abuse, abuse of power and abuse of conscience on behalf of those who have authority in the Church. We believe that with the winds of change which blow on our Church and with the willingness of everyone, we will be able to launch important processes and structures to render accountability, and that those already existing will be strengthened... The abuse of children is evil everywhere and at all times: this point is non-negotiable. We commit ourselves to work with the Holy Father so that the Church can forge ahead in a coherent, credible and unified manner, in a manner which produces real healing, to really renew itself, with new eyes to see and new ears to hear."

In addition to what we have already proposed in the Congregation concerning sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable persons, I share with you some notes of a session organized by the Conference of Major Superiors of France.

"Sexual abuse is also psychological abuse, spiritual abuse, breach of trust... because the whole person is affected... In all our formation relationships (from primary school to formation for religious life) we have to ensure that these relationships, "asymmetrical" by nature do not become a controlling influence, a power over the other, and an infringement on the freedom of the other...

The Church is therefore bound to fight with determination all that leads to abuses of conscience and ascendancy ... and religious life must take its full responsibility in this.

How can we listen to victims of sexual assault? Listening to them is first and foremost essential: the stifled word increases the victim's suffering... Mercy must not be exercised to the detriment of truth, justice, reparation, and protection of the most vulnerable... The victims are in a state of emergency.

It is necessary to learn how to act according to canonical and legal procedures. A report to the courts may be necessary, but it is important not to neglect the accompaniment of the accused. »

In each of our countries, let us be actors of healthy relationships, at the service of the growth of children and of every person. It is a call for us, women, in society and in the Church to assume our rightful place and be better recognized!

Catherine Barange

Transformation in Mission

The world-view of Jesus: Lk. 18-19 (dignity of each person) stirred and impassioned me for *evangelization of cultures in our missionary work*. **The world-view of all religions especially Christianity** in the caste system in India is a great challenge, which compares us to the burning-bush on holy ground. The struggle between these world-views prompted me to respond to the crying needs of our brothers and sisters. In 1999, we began our mission of solidarity and presence in Kookal Puncayat, Kodaikanal.

Empowering the Dalits to assert themselves with self-dignity and self-governance took four years. On April 6, 2003, we the Deepakam community, Gundupatty participated in the solidarity and freedom of the oppressed Dalits in the upper-hills of Kodaikanal. These people had not been allowed to fetch water for their day-to-day needs from the village's common well. The state of being treated as untouchable still existed in the form of using separate glasses in teashops, not being allowed to enter worship places, cleaning the toilets manually, early marriages of the girl-child and being denied education from 3rd class etc. There existed a kind of landlord/servant practice. It was a revolutionary day when the Dalits of Puthuputtur went to fetch water from the well that had been denied to them for generations. This particular action led the so-called high-cast community to take revenge on the people. They beat the women with wooden logs, stoned their houses and were to burn them alive. As a result of this violence, the court-case was filed with difficulty. 17 Dalits were arrested and taken to Madurai central jail for 10 days. The high cast people who had political influence tried to cover up this situation and blame the Sisters influence in converting people to Christianity.

People's Watch, Human Rights wings, People's action and education at Kodai, Arruthathyar Sangam and many other like-minded organizations collaborated in this struggle. My beloved Province of India stood for the cause of the marginalized. We were inspired to focus on the vision of Gundupatty community. Dalits are now empowered with Human-dignity, Equality, Justice, Freedom and Fraternity but they had to pay the price of rejection, unemployment and hunger. Finally, **"The weak became strong."- In our missionary way, this is the breaking of the body of Christ with our needy brothers and sisters.**

As I returned to India on December 12, 2018, after closing the Czech Republic mission, I experienced a dark moment in my life (questions, doubts and confusion). On January 9, 2019 at 9 p.m., I received an unexpected phone call from Mrs. Jyothi, the leader of the women's group, telling me that I was the apt person with whom the Puthuputtur people wanted to share the good-news of their liberation. Their case had lasted for 17 years of hearings, witnesses and warrants before the judgment was finalized. This phone call moved me to tears of joy and gave me great inner-peace although I was well aware of all the downtrodden and marginalized of the world. I was shocked and asked the Lord: "Why at this particular period of my life, after 17 years of that unique revolutionary experience? Please leave me alone."

Now, as I sit back with this unique experience from God for which he prepared me from my childhood, I am so grateful and I thank each of the sisters in my province. I especially thank all the Provincials, General Superiors and their councils for their support and understanding and my community sisters. Together, we made a difference and discovered greater meaning in our lives and in the lives of the needy of this world.

Always grateful to God,

Sr. Jasleenmary Micheal
St. Joseph Province

The Blessings of Aging, Both in Sadness and Joy



Challenges come fast as we age. Our bodies grow weaker and more complex, our energy level is compromised, thinking is slower, and our dying is closer as is the dying of many friends and family members. Yes, aging is a challenge but also a blessing. As I got older, I felt the call deep in my heart to spend more time in prayer, more time enjoying nature, visiting with a few friends, reading my favorite books, etc. It felt like my elder years would be a time of deep peace.

At nearly 81 years old I have been an elder for many years now. But it is just in these last three years that I have truly discovered the great blessings that come with aging, in both sadness and joy. By journeying with my sadness and joy I have accepted the call to renew my sense of mission in *how* I will live out these elder years.

But this learning, like many lessons, begins with pain. Three years ago my closest friend died after a long and terrible illness. Grieving her departure was extremely difficult. It was only God's grace that gave me the strength to survive her loss. Then my own blood sister, to whom I was very close, died quite suddenly. Once again grieving consumed me! Three months later my oldest sister died. I found myself crying out to God, "When will this mourning end?"

I worked through my grieving with supportive prayers and compassionate sisters, friends and counselors walking with me.

Grieving deeply, I learned, takes a toll not only on our spirits, but also on our bodies. After passing through such deep waves of grief my immune system had become quite weakened. A serious cold turned into a persistent cough that lasted long after the cold had left. I finally went to see a doctor. Through a rapid succession of tests and consultations, with supportive sisters by my side, I learned the news that no one wants to hear – I had a cancer on my lung.

My first thought was, "I'm going to die! I am ready." But was God asking this of me? After more tests and consultations, I learned that I could have surgery to remove the cancer. My mood changed from, "I'm going to die" to, "I might live!"

Amidst the fear and anxiety of medical tests, diagnosis and prognosis I felt the grace of God in a very powerful way. I experienced this Grace through Dr. Luck (yes, that was my doctor's name!), through the accompaniment of many sisters who went with me to appointments, surgery and recovery, and through the sensitive assistance and care of so many from medical personnel to housekeeping and food service staff at the hospital and almost everyone I encountered. God's grace was alive, even amidst the pain.

My still-palpable grief, together with the shock and fear at my diagnoses, had transformed into a deep peace, a deep trust in God, and a deep experience of God present with me in so many ways. Cards, phone calls, visits, a prayer shawl, a prayer quilt, and more came pouring in, and I mean *pouring*! I felt God loving and supporting me through the people and prayers that surrounded me.

After an operation that removed half of my left lung, and some further tests, the oncologist gave me both good news and challenging news. The good news was that I was cancer free, in that there was no mass of cancer evident in my body. I felt myself floating on a cloud! My two dear sisters were there on that cloud with me along with my dear friend. They were rejoicing with me. And although it's hard to express in words, I felt that the cloud was being held aloft by the legions of sisters, friends and even strangers that loved and supported me through my years of grief and through the months of medical crisis.

Then came the challenging news; there probably were cancer cells roaming around in my body, looking for a place to land. I had to make a choice – undergo chemo or another kind of therapy, or just see the doctor every few months to keep an eye on the situation. After discerning the options, I chose to *not* undergo chemo, but to focus on living fully *now*, with whatever time God has left for me.

During my weeks of recovery, I felt alive in a new way to the grace and love of God. In extended times of prayer and quiet reflection I re-read my life story and was overwhelmed at seeing again and again how God's love and grace had sustained me during every twist and turn, especially during my time of grieving. My joy grew, even though the road ahead remained unsure.

I'm not unique. We all know the pain of loss. Through my experiences, I have come to learn that the question isn't '*how will I survive?*' but, "*how am I called to live fully the gift of the rest of my life, however long it may be?*" Or in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, how do I, 'change the things I can, accept the things I cannot change, and have the wisdom to know the difference.'" I conclude by sharing with you a reflection written by Karia Manternach. "*For the record, I witnessed no resurrection. Did God let me down? No. As far as I know, God doesn't prevent painful things from happening or take away my suffering. But I believe God helps us in much the same way as our loved ones do...by being there when we are in pain, whether physical or emotional. This doesn't remove the source of suffering. But their love is a kind of shelter, a safe place in the storm. And God is the safest place of all.*"

My dear sisters, associates and partners in mission, especially my fellow elders; let us walk together in confidence as we move into the beauty and gift of the aging process, knowing that God is with us in every sadness and joy. Let us *live fully* God's mission for us, 'as much as we can, as far as we are able.' (Primitive Constitutions

Sr. Lorraine Rioux
Maine Sector

Did You Say: VISITATION?

During the summer of 2017, Sister Marie-Claire Berchet received a request from the Sisters of the Holy Family of Lyon to be affiliated with the congregation.

In the Code of Canon Law, this is called an **aggregation**. Each congregation remains as such with its superior, charism and budget.

On November 3, 2017, the Provincial of Europe and the Council welcomed the Superior General: Sr. Marie-Jean Plessy. She explained that thirteen sisters were left* and that their General Chapter had hoped to develop closer ties with another Congregation so as to "enlarge the space of their tent", to have spiritual and apostolic support and to ensure the accompaniment of the remaining sisters. They then wondered to which congregation to direct themselves?

These sisters, founded in 1825, facing the Carthusian Church, next to us, are invited to live "this hidden and laborious life" of the Holy Family. They are invited to be attentive "to the needs of the Church and to the needs of the neighbor." Their main ministry in the region has been in the areas of: education, health, and parish service. They resemble us a bit. Currently, they live in the Rhône and Loire departments. They knocked on our door.

We, Province Europe, welcomed this event seriously, with a few questions as well: can we meet their expectation?

Our Provincial Council met with the twelve sisters, which allowed a good time of sharing and mutual knowledge, and to perceive the joys and concerns of this congregation.

And then, we notice that some of the Sisters of the Holy Family and of St Joseph of Lyon know each other.

Following this meeting, we informed the Sisters of the Province, proposing that they encourage meetings between congregations. Thus, invitations were sent in both directions: to Vernaison, Francheville, and St Etienne. The Sisters of the Holy Family enjoyed participating in Sister Marie Paul Viricel's Bible classes.

We share with them the news of our Province which they appreciate; we have also proposed places where they can rest in the communities that are able to receive sisters on vacation.

Over time, journeying with the Holy Family Council and with these twelve sisters touches us deeply. Welcoming the other is always life changing in some area, but it is a happy upheaval or rather Good News.

Yes, the Sisters of the Holy Family, by sharing their journey, their current situation, offer us their trust; and it is quite naturally that the bonds are forged between us and that this support that is asked of us becomes for us, the Province of Europe, a shared journey, a journey serenely traveled together in the joy of true solidarity

between Congregations.

Recently, we have been working on the development of an "Aggregation Agreement". As for us, we will present it, for approval, to our sisters in May at the next meeting of the communities.

Thus, from **visitation** to **visitation**, we contribute to building a fraternal path for "the greater Glory of God and service of the neighbor".

*The Provincial Council
Province of Europe*

Mother St. John Fontbonne, The Great Woman of Our Time 2019

Mother St John Fontbonne (1759-1843) is the true daughter of St. Joseph. She is completing 260 years of her birth and entering the 261st year. We all know her and yet we need to know more about her in today's context. She is, for each one of us, the source of inspiration, courage, and strength.

Looking at her life as a woman of vision, compassion, and unity, we are drawn towards her and she leads us to love the Lord and the dear neighbor. She did wonders in her life, especially after the French Revolution, as she responded to God's will, going through trials and difficulties and never giving up her burning zeal of hope.

She tried her best and co-operated with God's grace. Regarding her time of fast growth, she endured many hardships, challenges and an adventurous life as she walked with God the extra miles and providing the greater expansion of our institute. We enjoy her many blessings and who we are today is due to her strong foundation.

Today, where, how, who and what is she for each one of us? She is walking, living, working, dealing, interacting and moving with us. Are we aware of her movements in us? How do we see her as our role model in all our activities and endeavors'?

Let us ask, knock, and search for her graces and blessings. May we, her unworthy daughters, practice the virtues of charity and humility even to a heroic degree.

May God be praised now and forever. Amen.

*Sr. Pasca Mary,
Nava Jeevan Province*

Together Towards « Greater » Love, At the Heart of the World and For the Life of the World

Is it a mere coincidence or a NEW CALL from the Lord?

This happened on March 30, 2019, on the day before the date of birth of Mother St. John Fontbonne: a woman known for her courage, a woman who dared to grasp and accept the mission to « renew » our 'Little Design', a woman who knew that in the darkness, light can shine. On that very day (and without looking for it), a new call and a new commitment emerged in our small Lebanon Sector.

After a few years of journeying together, we witnessed the commitment of three young Lebanese women: Loubna Chamoun, Bertha Missyadi, and Valérie Daou, as Associates in our Congregation.

In an atmosphere of sincere friendship with our small group and after taking steps on the spiritual, human, missionary and even professional level, the three young women expressed their desire to make their official commitment, and the expected day arrived. In the context of a recollection where the Holy Spirit was present, as usual in our meetings, the young women were invited to review their personal history with the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Lyon, to rediscover the experience or cornerstone that helped them to lead to this commitment, and to look to their future within this new call. After a time of personal reflection and sharing, crowned by a Mass presided by Fr. Dany Younes, the Provincial of the Jesuits of the Near East and Maghreb, we had an enjoyable dinner. Some family members of the three young Associates and the Sisters of our Sector participated in the Mass and dinner.



De gauche à droite: Valérie Daou, Bertha Missyadi, Loubna Chamoun.

We share with you a few excerpts from Fr. Dany's homily, which were most touching and profound, followed by personal moving experiences written by the new Associates:

✓ **Fr. Dany:** "Let us take a moment to look at Joseph who knew that in his house, - where he is the boss of his home, - his ultimate responsibility would be a service. He knows that Christ, the child who is growing up in his house, is a mystery to him. He can neither dominate nor possess Him... Likewise, each of us is a mystery that no one has the right to possess, because it is a mystery that belongs to God. Like the story of the mustard seed, this small seed, which falls to the ground and produces a very large tree. Within each grain, there is a tree that no one sees, only God. He alone knows this mystery... This mystery is the Holy Spirit who acts in his Church as he wishes.... He is an artist... In the midst of poverty, the Holy Spirit shows his energy and creativity... Saint Paul, in the letter to the Philippians says: "so that my joy may be complete... seek unity" (2:2)... It's the Mystery of the mustard seed. And St. Paul adds: "Do not do anything out of competition or pride (2:3), ». It is today's mystery, to accept our littleness where strength appears. He emptied himself to be a small

seed sown to produce much fruit. He stripped himself of all power to touch our hearts and lead us to serve him in love... The mystery of the mustard seed begins here. I believe that what we are doing today refers to this acceptance of our lowliness; even the community of the Sisters accepts that they are not Christ; they are the servants of Christ. He, through his fidelity, calls upon people: friends, associates, companions... He makes the tree very tall even though it comes from a small seed. Saint Joseph had the courage to accept to be servant in his house, he accepted to be father without being a father, he accepted to raise a child he knew very well was not his. With his courage, let us continue this celebration with joy and confidence, for God is working wonders in us. Amen. »

✓ **Loubna** "This congregation is one of the most beautiful gifts of my life, a precious gift. Above all, it is proof that God always keeps his promises. I never doubted it. It widened my heart and my vision, and explains my joy of feeling surrounded by you. I thank God for the gift of life and faith received.

How good is the Lord! A small seed is sown. What will it become? We entrust it to the Lord."

✓ **Bertha** "At the heart of the world for the life of the world, it is a journey of seeking the Lord and listening to his voice to discern the needs of the world, and to make the effort to respond with all the gifts you give me. Give me the strength, following the example of Saint Joseph, to listen, to obey, to face challenges with confidence, and to work with charity and justice.

From this perspective, I discover that life is full of diverse choices and outcomes. One of the best choices I've made in my life is this commitment. How can I be sure? The joy I experience, thanks to this choice, and the true happiness I have today, manifest many things..."

✓ **Valérie** "Happy to belong to this congregation, where the double union is the great virtue in thought and action! In recent days I have celebrated with two other people, our official commitment. Motivated by the simplicity and empathy of the Sisters of Saint Joseph who always find a way of life for each of us during our meetings, becoming an Associate is for me, day after day, a wonderful joy and achievement. I pray to the Lord to grow in these virtues and experience the Eucharistic hunger, to live the more, for my personal, family and professional development, for the congregation and for the life of the world at the heart of the world. »

To **commit ourselves for the life of the world** is our deep desire.

A new spark and a new covenant bring new life to our small group. Day after day, we realize that the life of the Little Design remains a mystery in the hands of the Lord. He watches over its development with creativity, and, for this, He is counting on us.

Lebanon Sector

God Works in Mysterious Ways!

The thought of uprooting and moving elsewhere, from our beautiful village, parish, house and gardens, seemed like a good idea when the General Council suggested it. The house was too large for only two of us. We needed somewhere smaller. In carrying out this action there was lot pain and heartache.

Many houses were visited but none found to suit us. They were family homes built for parents and children. We also viewed care homes but for one reason or another rejected the thought of joining the groups there.

A neighbour informed us of a new building, a residential home nearer Birmingham. We visited this home and liked it. We studied the area surrounding it and found everything we needed, Catholic Church, shops, post office, dentist, library, buses etc. all in close proximity. It was just wonderful. We decided that this was the place for us. This was where God wanted us to be.

Once the decision to move was made, a battle of wills rose within my being. Is this affluent Residential Home where God really wanted me or did he want me elsewhere? Where else would he need me? Peace came after some months of very painful struggle.

Anne Marie and I discussed what mission we would have there. As there were only a few people living independently there at the time, we felt we would be a companion and a listening ear to the other residents. We could also be of support to the local parish.

Shortly after moving in, God worked in our favour. The home began to change from a residential home to a care home. More residents with zimmer frames and wheelchairs and less independent people were joining us. The new residents showed they needed more support. A second dining room was organized to accommodate all these pieces of apparatus at meal times. Our numbers and mission grew. Now I see myself as a companion, friend, server of cups of tea and coffee, listening ear, a welcoming person, memory for those who have lost theirs, guide to rooms and around the house, assistant at activity groups etc. The management very often requests our help if Catholics join the home. The new resident feels relieved to know that a familiar 'link', connection is available for them. We are also asked to console, comfort, be supportive to residents who may be dying or in an emotional and distressing state. Sometimes the residents themselves request the presence of one of the sisters. We have also been asked to conduct a bereavement service for a deceased resident who did not have a Church service.

We mentioned at a resident's meeting that all aspects of care were being given but one, the spiritual care of all living in the home. As there are residents in wheelchairs and have mobility difficulties they could not travel to their own churches and suggested that they needed a Prayer Room, a quiet place to sit, reflect and pray. After some time this was granted to us. Unfortunately it was extremely small. Lately we have been allocated a much larger room. The residents enjoy it and even take their relatives to see it. As very few residents are Catholics, we do not have the Blessed Sacrament present but perhaps will do so in the future. We call it a Prayer Room rather than a Chapel as this pleases everybody.

Our Associate gathering continues but it has become more of a Faith Sharing group, which comprises members of the parish as well as some of the residents. They all love these meetings. Because of the largeness of the group and the many residents in wheelchairs the Prayer Room is too small to accommodate us. We use a large sitting room instead.

The mission has grown. The Lord knew in advance how the home would turn out and what He would want me to do. He has guided me to where he wants me to be. He always knows what is best even though it did not feel like it at the beginning of this journey. Here is where the Lord wants me to be and it is very good!!!

*Ann Tynan,
Anglo-Irish Sector*

Sharing my Experience of Self Emptying Shoots of small flowers on a curved branch...

These last three years have been for me a process of searching and new adaptations. I lived almost 14 years in Honduras, in different missions with the impoverished. During my last mission, I was on the peripheries of San Pedro Sula, a poor, violent and insecure area. My health was limited, but we had a deep desire, at the personal and community level, to remain as a simple presence among our brothers and sisters.

There has been a tug of war in my heart during these years, to live by pure Grace, the MORE of Ignatius which is always DIFFICULT to attain and which continually threatens to become SELF-SUFFICIENCY, APPEARANCE, RIVALRY...



How can we support the Honduran people, stripped of everything, without any possibilities, surviving, unmotivated, sometimes hypnotized by mobile phones, perhaps to forget their pain? And the arrogance of civil and religious governments, insensitive... offering them but crumbs...

How to accompany ourselves as a community to be a merciful, simple and close presence... by descending into the hells of dehumanization and from there,

to emerge and discover God who wants our dignity?

How to accompany myself, starting from my physical limitations, since I am more than 70 years old and in poor health, by building the community in the midst of successes and failures... and from there, to follow Jesus with an often weakened radicalism?

So many unanswered questions in my heart and in my daily life, in our fraternal dialogues and in my personal encounters with Jesus...

Little by little, the Lord enlightened me, which gave me peace and a desire to continue... **To experience that He alone is the absolute meaning of my life,** has been an inner strength, a purification that moved my selfish self towards a deep emptiness so that He could take HIS PLACE in me, so that He could be the CENTER... surrendering the control of my life, of the lives of others... inviting me to be stripped and free; all this has become a strong and endless struggle, to let go, to let Him act in me, so that He would do what He willed.

I felt like the prodigal Son who had enough of his searching, his pleasures, his tastes and pride, his emptiness... I no longer wanted to be satisfied with the food of the pigs... of my own complacency... and the Father urged me to return to him... In Him alone I found peace, deliverance... He clothed me in a new robe, placed a ring that renewed my covenant; we experienced the festive encounter of abandonment, of trust and of freedom. He makes me a

servant of the Kingdom, not with power, but from weakness, HUMILITY and JOY.

I thank the Lord for this experience of SELF-EMPTYING, so characteristic of our charism and synonymous with FREEDOM. I am beginning to look at my own reality and the reality of our broken and suffering world of injustice and violence, with new eyes and with another heart.

I pray every day for our world identified with the suffering and annihilated Christ, stripped of everything, but with the hope that many hands, feet, caresses, eyes, embraces, healings, generous people, continue to transform this reality, making it more human. Shoots of small flowers on a curved branch...

I am sure that in these hands, feet, arms, the Sisters of Saint Joseph, silent and simple, are contributing to make the Kingdom present and passionate for the person of Jesus.

Now I am in Mexico City, and am adapting to a completely new situation, I am not the same, the Province is not the same, and the reality is different. As the Lord continues to mold me, I count on your prayers.

*Maria Guadalupe de Garagorri,
Province of Mexico*

A Joyful Experience

I am filled with joy in gratitude to the Lord for the meeting I had on March 6 with a former student of the Sisters of Saint Joseph's School in Minya.

His name is Dr. Ahmad ELMENCHAWI, a good Muslim and cardiologist. For the past two months, he has held the position of Deputy Director of the University of Assiout.

On March 6th, I went to see him at his office. As soon as he saw me, he came forward, hugged me, saying to his colleagues in the office: "This is *Sr. Laurice* who gave me a good education with the Sisters of St Joseph in Minya when I was a child." For 3/4 of an hour, he repeated how much he appreciated the education of the Religious who taught him kindness, openness, tolerance, respect for those who are different, honesty, self-confidence and trust in others, and charity towards the most disadvantaged.

He said, "It is thanks to you, that I am in this very important position." He married a former student of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles.

He came to the door hugging me once again and asked his driver to accompany me to his car. More and more I believe that the grain we sow into the hearts of children will sooner or later bear fruit.

Thank you Lord for this deep joy, for these people of open heart, conscious of good education and who live from *all* that they have received from their youth.

HAPPY THE PURE OF HEART, THEY WILL SEE GOD!

*Sr. Laurice ISSHAC
EGYPT*

Participation at JPIC- New York

Jamaica Estates, NY
February 16, 2019

It is with great joy that we share with you the experience we had during our participation in the 57th Commission for Social Development of the UN, February 11 -15, 2019, which had as theme for this year:

Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

Prior to the sessions, we had the opportunity to participate in a day with the sisters who play a very important role in the UN as representatives of the NGO – Congregations of Saint Joseph.

They were:

Sr. Barbara Bozak – Chambéry
Sr. Suzanne Wilson – Canada

Sr. Joan Atkinson- Canada.
Sr. Marianne Sennick – Brentwood, NY

Together we learned about the UN organization and its functioning, as well as the global work that our sisters carry out as NGOs at the United Nations.

We also shared something of the reality of each of our countries - Mexico, Brazil and Argentina – together with the cries of our suffering people and how the political and economic decisions of our governments increase inequalities.

It was also noted that as the Congregations of Saint Joseph, we are part of the Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR) composed of 18 congregations or groups of congregations, which are, recognized NGOs at the UN. JCoR aims to strengthen the advocacy and capacity of religious who are working at the grassroots and that have representation in the United Nations.

On this day of exchange, we were also accompanied by Sr. Dona Cicalese - (Philadelphia), who provided translation.

Our participation in the sessions of the Commission for Social Development, were very intense days where we listened to different countries present the work they do to face inequalities.

During the midday break we met as a group in the office of our NGO for conversation and to encourage one other in our participation. This space also allowed us to experience the importance of the work that each sister and each community carries out in their country, as a part of a whole, which has its implications also for the UN.

Currently the Congregations of Saint Joseph are present in 46 countries on five continents.

We became more aware of how the influence of NGOs such as the Congregations of St. Joseph and other congregations have been advocating with our national political leaders and government delegates to the UN to promote the common good; to the point of influencing the agenda of the UN and having their suggestion become the theme of the next Commission.

On February 15, we actively participated in the Civil Society Forum, where in addition to listening to the different exponents of civil society, we participated in the Latin American and Caribbean group. There, together with persons from other

countries, we presented the situations that generate inequality as well as what policy changes governments should make to favor the most vulnerable sectors of society (disabled, women, seniors, young people).

It was a day that allowed us to use our own voices to present the reality of our countries. Deeply grateful for the opportunity to participate in this Assembly, we invite each sister and each community to offer their contribution, since everything we do, even the smallest thing, and has a significant impact for our work at the UN.

Each within her possibilities, be it prayer, solidarity or concrete actions, can help the transformation of the world.

We must be united and contribute, together with other organizations, to build the Kingdom of God through work towards the common good, to make real the words of Jesus "That all be One", with no brother, no sister, left behind.

Sr. Nilva (Chambéry – Brazil) Sr. Heidi (Lyon – Mexico)
Sr. Rita (Buenos Aires – Argentina) Sr. Paulina (Cuneo-Argentina)

JPIC - Actions - Europe

18 communities and the Associates' group of the Province of Europe submitted their reflections based on the letter sent after the Provincial Council meeting and the Province JPIC group.

Several communities underline the interest they have had in doing this together. Awareness is raised about the actions taken and the commitments made in the many Associations in which they participate, through signatures, donations and time spent on concrete actions: "Before we would take action for economic reasons, now we do it out of solidarity and for more justice. »

Many questions also arise about the political and financial commitments of our governments and particular attention will be paid to the upcoming election campaigns concerning "global ecology" concerning Europe.

The Province JPIC team will meet within the coming weeks to plan the follow-up.

JPIC - St. Joseph Province - India

Meeting with Provincial Council:

Meeting of JPIC members of our Congregation along with our General Council in Le Puy was a moment of grace for each of the participants to become clearer and more focused on their ministry. After that, I was given the opportunity to meet our Provincial council and share my experience and reflect together how as a Justice and Peace team we could be engaged, in order to bring about a better impact in our province. Our Provincial council was very supportive and widened our team by including all the ministry team heads.

Meeting of Justice and Peace Team:

As a team, we came together and reflected on Laudato-Si, the Social teachings of the Catholic Church, the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and action plans were prepared. We realized that this needs deeper reflection and therefore came to a conclusion that we shall reflect with community sisters at the beginning of the next academic year and encourage them to incorporate this into community projects.

Gaja Cyclone and Our Response:

In the early hours of November 16, 2018, Cyclone Gaja made a landfall, with torrential rains and winds of up to 120 Kmph, left a trail of destruction in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu. This resulted in the evacuation of 250,000 people at relief camps and taking 45 lives, affecting 7 districts. Aftermath of the cyclone is that volunteers and relief workers rushed to aid the affected area of Nagapattinam, Tanjore, and Pudhukkottai etc.

The region in the Delta has remained without power supply. Most of the thatched huts and tiled roof houses have been fully damaged. Drastic damage was caused to the coconut and banana plantations uprooting them alive. 100s of boats & fishing nets were thrown out which needs huge sum of money for repairing the boats and purchase of new fishing nets.

Sisters were challenged to respond to this emerging situation therefore at different moments our sisters visited the affected people and empathized with them in their difficult moments. We also distributed rice, sarees, solar lights, and mosquito nets etc. in 7 villages. Two groups of our college students stayed for 8 days and helped in relief work and also enabled women and children to heal them from fear and anxiety.

JPIC Movement Training Report:

It was a long awaited dream and action plan of Justice and Peace team to inaugurate the movement for justice and peace. This year the team members Srs. Rojamani, Amala and Vinnarasi took keen interest in forming JPIC Movements in all our educational institutions and Social action centers. As a follow up of that, the team planned for the JPIC movement leaders meet in order to orient them to the objectives of JPIC and introduce SDGs and plan the action plans to be implemented in each area. This meeting was held in St. Joseph Matric Hr. Sec. School, Madurai on February 23, 2019.

An analysis of present society was presented to them in order to understand how the poor are left behind in every aspect like economy, social, political, decision-making and how the ecology is also affected as a result of exploitation of the poor and the environment. We also were briefed about the UN and its objectives like promoting human rights, maintain peace and security of all nations and promoting development of all countries. They were introduced to SDGs (17) in power point presentation and explained in details about each SDG and how the movement could get engaged in living these SDG in personal and in community (School and village). At the end questions for reflection were given and the groups were divided according to their school and social action centers and prepared their action plan for the next year. After the group

discussion and planning they presented their action plan in common. Students, women and staff appreciated this initiative and they decided to come together once a year for common planning.

Pollachi Issue:

275 women and girls were abused by a group of four men. During the month of February 2019, Tamil Nadu was burning with this issue. Many civil societies and women movements went on a protest. We also joined with Magali ayam - Madurai and condemned this issue on March 18. Sisters, associates, women and students participated in this event and demanded the Government to take action on the culprits and bring justice to the victims

Reconstruction of the Social Fabric, a Challenge for Peace

In Mexico, over the past four decades, social breakdown has erupted due to the uncalculated effects of modernization and, more recently, due to poor policies to fight organized crime, which have increased violence. This social disintegration has caused a multitude of conflicts in family and community relations, which are reflected in classrooms and school corridors.

There is a process of fragmentation of social ties and fragility in family, social and political institutions to resolve conflicts. The quality of material life has had a direct impact on reducing the amount of time previously devoted to family life.

The lack of deep relationships and the breakdown of relationships are the result of the lack of tools, habits and skills that strengthen our capacities for negotiation, assertive management and of the creation of permanent spaces for dialogue.

The challenge for educational institutions is to promote actions based on the trinomial: community-family-school, which makes it possible to foster a harmonious and supportive climate, where respect, tolerance, solidarity and equality prevail.

For this reason, at the end of 2018 our French College of Pedregal began to set up the "RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SOCIAL FABRIC" program, starting with the training of 30 people (teachers and school administrators) who implement and promote the Culture of Conviviality by holding Peace Assemblies, which consist of creating restoration circles that bring together people who want to resolve conflict, rebuild relationships, heal themselves, provide support or make decisions, using honest communication, relationship building and community building.

We know that peace is not only the suppression of social conflicts, but that it is the result of a whole process of social reconstitution, the ingredients of which are the restoration of broken community ties and the creation of cultural, environmental and structural conditions for good coexistence.

The Reconstruction of the Social Fabric has as its horizon the political utopia of the Good Cohabitating in justice, and it has as its foundations the community meetings, the

meaning of life and the relationship with the world.

The promoters of the Culture of Conviviality have initiated sessions in each section of the school (from nursery school to high school) to train the teachers of each group to practice the methodology of restorative circles with students and parents, and at the same time that they become agents of peace and dialogue.

Our wish is that these practices go beyond the various social spheres where these promoters move about (teachers, administrative staff, students and parents) and that thus there be a social, economic and political transformation.

We believe that from the culture of conviviality, of restoration circles, of good living together in justice, we will be collaborators with those who work so that peace with dignity, and justice with solidarity can once again weave the broken threads of our society.



***French School of Pedregal
Mexico***

JPIC – West Africa

Literacy is one of the ways to fight poverty. In Dédougou, we teach young girls to read, write and sew in order to prepare them to take charge of their lives in the future.

In the communities of Dédougou and Zaba, Sisters and volunteers work in nutritional recovery centers. They go to neighboring villages raising the awareness of mothers about preventing malnutrition. The Sisters teach the mothers how to make porridge with flour enriched with local products (millet, sugar, groundnuts, soumbala) During our visits to families, we encourage the heads of families to manage their harvests well (avoid selling food to buy luxurious clothing or use millet to prepare alcoholic beverages (dolo).

At the Zaba Primary School, we raise awareness among our students about the importance of market gardening in the fight against hunger. Students do gardening to improve their meals at the canteen.

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE: In discussing with the villagers, we do not miss the opportunity to invite them to take care of their cultivable land by enriching it with vegetables and animal manure. Today, many have become aware that chemical fertilizers, herbicides destroy soils and animals.

During our visits with the villagers, we discuss that malnutrition (insufficient and unbalanced meals, too much consumption of fat, sugar and alcohol) and also the misuse of agricultural inputs) is one of the causes of diseases. We invite them to have a healthy diet, to use organic fertilizer in cereal fields.

In the dispensaries, our Sisters lead awareness sessions with pregnant and breastfeeding women on the importance of maternal and child health for a healthy family. The Sisters differ in the way they welcome and listen to the sick. Doesn't the deontology say that a sick person who is welcomed well is half cured? We experience this in our places of service.

In one of the villages in Zaba, we encouraged parents to send their children (both girls and boys) to school, because some girls still do not have the chance to go to school. Others have abandoned school because their fathers do not support them. To ensure that girls do not drop out of school, we encourage mothers to work hard to support them financially.

The sisters who are teachers fight for quality education. They children reach a good percentage on the various exams. They also manage to closely monitor students who have difficulties with their families.

In Dédougou, we have a non-formal training center that allows unschooled girls and women to learn to read, write, and sew and take care of their homes. This learning helps them find their place in society. These girls, like many others, face many difficulties such as poverty, early pregnancies, forced marriages. Due to socio-cultural obstacles, it is not easy but the Sisters often manage to help them.

Some of our Sisters work with charitable organizations that carry out activities aimed at the empowerment of women and young girls. They provide micro-credits to women to enable them to carry out income-generating activities.

One of the goals of the Dédougou Social Promotion Center is to help young girls to become autonomous. The Sisters of Zaba were intermediaries in obtaining a borehole at the Catholic Elementary School. A few years later, the same pump broke and the school's resources were insufficient to repair it. So they requested help from a school in France so that students and villagers could have access to safe drinking water. They make the children aware of the importance of good maintenance of the pump.

In Ouagadougou, there are often water supply cuts. Our community does not experience this inconvenience, because we have a borehole. So we allowed people from the neighborhood to come and get some from us.

The Life Journey of Sr. Marie Antoinette FORISSIER



Marie-Antoinette was born in Saint Etienne (Loire) on October 29, 1922. She had a brother and a sister and she always showed great esteem and admiration for her parents. She attended primary and secondary school at l'Institution St. Paul in St Etienne.

After obtaining her diploma as a social worker, she enters the novitiate of the Sisters

of St Joseph of Lyon on November 13, 1944. She makes her first profession on November 1, 1945, and receives the name of Sister Anne-Antoine.

Her first community will be Maclas, in la Loire, where she assumes the direction of the primary school and, at the same time, provides home care for the sick in this rural area.

In 1948, the community of Fribourg in Switzerland welcomes her and she becomes instructor at the School of Nursing situated in the same building.

She works in this institution until 1967; from 1948 to 1961 as instructor, then following further formation in Paris, as director of the nursing school. At the same time, she is appointed superior of the community from 1962 to 1967.

In 1967, she returns to her native place to assume the mission of Provincial in la Loire Province. She will participate actively in the preparation of the 1969 General Chapter, the first Chapter following the Council, where the provisional Constitutions of Aggiornamento will be drawn up, and the first steps towards the complete revision of the text to be approved by Rome in 1986.

During this General Chapter of 1969, Sister Anne Antoine is elected Superior General for a 4-year term, which will be renewed for the period of 1973 - 1977. For the first time, in the congregation, its internationality is confirmed by the election of a non-French councilor.

During these two mandates, Sister Anne Antoine or rather Sister Marie-Antoinette, (the chapter authorizing the resumption of the baptismal name) will give herself without counting the cost to move the Congregation into the new era willed by the Second Vatican Council and adapt it to the changes in society. Her far-reaching vision and open-mindedness allowed her to prophetically innovate in many areas, which profoundly changed the face of the entire Congregation.

Our being unable to make a complete inventory of Marie-Antoinette's achievements let us at least note the main lines of action that guided her:

- develop internationality; to do everything possible to ensure that the Provinces acquire certain autonomy and that the Sisters become more inculturated in their own country.
- develop the "*collegial spirit*"; promote working together for the unity of the Congregation, while respecting differences.
- incorporate renewal into government structures: set up the Extended General Council (regular meetings of the General Council and Provincial/Regional Councils) in order to favor consultation.
- encourage sisters to be attentive to the needs of the time, while listening to their own aspirations and skills. In this sense, encourage and promote "open air" insertions in new places and small fraternities outside institutions.
- live an authentic religious life, in closer proximity to people, by adapting and diversifying our commitments in society.

In 2014, at the age of 92, Sister Marie-Antoinette agrees to join a retirement home and asks to go to Fontaudin (Pessac).

It was a great change for her to be among priests, religious and lay people. She appreciated her room, facing the beautiful park, which she had arranged to her liking. A very active woman, in the early years, she took the tram almost every day to go to Pessac and even to Bordeaux, to visit the city.

A woman open to world events, she read the newspaper "Le Monde" every day.

A very relational woman, she liked to express her convictions and share her questions with some residents, friends and family. The deaths in the house affected her. These successive departures, as well as her gradual decrease in her mobility, left her in a great solitude. Very discreet about her past in the congregation, she participated little in community life.

After eight years of service at the general level, Sister Marie-Antoinette lived from 1977 to 2014 in Meylan, a suburb of Grenoble.

She will first ensure a presence at the Theological Centre of this city, then will resume her function as social worker at the Bourgoin-Jallieu prison, including in the "High Security" district. She really enjoyed this work and the encounter it provided.

Over the years, Sister Marie-Antoinette gets involved less in the life of the Congregation and the Province, but she will maintain the interpersonal relationships she held dear.

Following a minor fall in mid-December, Marie Antoinette's health deteriorated quite suddenly. She never left her room and died in Pessac on January 21, 2019. She had donated her body to science.

Sister Marie-Antoinette, now being in God, may you rejoice for all that you have done for our congregation to engage itself fully in the Church and in the post-Council society. All of us keep you in our prayer and gratitude.

A Few Expressions of Sisters from Different Countries

Sr. Marie Antoinette was a brave woman and never hesitated to take up any decisions once she was sure of it. We can never forget this visionary who took us up to the highest peaks with self-emptying love of Fr. Médaille and the great love of Mother St. John Fontbonne.

We are very much moved by her style of animation of our Congregation. She loved us and guided us with much freedom.

Sr. Marie Antoinette had been a great prophet among us. I cannot forget the prophetic work, the daring steps she had taken to accomplish the call of her time. India is what it is because of her Vision and Action. She was a woman of conviction, great love for the Congregation and the Church. She responded to the call of Vat. II, and went ahead with

her vision with the support of her team Dorothy and Marie Chantal. We appreciate that she recognized and promoted Internationality embracing internationality, interculturality, and promoted diverse languages. She encouraged the identity of each person, each culture, recognizing the beauty and richness of each nation.

First and foremost, my heart is lifted up with gratitude for the person she was in the Congregation, and for her dynamic, revolutionary leadership at the crossroads of the evolution of the Church. She was a person deeply in communion with the God who called her and her faith-vision gave her the audacious courage to take decisions for the growth and turning point of the Congregation. She was a woman of the time who was empowered by the breath of the Spirit of Vatican II.

With a deep sense of gratitude we remember our dear departed Sisters

“I am the Resurrection and the life...
and everyone who believes in me shall never die”-John 11:25

RONZON Lucie	Vernaison, France	Jan. 19, 2019
FORISSIER Marie Antoinette	Pessac, Fontaudin, France	Jan. 21,.2019
LASSABLIERE Pauline	Vernaison, France	Jan. 26, 2019
BAULES Marie Emilien	Pessac, Fontaudin, France	March 5, 2019
THELISSON Marie Thérèse	Messimy, Lyon, France	Mar. 20, 2019
VELAZQUEZ Luz Maria	Betania – Pedregal, Mexico	Mar. 22, 2019
FABRE Fernande	Vernaison, France	Mar. 27, 2019
De DARAN Marie Claude	Pessac, Fontaudin, France	April 12, 2019

**MAY THE RISEN LORD BLESS US,
OUR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS!**

