

## **Placing What We Have at the Service of the Mission**

*'With complete trust and availability, we place who we are and what we have at the service of the Mission, not seeking too much security but accepting risks and struggles in hope.'*  
(Const. 50)

I'm struck by this line, that we place, *'who we are and what we have'* at the service of the Mission. Who we are, yes! After all we are consecrated women who desire to give all that we are to God. But *'what we have'*? When we entered, we gave away all we had. And today, what do we have? We sold property and transferred ministries and shut down houses. And individually we have thrown away and given away much and moved into little apartments or even smaller spaces in retirement, assisted living or nursing care units. None of us earn a salary anymore and we are living off our savings. We have enough to care for ourselves and share a bit with others, but it's not much. So, what does it mean, today to, *'place at the service of the Mission'*, what we *have*?

In our Maine Sector Response to the 2017 General Chapter Orientation we challenged ourselves to, *'Develop our Center as a place of spiritual nourishment and healing.'* What we call our Center is a small, one-story house. Some of you may have visited our former Provincial House with its dozens of bedrooms, small chapel, multiple offices, meeting rooms, huge dining room and professional kitchen sitting on many acres of river-front land. We let go of the retreat ministry there and sold the building and property in 2014, then moved to the small building that we now call our Center. Today it serves our very simple administrative needs and, we hoped, it could serve the needs of the dear neighbor as well

But what were their needs and how could we serve them? After the last Chapter we began meeting with our local parish priest, talking with local parishioners, and reaching out to non-profit organizations in our area and beyond. What we discovered was that, as St. Paul said, *'our weakness is our strength'*. Our Center was small, but intimate; *'Catholic'* but welcoming; faith-based yet open to all; off-the-beaten-track but safe feeling. In our huge but rural state of Maine we also realized that we are well situated in the middle between the more urban south and the rural north.

We really had no idea what would come from our desire to have our Center be *'a place of spiritual nourishment and healing'* but in the last three years we have found out. It seems that when we open our hearts and imaginations the Spirit takes over and puts people and organizations in our path.

The results to date are three-fold. First, there is now a very well attended *'Gospel Reflection Group'* that meets weekly to break open Sunday's Gospel reading. Sr. Janet Gagnon, Sr. Claudette Poulin, a local deacon and a wonderful local chaplain facilitated, in turn. It started years ago as a small group of 5-6, accompanied by Sr. Claudette, that met in a few homes, but it seems that opening it up to meet at the Center created space for the Spirit to move others to take part. Second, we have a gathering one evening a month

for what we call 'Living Our Faith' events where we invite a speaker and have open conversation on topics that often aren't talked about in the broader parish or community. These have included faith and politics, mental illness, the trafficking of women and girls in Maine, immigration, how to be more welcoming of gay and lesbian Catholics and more. Future topics include rediscovering the indigenous roots of the land we occupy, living with depression, and a 'seamless garment' approach to Catholic voting. Third, several groups are now using the Center for their meetings, retreats or staff reflection days like a Diocesan ministry for families who have experienced abortion, a statewide network of organizations which support the survivors of human trafficking, and two monthly support groups; one for those who have a loved one in prison or jail and another for those who want to create a more welcoming parish for gay and lesbian Catholics and their families.

The Center is now 'what we have' and it is a blessing to us to put it at the service of the Mission. To our delight, those who come to the Center say they feel welcomed, comfortable, and accepted. It is becoming *theirs*.

Const. 50 cautions us not to seek too much security and to accept risks and struggles in hope. Perhaps someday the Center will no longer be part of 'what we have', and that will be fine, too. May we grow in that risk-taking freedom as what was 'our' Center blossoms into a place of spirituality and healing 'for the life of the world.'

**Sr. Judy Donovan,  
Maine Sector**

## **Canonical visit of the General and the Councillor to the Nava Jeevan Province- India**

There are expectations and preparations for every visit. For someone highly regarded such as Sr. Catherine BARANGE, Superior General, and Sr. Marie Line RIOUX, Councillor, their canonical visit on January 28<sup>th</sup> to February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020, to Nava Jeevan Province produced great expectations and brought hope to every sister and member of the Nava Jeevan Family. It was a grace-filled moment, which renewed us in the Spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon as an international family of fraternity and communion.



Their visit was an occasion for evaluation, renewal, and re-invigoration of the Province Life and Apostolate. In meeting all the Sisters individually and then as a community, they were able to assess community and apostolic life. With the same objectives in mind, the Provincial Council had planned an itinerary for the visit and had communicated it to the Sisters in the Province. The respective local Coordinators neatly planned out the visit with the proposed agenda and specifics. They invited us to celebrate the blessings and respond to the challenges in the Province with clear and focused planning. Whatever impressions the Superior General shared with us will be etched forever in our hearts.

The Sisters celebrated this time together, enjoying the friendship of Sr. Catherine BARANGE and Sr. Marie Line RIOUX and their sincere interest in the life and ministries of the Province.



Thank you, Sr. Catherine and Sr. Marie Line! Your visit was for us a moment of grace, a gift, a call, an invitation to center our lives on the Lord and on his Word. Your visit in our communities has left traces, which will impel us to renew our community and missionary life. We have been refreshed with vigour, energy and enthusiasm to live our consecrated life in the spirit of Father Jean Pierre Médaille and Mother Saint Jean Fontbonne to continue to be prophetic witnesses and to share the charism of communion with those to whom we are sent. The Sisters celebrated this time together, enjoying the friendship of Sr. Catherine and Sr. Marie Line and their sincere interest in the life and ministries of the Province.

On February 21<sup>st</sup> the entire province gathered and Sr. Catherine addressed the Sisters on the themes of love and unity in the Congregation in keeping with the charism, the three evangelical councils, the mission of the Church, and the needs of the times. Sr. Marie Line invited all the sisters to be responsible to spread "Double Union."

On the same day, we hosted the silver jubilee celebration of Sr. Shanti KERKETTA and Sr. Jessy KURIEN. The beautifully decked hall, angelic choir and special prayers made the Eucharistic celebration meaningful and awe-inspiring. Then followed a time for special greetings, congratulations, cutting the Jubilee cake and enjoying the scrumptious meal. The day concluded with an hour-long cultural program jointly hosted by the St. Joseph hostel students of Baikunthpur and the Sisters. We have genuinely felt your fraternal support in the best interest of our Nava Jeevan Province and, at the outset; we want to say THANK YOU! We continue to be grateful for your prayers in the mission of Jesus that we share. You remain in our prayer.

**Sr. Daisy JOSEPH**  
**Nava Jeevan Province**

### **Living Our Mission Through Loving My Neighbor**

Real success is when I can make a difference in the life of another through how I live. I find the source of my life in the Holy Spirit dwelling in my heart and the heart of my neighbor. With God's grace I can then ask myself: am I a peacemaker? Do I make myself available to others? Do I listen to them? Do I help them through my prayers and actions? We are called to go beyond even that. Loving my neighbor also means working for peace, the rights of others, and social justice for people here at home and far away. When we can act out of love for the neighbor, we might even inspire others to follow and this can disarm some of the hatred in the world.



Our faith tells us that God lives in our neighbor and so all neighbors should be treated with equality, dignity and justice. Nelson Mandela said, 'No one was born hating another person; one must learn to hate. And if one can learn to hate they can learn to love for love comes more naturally to the human heart.' Loving our neighbor should come naturally to us but we need God's grace. When my heart trusts in the Lord's mercy and forgiveness I can forget myself and focus on doing God's will each day.

I am retired but not from our mission. Some of the ways I try to live our mission are through giving my neighbors rides to a doctor's appointments, helping them with their shopping, bringing communion to people in the building. Another sister and I live with retired lay people now. When I see them, I ask them how they are feeling, I pray with them. At mealtime, I give them a helping hand. When someone asks me for any service, I do what I can to help him/her. I could say that my ministry is to acknowledge everyone I meet throughout the day.

**Sr. Shirley Alexandre,**  
**Maine Sector**

## Province of Europe

Sr. Ignatius PALATHINGAL left the Province of Europe to return to her native country on February 19. She shares with us her experience with the archives of the Congregation.



### **"Count your blessings one by one."**

In 2009, Sr. Janet GAGNON, our former Superior General invited me to come and work in the Archives of the Congregation.

I compared myself to a busy bee that harvests honey. I was happy to be in this holy land where our Congregation was born. I believed that God would lead me on new paths.

Since I had no previous experience as an archivist, I had to rely entirely on the advice of Sister Marie-Laure MORETTI who, at the time, was the archivist of the Congregation.

Every day I was in search of treasures. There were documents dating back to 1808 and what amazed me was to see this beautiful writing. The documents included permission to begin a novitiate, news from the communities, deeds signed by the great emperor Napoleon. I was delighted. Mother Saint Jean Fontbonne had signed some of these documents; I looked at them with respect as if she were present in the room.

There was an attic near the archives that was rarely visited. It is there that I was shown unsorted old documents, kept in dust-covered boxes. I had to categorize and label them before placing them on the shelves.

When the two St. Joseph congregations of Bourg and Bordeaux brought their archives to Lyon, "wagons" of documents arrived. It took a long time to unpack the boxes and put the documents on the shelves. They became the treasures of the Congregation: the history of educational institutions, orphanages, health centers, institutions for the handicapped such as the deaf and the mute. There were also many insignia, decorations, medals, and ribbons that had been given to the Sisters in recognition of their service to humanity.



The archives also contain some beautiful works, such as paintings done by our Sisters. There were biographies of Sisters filled with accomplishments, copies of the communication network that existed among communities, many revised versions of prayer books and copies of the Constitutions testifying to the fact that the Congregation has moved forward in responding to the Spirit.

In digging through the collection of documents, photos, newspaper clippings, I met extraordinary Sisters who have made the world a better place in which to live through their positivity, compassion and self-giving. In the letters from the pioneers in the Mission Lands, I saw their simple lives that awakened the consciousness of God in the people they served.

Joy overwhelmed me when I read some of the documents recorded by the Missionary Sisters who were living in India. It was as if we met them personally with their lived experiences in that country. Some of their personal letters reveal that they



have endured great trials to respond to God's call. Thus, in striving to become champions of social issues, they attempted to unite all humanity through faith and love. In order to improve the welfare of women, they created educational institutions. Sister Rose BENOIT (founder of Grandes Ecoles) was a charismatic leader who expressed great faith in God's providence. Her accomplishments are all the

more remarkable at a time when few women had access to an education.

**"The sea is the same for all."** Some find pearls, some find fish, and others find themselves with wet feet. The archives are common to all of us, but we can only get what we are looking for. I was fortunate to find more than what I was looking for. I am happy that my work in the Archives has been a spiritual journey with many of our Sisters who have gone to their eternal reward. I thank the Congregation for giving me this opportunity to meet many Sisters in the silence of the Archives.

**Sr. Ignatius PALATHINGAL**

## **My Experience in Lyon**

The happy and beautiful experience that I had in France has been a unique exposure to find more purpose and a new meaning for my life. I encountered new people, a different culture and visited new places that led me to question what effect these experiences would have on me in the future? I learned to accept differences, respect the individuals and come into contact with everyone. My mind and heart became more open in living the charism more meaningfully here and now. It has helped me to venture into my soul's ultimate goal.

It was indeed a significant spiritual experience to understand the sacredness of internationality and its values. My interaction with my Sisters from different provinces taught me that we are pilgrims on the earth.



The cultural diversity and the global perspective enlightened me to see that I belong to a larger body of 'The Little Design.' It was a journey to the sweet mystery of being present to 'the moment' and to develop a new consciousness of wonder and awareness of something amazing that I call the numinous. The journey became a turning point in gaining new knowledge that opens up my soul to new horizons and makes my spirit alive. It led me to a personal inner transformation that helped me to return to my routine life with new insight, vigour and enthusiasm. It nourished my soul to become more authentic and a committed, open, willing and human person with a sense of humour for the life of the world.

***We are all on our own pilgrimage path towards the numinous.***

All journeys are a stepping-stone on the Pilgrimage of Life. While travelling to Lourdes by train, I crossed Carcassonne, Fr. John Peter Médaille's birthplace where I saw a large cemetery near a pathway. I immediately thought that this could be his resting place. He may have visited this place many times. ***"Faith is not clinging to the shrine but an endless pilgrimage of the heart."*** Abraham Joshua Heschel. Realizing this truth made me go into a transitional experience of silence and stillness. It was a moment to feel the spirit of the founder within me.



The visit to the Origin and Evolution space, Mother Saint John Fontbonne's room, where she lived, was a spiritual awakening experience, which gave me a deep spiritual power. I found beauty, connectedness, knowledge and inner peace while visiting the spiritual places of her Memories, which she left for her daughters. This courageous woman whispered in my ears: *"Take courage to travel the path less travelled by others."* Every step on our journey has meaning, but at the same time, life-giving challenges will also emerge. This journey is not a vacation but a transformational journey during which significant changes take place and new insights are given to build up a true humanity. Deeper understanding and blessings will also follow you to reach greater heights.

My journey to my Congregation's birthplace brought a holistic change within me. It enriched my life, by bringing me closer to others and most importantly closer to God and, simultaneously, it increased my love for the Congregation. When I returned to India, I felt renewed as a person having a purpose and a strengthened desire to grow effectively, fruitfully and charismatically for Christ's kingdom in my own community. Having experienced internationality in such a profound way helps me to build up the international spirit in my own country by treating people with respect, reverence and dignity. I look at my life differently now and I am sure that it will never be quite the same again.

**Biji Cyriac Pothiyittel,  
St. Joseph Province**

## **“The Small Friday School Uniting Hearts”**

Our house in Xalapa is very large since it was built as a Formation house. Now, due to the lack of vocations, we are searching for projects to utilize it.

In speaking with the teacher, Bibiana Morales, about what should be done to help the neighborhood children and young people, she expressed the desire to collaborate in a project to assist children by offering them free classes once a week.

At the ‘Small Friday School,’ we have children who have been relegated, rejected from their regular schools because of their slow learning, hyperactivity or lack of participation in class like their classmates, etc. Here they grow in 'self-confidence', and this allows boys to develop their best potential, to learn to respect girls, to listen to each other and not to fight with their younger brothers.



One Friday a month, the teacher works with the mothers of the children and reports to them their progress in understanding and learning the contents and objectives of the classwork.

To this day, we have 12 children in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and primary school. In addition to the teacher, three teacher-aides help the children. I supervise to assure that no child goes out the door into the street.

As part of our Charism, we collaborate with others so that another world is possible, i.e., a better world.

**Enedina Juárez,  
Xalapa, Mexico**



## All for the Greater Glory of God

"All for the Greater Glory of God!" Fr. Médaille always longed to live the "more." He led a self-emptying and hidden life, had a special devotion for the Eucharist and a deep faith in God's providence.

One of our Chapter orientations is to deepen our common mission with the laity, discerning together the needs of our time and our responses.

We have started a lay Associates group with three couples who are professional teachers. This group is functioning effectively. Every first Friday and Saturday of the month, the group meets in different houses and each one takes his/her turn to lead the prayer, which consists in reflecting and sharing on a Bible passage then offering intercessory prayers. Listening and reading God's word can be a life-giving encounter with God. Pope St. John Paul II urged us to turn to the Bible with a renewed interest. He said: Let us pick up this book! Let us deepen it so that it can become our very life. Let us savor it deeply; it will give us joy because it is as sweet as honey. Filled with hope, we will be able to share it with every man and woman we encounter on our way!



Thanks to the Associates, we are able to share our charism of communion with different families where there is misunderstanding between father, mother, children and neighbors, where there is no peace, love, happiness and adaptation in families. Thus, the Christian families can have an astonishing growth. Prayer can be a powerful weapon of reconciliation, bringing back home the prodigal son.

God alone is persistent. Life passes, riches fly away, popularity is fickle, senses decay; One alone is true toward us; One alone can be all things for us.

"For I, your God, am holding you by the hand. I tell you  
'Do not be afraid,' I will help you." (Isaiah 41: 13)

**Sr. Pauline VADAKUMPARAMBIL,**  
**Nava Jeevan Province**

## 60 Years of Covenant with the Lord



***Transformation of the poorest of the poor...*** Two of our communities St. Joseph's convent, Usilampatti and Holy Family convent, Madurai were mainly engaged in caring for the poor, needy, abandoned and orphan children. At times we found babies from six days to one-month-old left by their parents and relatives at our gate. At Usilampatti we had a crèche for the little ones 6 months up to 6 years old, and an orphanage for the older children. As we had a primary school in the campus, these children went to school up to the 5<sup>th</sup> class. After these children were sent to Holy Family where we had a middle school up to the 8<sup>th</sup> class, an orphanage for the elder girls and an industrial school where embroidery and dressmaking was taught. Children were free to continue their education in school or technical line according to their aptitude. As a result, they became teachers, engine drivers, and business people and so on, as we had boys and girls in the Crèche at Usilampatti.

### Sr. Theresa Anthraper



St. Joseph Usilampatti community was an international community of French, Mexican and Indian Sisters. Missionaries played a great role in forming and caring for the children. Their spirit of service, sacrifice and commitment were admirable and they were real models for us Indians who were young and inexperienced. Once a cholera epidemic spread among the little ones and many were affected by it. Sisters, without hesitation and fear, carried them to the hospital and spent days and nights with them as their own mothers. The Missionary Sisters' love and care for the poor and abandoned was a great inspiration for me, which brought about a transformational change within me. After 5 years of service at Usilampatti, I was transferred to Holy family to take charge of the industrial school and orphanage. So, once again I was with my orphaned children, renewed my relationships and became closer to them. ***My heart moved to embrace the meek and abandoned for I found Jesus in them.*** Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk with Him, firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude (Colossians 2:6-7). These words of the Lord were my strength to love and support these little ones.

### Sr. Marie Celina Vatamala

As a young professed, I had the good fortune of living at Holy Family Convent and at St. Joseph's Convent Usilampatti. In these two communities, I could directly come in touch with orphan children considered illegitimate, babies abandoned by the parents, deserted young women and children. To understand them I had to be a woman of compassion, love and service-minded person. As the children grew up they were anxious to know their family background, their parents, and their relatives. The community

made efforts to trace the parents. Often it was a failure due to lack of proper address and connection with the relatives. However, I could succeed in a few cases. Our missionary sisters took great interest in giving the children a solid education and that motivated me to stand for the poor and weak and to give my best for them.

The spirit and the spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph is profound and life giving. The life style during the years of formation and my witnessing the life of our zealous missionary Sisters encouraged me to follow their example. They taught me to find God in all things, discern God's will and to be obedient at God's service.

**"Each drop can create an ocean; each flower can create a garland;  
each brick can create a building,"**

Yes, 'God is Great' because He made use of me to get all kinds of donations from good and loving people for the welfare of our poor children. I am very happy to support our less fortunate with my contribution, because I see the face of God in them.

***"I have come to realize that the only people I need in my life are the ones who need me in theirs even when I have nothing else to offer but myself."***

We are grateful to God, Father John Peter Médaille and Mother St. John Fontbonne for our Congregation "The Little Design." We remember the years God gave us the joy of serving the poorest of the poor, and He still helps us to continue in our own small way. We count it nothing short of calling it a MIRACLE. GOD BE PRAISED!

**Sr. Therese Antraper & Sr. Celina Vatamala  
St. Joseph Province**

### **My God Experience**

Moving from spring to summer and from summer to autumn have always been gradually discerned and accepted with all its nuances, pain as part of life.

#### **Discipleship**

It became clear to me that I passed from,

- ***Essential Discipleship*** when I struggled to put order in my personality- especially my relational need and God gently lifted me up from falls, to mature love (never go ahead of grace but walk along with God) I gratefully remember the person/s who have chiseled me to grow and transcend.
- I grew in ***Mature Relationship*** with my surrender, a loving surrender to God's will. He was/is with me in all my ministry and service to the Congregation and to people. A call from God has always been to grow in humility and do all for the greater glory of God alone. God leads me in this path.
- I am entering gracefully in ***Radical Discipleship***. Pain according to me is part of life. I feel I have not suffered and endured much pain for God.
- Nature speaks to me powerfully. And nature befriends me and soothes me. I do the will of God **always** and I try to do it more and more gracefully. I grow in humility,

responsibility; I keep less and less of negative thinking and am becoming more and more relational.



**God is walking with me, leading me, owning me in a specific way.** When I look back into my life journal, I am convinced that God achieved His purpose in my life, gradually making this clay into a pot of flowers. More than anything, the freshness of His loving, gentle touch from my childhood has been calling me to be His totally. John Chapter 4 'Samaritan woman' has attracted me so much from my childhood. I understand now, that Jesus Himself has been leading me to the Truth by His directions and calling me to live the will of God in many turning points in my life. He sends persons who could strengthen me and clarify where I am; but through all this I experienced Him who loves me and this love deepens in me day by day. Whenever I ask God that I want to be nearer to Him, he tells me 'come closer to people in the periphery and I will come closer to you. This clarion call of Jesus made me sensitive to the suffering people and called me to go out of the way to reach out to them. Now after 50 years of life in ministry and 77 years of life in the world, what remains as a sweet memory to me are these faces to whom I have lent a helping hand and the sweat of life in living the will of God in service to humanity under obedience in ministry. God has given me a great capacity to walk with the youth. I find so much love and meaning in these young faces of students and staff and sisters who influence my inner life and whom I influence by my very presence.

My Congregation has given me much in my spiritual growth, especially in the Charism and Spirituality of the Congregation. God turned me away from Chemistry where I excelled and made me excel in the Congregational Charism which has become part of me and that I gave to different groups of juniors from 1987 to 2014 and to Sisters of Chambery and Annecy in India and to other Congregations. More than that, it helped me to grow deeper interiorly and discover myself in Truth.

St. Joseph Congregation was the choice of God in my vocation story. I would have studied in Holy Cross and joined there since my relatives were there. When we came to Kodaikanal to visit my mother's uncle a Jesuit, Fr. Selvanathar SJ, nearing his death, St. Joseph School was introduced. It changed my path. Mother Rose Benedicta was my vocation promoter and brought me to this congregation. In all my services I have always felt I am not able to do it but I placed all my hope in God for whom nothing is impossible and I do it with His help.

*My life has been a river of love searching for its true meaning and I found it as I ran my way, giving life to all on the way and finally when I mingled with God-self true ocean of Love, I am realizing my true self. How can I thank the Lord and the Sisters and the people for all they are to me? I will strengthen my commitment to them and live my life in happiness and joy and surrender to God and His people whom I serve.*

**Sr. Flora Mary Mangalam  
St. Joseph Province**

## **Faith Sharing**

I thank God for the grace of participating in prison ministry and taking care of the prisoners' families. I'm also grateful to Sr. Catherine NAROUZ who encouraged me to accompany her to the prison while assuring me that God would be with us. She then visited two prisons for men and I visited another for women. The large group of lay people who love to serve in this mission come from different churches. We divided into smaller groups to serve the families of prisoners in many villages and in the big city of Minia. This group especially serves Christian women and men from different Protestant or Orthodox churches. We simply focus on those who are following Jesus. In our desire to witness unity and ecumenism, we were also willing to serve the Muslims but they did not accept it and we respect them.

The last time I visited the prisoners, I had a lovely experience. I met a woman who wanted to speak with me so I listened to her attentively. She shared that she had been imprisoned because she needed money to buy a car so she could sell her vegetables. She borrowed 65,000 Egyptian pounds. The man who lent her this large sum of money was a crook so when she was unable to repay the debt, he put her in prison and took her car. Of course, she was heartbroken and experienced much suffering in prison. However, prior to her imprisonment, she had always desired to receive the Lord but could not because she was too busy working. In prison, she found peace, joy and consolation by developing a greater relationship with Jesus by reading the Bible and attending Mass for which she was most grateful.

This woman's faith truly touched me. She could feel the presence of Jesus with her during this difficult ordeal of being with other women offenders although she herself had not been guilty; I pray that the Lord may bless her and grant her peace and that her children may be protected.

**Sr. Nadia HABIB,  
Egypt**

### **LIFT: "S.W.O.R.D.!"**

A woman is God's finest and beautiful creation in the world without which any new generation is possible since she possesses God's creative energy and abilities. In our society, women's contribution to social development and progress is remarkable. In this modern age, they have shown their potential and excellence almost in all fields such as in education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, Govt. departments, science, technology, etc. Therefore women are widely recognized and appreciated for the role they play in contributing to the growth of society. Expectation that women will not be marginalized, discriminated against or absent from future successes are growing. Despite all these, even today many of our women folks are deprived of their basic necessities of life and are being considered as neglected segments of our society.

Indian women also have been excelling in every field especially in social women welfare though they are not completely supported by the Administration in their social works. This reflection brings me to my title "*LIFT-S.W.O.R.D.*" The 'S.W.O.R.D' that I mean is 'Saving Women's Opportunities, Rights and Dignity. "It is impossible for a bird to fly with only one wing;" says **Swami Vivekananda**, "it is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.

Though we are in the 21st century, women are still exploited and treated unjustly which is the shameful side of our country. After having the provision in Article 15 (3) and article 16 (2) of the Indian Constitution, women are waiting for 33% of opportunity in legislation and other employment to flourish, to break barriers and to earn a respectable position in the world, hoping for a better future for their communities, children and themselves. The **Right** to live is not merely the right to physical existence, it also includes the right to live with human dignity, with adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, facilities for reading and writing, opportunities to express ourselves in diverse forms, communicating the inner voice of women to all.

*Article 19 of the Indian Constitution* has provided six freedoms to every citizen of India. They are freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly, freedom to form association and union, freedom of movement, freedom to reside and settle and freedom of profession, occupation, trade and business. In *Vishaka v. state of Rajasthan* (AIR 1997 SC 3011) - the Supreme Court has held that the sexual harassment of workingwomen amounts to the violation of right of gender equality and right of life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution. Though the immoral traffic (prevention) Act was passed in 1956, trafficking of young girls and women has been reported every minute. A double standard is often accepted in matters of sexual conduct. Men's voices are tolerated and women's mistakes are condemned. In many places women are still merely considered as the sex objects and vessels or machines of producing children.

The women are forced into prostitution, domestic work or child labor. Illegal abortion is being done without the consent of women and kills the fetus in the mother's womb. Everyday there are incidents of rape, divorce and dowry death. Many cases have been filed in the court but miserably they are either maintained, unnoticed or pending. No verdicts are given with justice even though discrimination on the basis of sex has been specifically prohibited under the Constitution. Very recently the legislation enacted Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2005 through which protection is given not only to the wife, but also to sister, mother and daughter. But the tragedy is that women are hardly aware about this act.

Today women are not hungry for bread but hungry for love, respect and human dignity. **Dignity** is a value and a right that all people should have. Education is the best weapon to fight against injustice committed toward women. Illiteracy is the root of all exploitation, violence and oppression. So each and every woman in our society should be

educated especially on legal rights, which are necessary and important in today's age. Therefore, let us all, as women, join our hands to lift the **S.W.O.R.D** for those who are rape victims, tortured, exploited in their home or work place every day. Let our constant support and empowerment bring new ways of credibility for women to live with human dignity.

**SR. SUCHITA TIRKEY  
(Justice and Peace Commission)  
Nava Jeevan Province**

**Latin American Seminar of the Sisters of St. Joseph,  
Itú, Brazil February 2-9, 2020**

When I think of the Latin American meeting of the St. Joseph family in which I participated, automatically a smile appears on my face and an infinity of memories, sensations, faces, flavors, themes, songs, prayers, discussions, hugs, smiles, glances... come to mind. In other words, to participate in the Seminar was to 'taste' communion, to feel one with so many sisters and brothers who were there, and who, like me, felt worried and invited to be and live something greater than ourselves. Our differences, beyond separating us, united and enriched us. I discovered that life calls me, calls us to serve.

One of the themes of the Seminar was the importance of knowing our Latin American history in order to discover how it is interjected in us. We were invited to continue to make internal journeys in order to become more aware and freer, and at the same time to promote and reap more freedom in our peoples, through true prophetic signs: small daily gestures of love, hope and solidarity.



I can only express my gratitude to God and to all the people who made this meeting possible. It has left a deep imprint in my heart, which I continue to savor day after day, dreaming of Jesus, of St. Joseph, of the first Sisters and of the whole St. Joseph family, in a world where we are invited to become ONE.

**Deborah, Associate of Honduras  
Province of Mexico-Honduras-El Paso**

Dear St. Joseph Family,

I would like to share with you my experience at the Seminar of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held February 3 to 9 in Itu, Brazil.

The Seminar's title, « Dynamism and Prophecy, » had greatly motivated me as well as the chosen site, Brazil, a land with an interesting history and famous theologians, prophets, mystics, protagonists, pioneers, always open to the newness of the Ruah (the Holy Spirit). Brazilians are committed to justice, to the most disadvantaged, and to the care and protection of Creation.



Taking this into account, I can tell you that my heart was deeply touched by this event. To behold several Congregations of Sisters of St. Joseph, present in different countries, offered me great joy and hope. At the same time, this reflected the communion and the dynamism of our charism and filled me with courage and enthusiasm. It urges us to collaborate, to search anew, because our world needs us.

The prayer times and the cultural evenings were like a rich mosaic symbolizing cultural diversity and traditions imbued with popular religiosity and different names for Mary of Nazareth. They were manifestations of great faith and hope in the God of the poor and in the Mother of the Risen One.



The invitations or challenges that we received, and which have impressed me, are the following:

- to revitalize our strength and our charism,
- to prize the spirit of the St. Joseph families,



- to audaciously witness in the face of crying realities,
- to strengthen the awareness of compassion and dialogue as a reflection of our spirituality,
- to energize communities and projects with the laity.

I ask the Ruah to give us its strength to be able to respond to these invitations and challenges, committing ourselves as the St. Joseph Family and thus be bearers of Unity and Reconciliation.

With much affection,

**Adelina Zilli,  
Mexico**

**Saint-Priest Carnival – A Colorful Celebration**  
*“Believe in charity and practice solidarity.*  
*Charity connects you vertically and solidarity horizontally.*  
*So, to be connected with God; be connected with the neighbor.”*

The Carnival of Solidarity is a unique event organized yearly at Saint Priest parish. Parishioners invite lonely, isolated, handicapped or elderly people of all faiths to join us in celebration. There were almost 200 participants including volunteers of all ages and it was amazing to see how each one intermingled. All volunteers had been assigned to different tasks for the smooth running of the entire day. Beautiful decorations and table settings created a wonderful ambiance.



Various games were provided for the children who besides wearing facial make-up could dress themselves differently. Of course, the free Carnival photograph was quite the attraction that brought a smile on everyone’s face. You’ll notice that Fr. Gilles Vadon was well attired for the occasion.

A variety of delicious food donated by the parishioners provided an excellent meal. It was a fellowship agape, where everyone was replenished and felt so joyful. Music and dance entertained our guests and many of them joined in the fun. I firmly believe that such an event is an opportunity to set an example for the younger generation

- To be in solidarity with the less privileged
- To grow in inclusive love
- To be more human

**Vimala Maria  
International Community**

**With much gratitude, we remember our dear departed Sisters**

**"I shall return to take you to myself,  
so that you may be with me where I am." John 14:3**

**January - April 2020**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Date</b>
Jeannine LEVASSEUR	Mount St. Joseph, MAINE	89	18.03.2020
Monique DUBREUIL	Vernaison, FRANCE	91	23.03.2020

**Change of email** Sr. Frances RUSSELL - francesrussell [50@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:50@yahoo.co.uk)  
Sr. Heba ADEL - [Hebaadel31@yahoo.co](mailto:Hebaadel31@yahoo.co)



May this Holy Week increase our faith in the Risen Lord who walks with us and is present in every person who helps the needy.

Through our faith, we believe that he is already raising up new life for humanity and for the earth in this time of crisis.

