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GENERAL COUNCIL

May this pandemic bring out the Best in us !!!

S. Philomena Pazhuruparambil

General Council

Today I recall one of the commitments we made at the end of the 2020 Extended Council: "Be a presence of hope, openness, availability, emphasizing the positive, and unafraid

interactions are with social distancing. In my reflection these days I realize that nothing can block me from being a presence of hope, being available and unafraid to move out to the needy in many creative ways. "May this pandemic bring out the Best in us" is what I hear these days in all our conversations and in reports coming from around the world. I, personally and as community,



Srs. Sally, Ieda, Philo and Mariaelena preparing food for those in need

to take risks and to move out of our comfort zones." Then just after a month of having returned to our homes, we hear the same news from every corner of the world: "lockdown". People are told to stay at home; countries have sealed their borders. All our personal

search for ways to respond to the dread of corona virus, to people forced to sit home without any social engagements and a different schedule of work for fear of corona virus – some working remotely, others without a job and without a salary.

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In the past we have seen countries facing tragedies, epidemics and calamities, at times, one particular country or perhaps a few countries together. But never before have we faced a healthcare crisis that affected the whole world as the Coronavirus pandemic is doing now. What comforts me is to see that many people are seeking ways to make meaning of these crazy lock down days. Many across the world are seeking ways to live in solidarity. As each one tends to their own grief, they keep their hearts open in a communion of deep compassion and generous love. Because of the lockdown, many have time to look out the window and see rare birds flying around freely and joyfully chirping in a non-polluted atmosphere.

This shows that we have the ability to prevent all that destroys the wonderful creation of God and keeps our planet beautiful for all creatures. The graced season of Lent and the celebration of Easter 2020 took a different face for all people. The fact that churches and pilgrim centres of all faiths were closed led, for many, to a greater awareness of the compassionate God within each one. In the places of deepest pain, of the most intense sorrow, deepest loss, and where we cannot imagine what the future holds, we rely on the risen Christ to help us be positive and unafraid. Is not this the commitment of our 2020 Extended Council? What we experience these days

continues to bond us all, irrespective of caste, colour or creed, into an interdependent and interrelated community of love, graciously welcoming everyone as they are. The grief and the paralysis that we experience helps us to continue our mission of making this world and this church better, more just, more peaceful, more inclusive. The future we hope for, whether in personal relationships or global realities, starts with loving and building up the other. All of us together can be and are "change agents" to make this world a better place. We may not always be certain where wisdom will call us. Let us be attentive to hear it and, with courage, risk moving forward to bring out the best in each one.

The Covid-19 Pandemic

The world is confronting the Covid-19 pandemic at this time. No country has been spared. With these four short articles we give you a small idea of how different countries and the sisters there are dealing with this crisis. We also give some sense of the difficulties people are facing at this time. – the Editor

The region of Denmark and the corona pandemic

S. Gisela Heitz

Region of Denmark

Denmark was one of the first countries in Europe to react to the pandemic. As early as March 11, the shutdown of the country began. The outbreak of the pandemic and the restrictions that followed in society and church have affected all three communities in our region. Fourteen of our elderly sisters reside in the new nursing home that was built close to our former motherhouse. This is a public facility and has been closed since March 12th. For our sisters this means that they have to renounce daily Eucharist and that we can't visit them at all. Instead of visiting, we now make many telephone calls. On Palm Sunday



S. Jaya, S. Suzanne and S. Marianne outside with S. Mechtilde

we brought a “spiritual parcel” to the nursing home and met a few sisters individually outside in the courtyard, where they received the parcels to distribute to all. The most important of the content: the Eucharist. Sisters organized small meetings in different rooms and received Holy Communion. A wonderful experience. Other things: a small bundle of palm branches for each of them and a some spiritual reading for Holy Week. Further on they

found chocolates to help them be in good humor and lots of love from all of us outside. We will repeat this on Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday and try to continue as long as the pandemic lasts. The community of senior sisters and lay people is very lucky as a couple of times during the week they can have mass in their chapel, with the restriction of social distancing.

In the retreat center and its community, all retreats and other arrangements have been cancelled since the shutdown of the country. Since we must not open the church for the public, we placed palm branches outside in front of the door, so people could take them home. Many came and did this. Since we are “out of order”, we use the time to bring order into our own life and the life of our community.

Covid-19 Pandemic in India

S. Navya Neelamvilail

Province of Pachmarhi - India

According to World Health Organization COVID-19 is caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2). To stop the spread of COVID-19 in a country with the population of 1,387,297,452 people, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a 21-day lockdown of India from Wednesday, 25th March. There is chaos and hunger all over the country due to this lockdown. Stranded labourers queued up at various terminals. The people worst affected are the daily wagers and migrant workers. They now will die not of COVID-19 but of hunger. Thousands of them were forced to walk home from cities to their villages with nothing in their hands. Their homes are mostly in the neighbouring states of India hundreds of kilometres away. The Prime Minister later expressed his helplessness and apologised to the nation regarding the choice for the



lockdown. “The battle against Covid-19 is a tough one and it required such harsh decisions. It is important to keep the people of India safe,” the Prime Minister said, “Coronavirus is bent on killing people therefore entire humanity must unite and resolve to eliminate it.”

To fight against SARS-CoV-2, the Indian Railways has decided to convert non-AC coaches into isolation wards to treat COVID-19 patients. Many industrialists, business people, actors and people of good will are coming forward to help India fight this pandemic.

NEW SAINTS

Sr. Lúcia Vian	88	Brazil	19.02.2020
Sr. Anastasia Kakanatt	88	Pachmarhi	06.03.2020
Sr. Gemma Boza	99	Brazil	15.03.2020
Sr. Gema Galiotto	87	Brazil	05.04.2020
Sr. Maria Matiello	86	Brazil	08.04.2020
Sr. Frances Tighe	95	USA	16.04.2020
Sr. Ann Charlotte Watkins	100	Pachmarhi	23.04.2020

Covid-19 shines light on inequalities

S. Barbara Bozak

Province of USA

Here in Connecticut we are living in the greater New York metropolitan area, the hotspot of the Covid-19 outbreak in the United States. The virus has been slowly spreading into our area and so the entire state has been in lockdown since March 20, although many began to engage in social distancing before then. No church services, no classes in the schools, no gatherings of more than five persons.

We are among the very lucky ones, who have a secure home, food on the table, money to purchase what we need. This is not true for many Americans. Those who work in the service sector or in non-essential services: restaurants, stores other than grocery or pharmacies, those who clean homes or offices, many manufacturing companies, have lost their jobs. In good times, they live from one paycheck to the next, barely covering the cost of necessities. Now, people do not know how they will pay the rent on their apartment, how they



Empty streets of Times Square in New York City

will feed their families, how they will access needed healthcare. For many, losing their job meant losing their healthcare insurance. While schools have moved their teaching online, many families do not have internet connection or a quiet place for the children to study. Many schools gave the students their only meal of the day. Now other ways have been found to feed the children who would otherwise go hungry. In crowded apartments families are living in very tight quarters and have no place for

privacy or space for themselves. It is not surprising that domestic violence is increasing during this time of stress. This healthcare crisis has shown how poorly the United States cares for all its citizens. Too many lack healthcare coverage. Too many work in low-wage jobs with no ability to save money. Too many do not have access to the technology most of us take for granted. Hopefully, as we move from this crisis, we will respond to the needs that have had a light shone on them in these days and months.

Mumbai lockdown

S. Laveena D'Sousa

Province of Tanmaya - India

The City of Mumbai, which has never rested before, is at complete rest. Most of Mumbai's population are migrants, who landed here because in one way or another, they know the city will cater to them. Daily wagers, Auto/taxi drivers, construction workers, street vendors, and slum dwellers are the people most affected by the lockdown. A few of the construction workers left the city before the lockdown but were stranded on their way. Those who remain in the city are the ones who suffer from hunger, cramped living, inadequate sanitation, and indefinite uncertainty. Government, NGOs, institutions, youth are trying to reach out to those who are in need but it seems so little or it does not reach deserving cases.



The rising price of pulses (lentils, beans) and vegetables makes people nervous. The city residents, rich and poor alike, worry if the situation is going to get even worse from here on. Despite repeated assurance from the government, people are increasingly out on roads, to stock up on essential food items. The

shopkeepers claim that there is no proper supply of essential goods. Fr. Lancy Pinto, the Parish Priest of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Mahim, Mumbai said, "the lockdown has increased problems in families. Parents find it hard to control millennials and Gen Z." While narrating the situation in his parish he said, "most of them live in one room and a kitchen. They do not know how to spend their time. They start quarrelling with each other. My time goes listening to their stories online and counselling them."

Let us SAVE THE EARTH

S. Aradhana Beck

Province of Pachmarhi - India

“The main challenges before humankind are three – to preserve peace, to eradicate poverty and to conserve the environment. The path that the world has until now traversed in the pursuit of technological mastery has imperiled peace and the environment and failed to provide prosperity and equality for all the peoples of the world. A major change is required in our outlook and our methods.” These are words from the Brundtland Report given to the UN in 1987.

Since that time, the challenges facing the world have not greatly changed. Pope Francis’ encyclical on ecology, *Laudato Si*, published in 2015, states that climate change is real and mainly “a result of human activity”. The overwhelming majority of climate scientists agree with him, that human activity, especially the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) are responsible for most of the climate change currently being observed. With the earth’s average surface temperature having increased by more than 1.4 F (0.8°C) over the past 100 years, the scientific community has said that the consequences of continued warming are likely to be severe. The effects of high levels of greenhouse gases include rising sea levels, changing weather patterns and extreme weather, with consequences for access to water and food production, not to mention political and security risks, human health



risks and an impact on ecosystems. India is already experiencing a warming climate with an increase in the frequency of heavy rainfall. More than 60% of India’s agriculture depends on rainfall and droughts have affected more than half of India’s crop area already, and has led to a huge fall in crop production. Many parts of India are already experiencing water stress. Climate change is expected to have major health impacts in India with the poor likely to be affected most severely. Furthermore, the impact of climate change on agriculture and livelihoods will almost certainly increase the number of climate refugees. The Brundtland Report reminds us that “the earth is one but the world is not. We all depend on one

biosphere for sustaining our lives. Yet each community, each country strives for survival and prosperity with little regard for its impact on others. Some consume the Earth’s resources at a rate that would leave little for future generations.” Solving climate change is essential if we wish to protect the planet and vulnerable people. We must hear “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”. Faith can guide us, for “the entire material universe speaks of God’s love and boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains – everything is, as it were, a caress of God.” The problems are big and urgent, but hope remains if we act together in honesty and love. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home, respecting our mother earth. Let us work together for a better tomorrow.



“Be part of the Solution, not part of the Pollution”

S. Gloria Clarence

Province of Tanmaya - India

“There’s one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent threat of a changing climate” Barak Obama. St. Joseph’s Convent Nursery School, Ratlam, celebrated its Annual Day focusing on two themes: “Phulwari” (Flower Garden) and “Deraming for a better Me and We.” After the lighting of the traditional lamp, the theme which encapsulated a multitude of ideas and concepts, unfolded in a magnificent medley of colourful display. The Tiny Tots, through their presentation, made the audience aware of the burning issue of “Climate change.” Harm done to the environment results in harm done to all living creatures, including us, human beings. There was a time when humans thought they could selfishly draw on exhaustible resources. We now know that the world is not a commodity. To exhibit these ideas the little ones presented a skit on “Save the Environment” and “Say ‘No’ to plastic”.

Since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health, the students depicted the story of a tree, home to birds, being cut, leaving the birds homeless. In later years, a seed is planted, and grows into a tree, bringing immense joy to the birds. The message was beautifully communicated by the Anchors and Tiny Tots of the Nursery. We need to save the environment by planting more trees, thus making the planet greener and healthier for present and future



generations. Another social issue, saying “No” to plastic, was highlighted through dance. Chemicals added to plastics are absorbed by human bodies, and often ingested by marine animals. Plastic buried deep in landfills can leach harmful chemicals into groundwater. Around 4 percent of the world’s oil production is used as a feedstock to make plastics, and a similar amount is consumed as energy in the process. The problem of plastics extends beyond

the human body. More than one-third of all plastic is disposable packaging like bottles and bags, many of which end up littering the environment. A strategy known as green chemistry speaks to reducing the use of these chemicals, developing safer alternatives. Much awareness is sorely needed. “Let us be part of the solution, not part of the pollution.” Thus, our little ones provided to our audience a solution for climate change.



Dynamism And Prophecy

VII Seminar of the Congregations of Saint Joseph in Latin America and the Caribbean

S. Nilva Rosin

Brazil

From February 3 to 9, 2020, in Itu - São Paulo, Brazil, the 7th Seminar of the Congregations of St. Joseph in Latin America and the Caribbean (CSJ) took place. A unique experience that brought together one hundred and two people from fifteen congregations, from eleven countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, United States, France, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and Puerto Rico. The seminar is held every five years and this 7th edition was attended by Sisters, CSJ associates, leaders and collaborators, who reflected on the theme: Dynamism and Prophecy of the Congregations of St. Joseph in Latin America and the Caribbean.

It was an opportune moment to revive our prophetic dynamism from the Latin American and Caribbean context. Active participation made it possible to share dreams, experiences, knowledge, reflection and action, to present the wealth and diversity of projects, as well as challenges in light of the historical moment we are going through, in order to reach a stronger and more hopeful interaction, among the family of the Congregations of Saint Joseph in Latin America and the Caribbean. The integration of associate members in the seminar has become a driving force in our mission and in actualizing the congregational charism. It challenges us to think creatively to continue to live the gospel and our charism in the present scenario, reflecting unity in a prophetic and dynamic context.

The theme of dynamism and prophecy puts us in the dynamic of perceiving the changes that continental realities demand. Initially, we had an analysis of



Group together in prayer

the Latin American situation and reality, with Dr. Fernando Altemeyer, who helped us to look at our reality of colonialism, dictatorships and globalization. These are great challenges for our action because they are linked to the present phenomena of urbanization, migration, aging and ecology. Following that, theologian Ivone Gebara invited us to reflect on prophecy today in the Latin American context. She characterized the current historical moment as a period of the complexity of human knowledge, which is not always recognized, especially in the religious world. Latin America is experiencing a critical period of cultural, political and religious insecurity. We need to live a new type of relationship and understand humanity in the diversity that characterizes the human being. Finally, Griselda Martinez Morales (CSJ-Lyon / Mexico), addressing the theme "Prophecy and Charism of the Congregations of St. Joseph in Latin America and the Caribbean," stressed

that discernment and contemplation of the reality are essential to ensure fidelity to the mission. To revisit Le Puy is to drink from the source and that's what our Sisters and associates want to do from 2020 forward, because this is the place from where all must take their stand, so that a faithful commitment to the original mission will emerge, from the least to the greatest. The vital force is total unity with God and what surrounds us. We have lived in deep union with that vital force since 1650, with eyes open to the reality and the utopia that we want to achieve.

It is necessary to open our hearts to prophetic dynamism in order to respond to the current and real needs of our people. The present moment demands that, in the light of the evangelical option for the poor and our charism of communion, we deepen our understanding of reality, so that we can commit ourselves even more consistently and decisively to LIFE.

A new way of being a formator

S. Harshita Joseph
Nirmala Province - India

S. Promila Guria
Nagpur Province - India

Having attended a nine-month course on Animation for Formators at Institute Mater Dei, in Goa, was very enriching. Mater Dei is a unique and prestigious institution, a cradle for theological knowledge and holistic formation for thousands of women religious across the world. Among the thirty-two topics presented, 'A New Way of Being a Formator' was, perhaps, the most valuable. In simple practical ways, we came to understand what is the role of a Formator today. We came to understand two ways persons approach life, both of which have an impact on the process of formation: External Control Psychology (ECP) and Choice Theory (CT). External Control Psychology places all power and control in the hands of the one in authority, taking away the

freedom from those under them. By compelling, using punishment and reward to control, it violates human freedom and thus destroys relationships. It is grounded in punishment and power over the other. Choice Theory, on the other hand, focuses on consequences and not punishment. Emphasizing the importance of relationships, it offers the freedom to see and hear, to say what one thinks and feels, to ask what the other wants, and to take a risk on their behalf.

With its negative impact on people, External Control Psychology would be used by a boss manager who dominates, forces, blames, threatens and punishes. Hence, there is a need to shift from boss management to lead management, with its central message 'we care about you,' with importance place on relationships. What is required for today's formation is Lead management, with the formator leading the formee with an equal amount of respect, trust, cooperation, openness, and honesty to create a better atmosphere as well as build up quality vocations.

This topic was further enhanced by learning the importance of giving our attention to five areas of life; environment, capabilities and skills, values and beliefs, identity and mission / purpose / goal. Problems can arise at any level. When External Control is used to solve the problems, the formator may use her power to control the formee.

In a 'New Way of Being Formator,' we considered Jesus carrying His 'Heart' into formation and transforming twelve ordinary and unlikely men into leaders. He formed them as a team, saw them as God's gifts and gave them a vision larger than themselves: 'I will make you fishers of men.' Jesus believed in them, treated them as equals, held them accountable, prayed for them and with them. He acknowledged them in public and in private, served them and loved them to the end. This is what the formator is called to do.

We cherish and treasure this unique experience as we move forward to bring hope to the world of formation, pledging ourselves to be beacons of hope in the life of others.



Mater Dei future formators including Srs. Harshita and Promila listening to a lecture

Postulants experience Mission

S. Jaya Nampally

Province of Nagpur - India

Keeping in mind the theme of our Extended Council – Incarnating love with joy, on 10th Feb 2020, S. Jaya Nampally, S. Sushimita and the 11 postulants of Nagpur Province, India, embarked on a 20-day missionary journey to Kotba, Chhattisgarh, in the Central part of India, where modern technology has not yet touched the lives of the villagers. In groups of three, they visited all the homes in four villages, to incarnate love with joy. The villages were far from Kotba community and every village was composed of just a few families. The task given them by the parish priest was to teach the faith, build the spiritual life of the people and encourage them to participate in the church and Sunday liturgies. He prepared the people much before the arrival of the sisters, to open their hearts and homes to receive them. With a deep sense of simplicity and generosity, the people welcomed the group wholeheartedly and graciously accepted them as family. On the first day, as they went to visit the families in their homes, they hardly found anyone in the house. Discouraged and disappointed by finding so few at home, they went in search of the villagers and found them in the fields grazing their cattle. As the Sisters taught them simple prayers, beginning with the Sign of the Cross, they marveled at the people's simplicity, receptivity and openness to learn the basic prayers, whatever their age. It was amazing to see even the people who do not share the Catholic faith actively taking part in prayers and devotional hymns. The enthusiasm, keen interest and eagerness of our little sisters gave them great hope and courage to go forward with their missionary activity. The people slowly started to attend services and prayers in the church. Though many had been baptized, they did not take part in liturgical celebrations and church activities. Although the people were not able to articulate their faith in theological terms it was clear that



S. Swhency & S. Balkumari teaching scriptural action

deep within they have tremendous faith and are in touch with God. The humble faith and sincerity of these people was something to admire. Some of them, in fact, called the sisters for extra classes to prepare for the sacraments they would receive. The groups interacted with the people, had meals together, taught them prayers and prepared them to receive the sacrament of baptism, reconciliation, holy communion, matrimony. The sisters were part of their traditional celebration like Chatti (ceremony of welcoming a person into society). 25th Feb was a grace-filled day for the people as well as for the sisters. Many, adults and children alike, received the sacrament of baptism - 34 in all; 18 the Sacrament of Reconciliation; 7 couples' marriages

were blessed; 18 faithful received Holy Communion. At the end of each day's teaching, some were able to lead prayers and conduct the Rosary, while others found it difficult to learn the prayers. Yet nothing kept them from the love of God.

After reaching the destination, it was an exciting experience to prepare and to taste food of various types. The interculturality of the group was visible and marvelous. The group returned every day with peanuts, tomatoes, pulses and vegetables, plucked from the fields. The sisters of Kotba community joined the sisters in visiting the families. These sisters will always treasure in their hearts the experiences they have had with the villagers and of their mission.



Postulants – Nagpur Province

Staying hopeful in the midst of COVID-19

S. Sumera

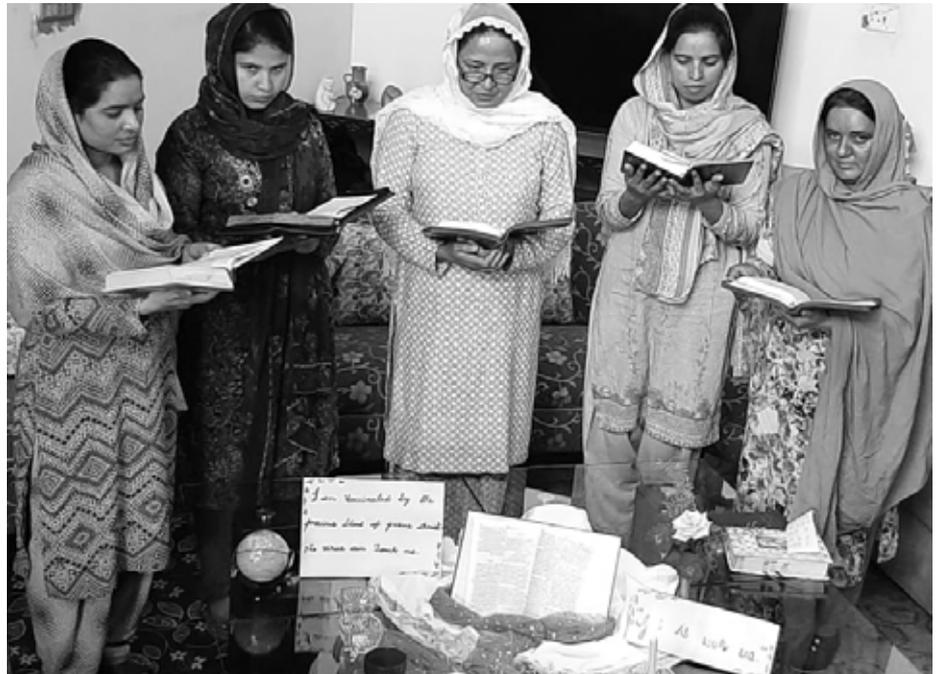
Pakistan

I am hopeful as I put my pen down to write about the current pandemic. Today there are 197 countries in the world. Among them, 167 countries have been affected in a few months by the COVID-19 killer virus which has spread all around the world, sending billions of people into lockdown.

Since March 15, Pakistan is observing lockdown. Though life in isolation is difficult, it is the only way to save lives. People of various beliefs and religions are united, praying for God's mercy, compassion, and healing.

In union with the Holy Father, Pope Francis, on March 25, a Day of Silence was observed by the church in Pakistan. Adoration, reading of the Word of God, and contemplating the poem 'Lockdown' written by Richard Hendrick, OFM, helped us to look forward with hope.

On the same day at 4.00 pm, we prayed together the Our Father, expressing our oneness with the whole creation being a sacred portion of the universe. God is our creator and protector and not a



S. Sumera, S. Flonia, S. Shakila, postulant Sumera and S. Kiran gathered in prayer

judge. Our God is compassionate. Having created the world with love, God will not destroy it. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Therefore, we should be hopeful that through Him, with Him, and in Him, we can joyfully fight against the Killer COVID – 19.

Each day we pray together and this gives us hope – the assurance that everything is going to okay in the end. It is seeing that there is light despite all the darkness. Being hopeful is all that is required at this juncture.

We know it is essential to look for meaning in the most challenging moments and find the optimistic viewpoint in a negative situation. We also are aware that everything that happens brings a lesson to be learned. In this crisis we are more aware of the fact that we are one and living in a globalized world. Each one of us needs to look not at corona but at karma (our actions), our failures in caring for the earth and our neighbor. Let us arise and care for our common home.

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