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Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry

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GENERAL COUNCIL

SUMMARY

GREETINGS FROM THE 'NEW' GENERAL COUNCIL!



S. Dolores Lahr

General Council



Sisters Elisa, Dolores, Celine and Cristina gathered in prayer with 'Joseph on the journey'

GENERAL COUNCIL

Greetings from the 'new' General Council!

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Sister Elisa (Brazil) arrived on February 16, and Sister Celine (India) on February 17, as they were required to quarantine for a few days. Sister Dolores arrived on February 22, and Sister Cristina moved in the same day. After a day of some unpacking and rest, we began our transition meetings with Sisters Sally, Ieda, Philo and Mariaelena. Ieda joined us via Zoom, and Sister Preeti via Zoom from India assisted us with translation.

We are grateful to Sally, Ieda, Philo and Mariaelena for their years of service in our Congregation, and for the days spent with us as we reviewed material on various subjects.

We are also grateful for the many messages of support and promises of prayer as we begin our ministry of leadership.

We opened our first meeting with Joseph on the Journey, with a prayer of hope for our future together with our sisters, associates and lay collaborators. Recognizing our path will not always be



Sisters Cristina, Elisa, Dolores and Celine gathered around the whiteboard.

smooth, there were a few stones scattered around the statue of Saint Joseph.

We have spent time speaking of how we will organize ourselves as General Council, but also as a local community, committed to living as an intercultural community. As of yet, we do not share a common language, but as we meet, we try and use English, Italian and Portuguese. The whiteboard is not only a space for us to organize our meetings but has also

become a language learning space for us.

We have begun reviewing the Final Document in earnest and look forward to your insights and plans for implementation as we move into our future together with calls to be Communities Immersed in the Spirit, Living Interculturality and Protecting All of Creation.

We pray for each of you, our Sisters, Associates and Lay Collaborators as we begin our journey united in the great love of God.

NEW SAINTS

S. Germaine Lenoir	98	France	19.02.2022
S. Maria Teresa Galliano	93	Italy	02.03.2022
S. Beatrice Madathiparambil	89	Pachmarhi	05.03.2022
S. Teresinha Muraro	79	Brasil	11.03.2022
S. Lucina Fachin	85	Brasil	14.03.2022

MISSION IN MANUGURU



S. Prabha Toppo

Nagpur Province, India

We, sisters of the Nagpur province, are involved in the social and pastoral apostolates of the diocese of Khammam in Manuguru mission. The mission work in Manuguru began in 2007 and we are fully involved in the mission work here. Our pastoral activities consist of family visits, helping to organize village Masses, preparing the children for various sacraments, etc. We have a centre in which we teach poor women how to be self-employed, giving them tailoring skills. We are fully involved in the social work of the Diocese of Khammam through various projects including activities for malnourished children, women's empowerment through self-help groups, education of dropouts and providing nourishment for the people affected by AIDS. We also help women with



S. Prabha (in the simple sari, to the left) with people of the village

family difficulties through counselling. We assist poor students with individual tutoring and organize free health camps for the poorest of the poor. In order to help the poor villagers have the resources to sustain themselves, we gave them

goats and chickens and organized a community farming project. We have also worked to establish community farming in the villages.

The situation in Regghalla Village is very pathetic. In this village people live in

hidden interior jungles, with each family having a small shed for themselves. People there do not know Telugu, the language of the state, nor Hindi, so it was very difficult for us to understand them and their language. There is no school in the village. The children go to the neighbouring village of Anganwadi. It is our challenge as social workers to bring proper education and social awareness to the people of these interior villages. We also do our best to find funding to assist them, with the help of the diocese and other NGOs, like the State Bank of India, so we are able to provide them with basic needs such as blankets and bed sheets.

We have opened self-help groups for the women



of this village, because it is the women who bring change for the family and society. In this way we are helping them achieve self-sustainability. We visit them often, help them with financial support and teach them moral values. Although they are basically a nomadic people, some are engaged in agriculture and some are

day labourers.

We, the group of social workers, are directly involved in many different activities, all directed toward uplifting the poor and marginalized people of various villages. These activities help us to get involved with the women, children and youth and help them to grow into better human persons.

EQUALITY AND EQUIVALENCE IN NORWAY



Helga Haass-Männle, Associate

Norway

One of the most important values in Norwegian society is equality between people. This

is based on the belief that all people have equal value, regardless of gender, age, level of functioning, cultural

background, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. Society works to give everyone equal opportunities, considering

their preconditions. Examples of this are the schools offering education to pupils with various disabilities, the offer of Norwegian language learning to immigrants and the principle of equal pay for equal work.

In the 1970s, attention to women's rights in society grew as did their opportunities in education and in working life in general. Women's participation in the workforce has increased profoundly since then and today almost as many women as men are employed. There are still typical female and male professions, and many more women than men work part-time. Although an equal number of women and men have completed higher education today, many women choose traditionally "female" professions. Women are more often educated in care and teaching, men in technology and science. Although women now make up almost half the workforce, two out of three leaders in work situations are men.

In recent decades, we have experienced a change in attitudes toward the tasks and place of men and women both in the public sector and in the home and family. In most families today, especially younger families, it is common that both share work at home, but according to a survey, women still spend more time on housework than men. We find the idea of equality and equivalence in laws and rights and everyone who lives in



Norway must follow these rules.

So where can we start JPIC work for the equality of women in Norway? For sisters and associates, a natural starting point could be the Catholic Church, especially now, in the time of the Synodal process which Pope Francis launched in October last year.

In a recent article in the newspaper *LaCroix*, Andrea Dean, member of Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) wrote, with reference to the Synodal process and women rights: "Pope Francis stated in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, it is not acceptable that some have fewer rights by virtue of being women. The Catholic Catechism claims that 'Man and Woman... have the same dignity and are of equal value'".

At the same time,

however, women are described as 'complementary' rather than 'equal'. As theologian Catherine Lacugna explained in 1992, the "theology of complementarity extrapolates from bodily differences an inbuilt dissimilarity in roles" claiming women's role is private and domestic, with man's role as public, given to leadership and headship.

In the current structure of our church, all roles assigned to women are subject to the authority of men. To address this inequality, the Catholic Church must, according to Andrea Dean, redefine its theology of the human person, use gender-inclusive language, expand the language used for God and maximize its use of alternative decision-making structures.

PEACE NOT WAR



S. Navya Neelam CSJ

Province of Pachmarhi - India

For the first time in my life, I am deeply disturbed by a war, even though the world has witnessed many wars over the past centuries. The present war between Russia and Ukraine bothers me because we live in a time where the world upholds values of fraternity, equality, justice, and freedom for all people. No one is to be a slave to another in any sense.

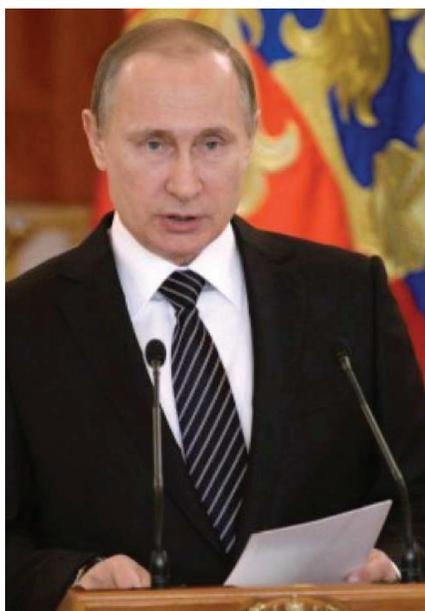
All the news channels are full of news about the war. Many debates and discussions are *LIVE* on these channels. What I am concerned about, and I see the whole world is concerned about it, is the plight of millions of people from Ukraine who have become refugees in a fortnight. They fled their home in fear of death. They left behind everything; many left the male members of their families to fight the war in Ukraine.

I begin to question my

own existence and my beliefs when I see the Ukrainians fleeing for their life. Yes, the world has seen many wars. During World War II, there were more than 6 million refugees. But this war

million Ukrainians fleeing their country within two weeks". (*Aljazeera* March 10, 2022)

The leaders of the world cannot simply close their eyes to the suffering of innocent



between Russia and Ukraine "has triggered Europe's biggest refugee crisis in decades, with more than 2

people. Nor can they join the fight, because violence breeds violence and it will lead to a third world war. Many

countries have taken bold steps, with sanctions against Russia to stop the war. According to *Investopedia*, as of March 10, nearly 330 companies have withdrawn from Russia.

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin is demanding what he thinks is Russia's right, claiming that the Ukraine is, historically, part of Russia. The Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is trying to protect his country's independence and autonomy. In this process what appears to be overlooked is the life of millions of innocent people. Soldiers are dying on both sides and many innocent people are suffering, dying, and being displaced. "War does not determine who is right... only who are left homeless, shattered and destitute..."

While the European Union and many other countries and NGOs are coming forward to help



the victims of war with humanitarian aid, this response is temporary. What will be the plight of the refugees of this war is another question.

In spite of all this goodwill, the refugees are experiencing racial discrimination at the border as they try to flee. An interviewer from *Aljezeera* has called this a "schizophrenic refugee response". Alberto Neidhardt, from the European Policy Centre, said, "[It is] necessary to offer protection without discrimination to any nationality..." Especially in

the midst of war and crisis, discrimination on the basis of nationality and race is disheartening.

"Community Immersed in the Spirit, Connected to the World," is the theme of our congregation for the coming eight years. What can we do in a situation like this? Many of us joined signature campaigns to end the war. Some of us have published videos and prayers for Ukraine and Russia and joined protests against the war. Our prayers are important. The world cannot handle yet another manmade crisis.

NEW SAINTS

S. Agnes Murphy	87	USA	28.01.2022
S. Lioba Herbert	94	Norway	07.02.2022
S. Paulina Bongiorno	91	Brazil	08.02.2022
S. Ignez Maria Novello	86	Brazil	09.02.2022
S. Mary Gertrude Mampilly	85	Tanmaya	15.02.2022

THE GREAT CHALLENGE OF SOLIDARITY



S. Rosalba Scaturro

Italy

On Sunday, March 6, with only two days' notice, the Provincial Council decided to convoke a meeting for the communities in Italy to understand if and how it might be possible to avoid "looking out our window" and contribute to the building of peace, responding to the new emergencies born of the conflict in Ukraine. The response of the sisters was powerful: all the communities participated and did so actively, involving themselves with complete availability for whatever the council would ask of them, to respond to the needs of brothers and sisters who have been risking their lives since February 24.

"It was a moment of sharing as a family. Often, when we face difficulties together, it strengthens our bonds and makes us grow in our common response to do our best for the greater good of all," said Sr. Clementina Copia, the provincial superior.

We were not yet out



Ukrainian children with the Sisters of the Pinerolo community

of the Covid-19 pandemic and another great challenge appears on our doorstep. None of us had thought we would see so close at hand the great scourge of war and the flight of refugees in Europe. These events seemed like past history, but unfortunately this is not the case. "We all feel the seriousness of this time and how life is being threatened where it is most fragile. Once

again, we are called to stand with the most disadvantaged and the weakest", continued Sr. Clementina.

A few days after the virtual meeting, the council decided to send a reminder to the province about what had been said and move toward concrete action. In her letter to the province Sr. Clementina said: "The purpose of this letter is to quickly gather the feedback

from the communities on the proposals of our Zoom meeting, so that we can decide together how to respond to the great challenge of solidarity with the victims of this conflict”.

Among the proposals

to be discerned we note: the possible formation of a Provincial Fund for emergencies; the mapping of spaces available in our communities to dedicate to receiving others; becoming well informed without being

satisfied with television news; boycotting or reducing the use of gas coming from Russia, in protest. While waiting to receive all the feedback, the sisters of the Pinerolo community welcomed ten Ukrainian girls.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – A UNIVERSAL PROBLEM



S. Barbara Bozak

USA

In the context of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, March 14-25, 2022, held in hybrid format this year, both at the United Nations in New York and on line, the President of the General Assembly hosted a special event: Ending violence against women in politics. He stated that such violence is deeply rooted in culture, in bias and stereotypes concerning women’s place in society as subordinate to men. The director of UN Women said that 85% of women in politics have experienced violence, from hate speech to threats against their life. Such violence has



The group gathered for the event “Ending violence against women in politics” (UN Photo/Manuel Elías)

the effect of silencing the voice of women, undermining their participation in society. Women who are in politics are often harassed on social media, with comments on their appearance, their sexuality and their fitness for the job, issues that are never directed to men. Many of the representatives of countries across the globe who spoke were clear that society needs to address the patriarchal system which is at the root of what is happening due to its unequal power structure. Change is needed.

The event at the UN had a specific focus but is part of the broader issue of violence against women. The reality is that women suffer violence in many ways: physical, psychological and sexual.

The plight of Ukraine women, refugees from the violence of war in their country also face gender-based violence. Women have taken their children and left their home, their city, their country, arriving in a place totally unfamiliar to them. When someone approaches them to offer shelter, they may accept what appears to be an offer of simple hospitality, yet in doing so can find themselves trapped and facing physical or sexual violence. An offer of shelter in exchange for the woman doing housekeeping or caring for children may be a way to enslave her, taking her freedom and subjecting her to physical and/or psychological violence. These vulnerable refugees can too easily fall



Executive Director of UN- Women (UN Photo/Manuel Elías)

into situation that makes their suffering worse.

The climate crisis, with the resultant drought, flooding and destructive storms, often places women in very vulnerable situations. In many countries, when they cannot access water locally, women and girls walk great distances to seek this basic necessity, exposing themselves to harassment, threats of physical violence or worse. One panelist in a UN event spoke of “sexploitation” where women are forced to give sexual favors to men as “payment” for the water which should be rightfully theirs. Statistics prove that violence against women, including human trafficking, increases threefold following climate crises: a cyclone in Vanuatu, hurricane Katrina in the USA, typhoons in the Philippines.

In preparing a report for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights a small group of NGOs

has been doing research on the topic of domestic violence in Brazil. While the findings can be shocking, the reality is that the same situation exists in every country throughout the world. Women continue to face intimate partner violence which includes control of their activity, beatings, threats to themselves and their children and even death. The lockdown imposed by governments to control Covid-19 led to an increase in violence against women.

Everyone is called upon to become aware of the situation in their local setting as a first step to addressing this pandemic of gender-based violence. We must find ways to creatively change the culture which accepts this violence as normal, to be expected. And we must have more women in positions of power and at the table of decision-making groups. Together, women and men, we can effect change!

TOWARDS THE SYNOD OF SYNODALITY 2023



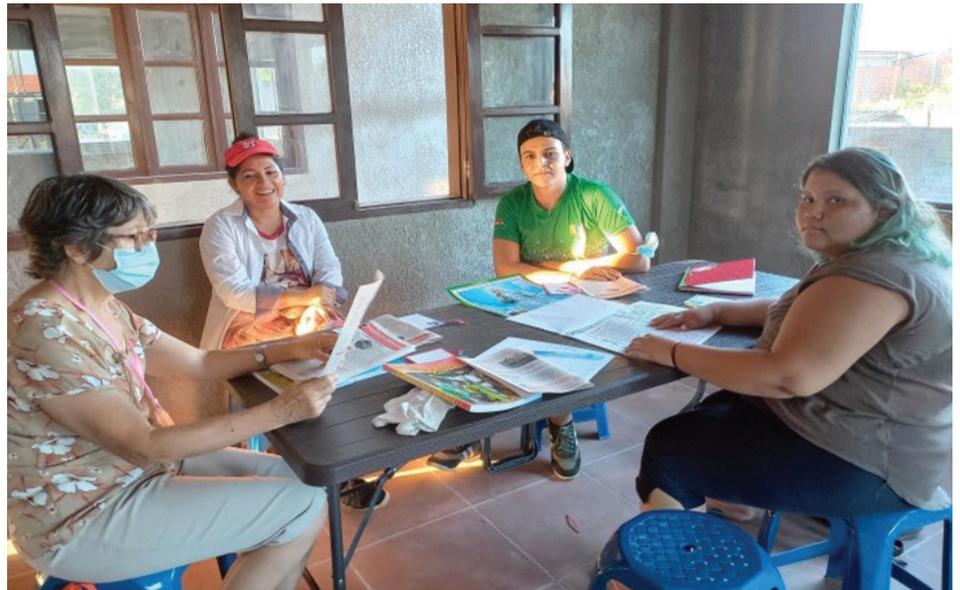
María Lidia Pereira

Bolivia

“**T**ravellers have no path, they make a path by walking.”

We began this new year 2022 as a region and part of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry, called to live what the Spirit prompted during our 2021 General Chapter, animated by the theme “Immersed in the Spirit, connected with the world” in a complex time because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. In the midst of the many global, national, and local situations that challenge, concern and distress us, we have to make life the focus and mission of each one of us, of each community, and do it with love, mercy, hope and responsibility in every moment, overcoming all obstacles. This is our challenge.

We are also called to participate in the process of listening and discernment and



Sr. Antonia Mandro in an inter-congregational meeting on synodality

the experience of the Synod on Synodality, being called to journey with the people of Bolivia in their different contexts and realities where we are inserted as community, church, consecrated life.

In the spaces of encounter, exploration and reflection, consecrated life is

accompanying and animating the experience in different regions of the country, through a team that gathers the voices and contributions of all. As always, many of the voices are women’s, those who highlight the lack of participation and equality between women

and men in the decisions of the church. In this powerful chauvinist clerical structure and the exclusion of laity and women, religious life has historically formed itself as an independent charismatic family and many male

congregations do not share with each other, each one defending their institutional charism. However, the synod is giving the opportunity to rebuild a synodical path . . . where each and every one is considered and valued equally

as a member of the church. We are certain that God is with us and encourages us to walk together, to share and be in solidarity with our weakest and most needy brothers and sisters, following the example of St. Joseph.

LENTEN CONVERSION AND THE FRATERNITY CAMPAIGN



Religious Education Team –
St. Joseph School, Pelotas

Brazil

Lent, in the liturgical calendar, is the forty-day period that precedes and prepares for Easter. During this time, which begins on Ash Wednesday, the Church invites us to follow a path of conversion. In Brazil, through the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), since the 1960's the Church has proposed an annual Fraternity Campaign, presenting us with a different theme each year to guide our Lenten reflections. This year 2022, as in 1982 and 1998, the theme is Fraternity and Education and the motto is

“Speak with wisdom, teach with love” (Prov. 31:26). Throughout the Lenten journey, in which conversion becomes the primary goal, we receive an invitation to seek the motivation for our choices in all actions and, of course, in those that more directly concern the world of education.

In fact, as this year's Basic Text tells us, “the educational situation challenges us and demands a profound conversion from everyone. It demands a true change of mind-set, reorientation of life, awareness of attitudes,

and a search for the path that promotes holistic personal development and formation for fraternal life and citizenship. We are invited to look at the reality of education in different spheres in order to enlighten them with the Word of God”.

In this sense, the biblical text that explains and guides the Fraternity Campaign in 2022 is Jn 8: 1-11. It is the episode in which the scribes and Pharisees bring to Jesus a woman caught in the act of adultery and ask him to make a statement about the Mosaic Law that stipulates, as a

penalty, death by stoning. This Gospel passage shows the pedagogy of Jesus, his way of teaching and educating: He listens attentively to the issue brought to him by the people, writes on the ground (just as teachers write on the blackboard) and does not offer a ready-made answer, as students want, but questions their criteria of truth, making them, by themselves, conclude that their principles and values are mistaken.

In this way, as the same Basic Text emphasizes, “in the story of the adulterous woman, two different pedagogies, two different ways of educating, are opposed: those who limit themselves to what is written, without taking into account the person and his/her circumstances, and those who look at the person with wisdom and love, as did Jesus. What is written is important, but the way of reading what is written is decisive to advance on the path of life.”

As a Lenten exercise of conversion, the Fraternity Campaign urges us to follow the examples and teachings of the Master Jesus. This



Sr. Marilene speaking with students about the campaign

year, particularly, the theme is directed to educators and to all those who, in some way, work in the teaching profession. We need to let ourselves be moulded by Jesus’ teachings. We need to be teachers who, in the classroom, transmit

Christian values and, thus, make our teaching and acting Christocentric. In short, it is essential that we convert ourselves more and more and, as educators, we conform ourselves to our supreme pedagogical model: Professor Jesus Christ.

CORRECTION – In the last issue (Nov. 2021-Jan. 2022) of the CSJournal the author of the article from Ireland was incorrect. That article was written by S. Eileen Silke and not S. Joan Margaret Kelly. Apologies to S. Eileen.

MISSIONARY CONSECRATION IN BRAZIL



S. Rosalba Scaturro

Italy

On Sunday, January 9, 2022, the community of Joaquim Gomes in the state of Alagoas, Brazil, experienced a moment of deep prayer and joy, celebrating Valdir and Maria Cicera's renewal of their consecration. Curious about this choice that they have been making for 5 years now, I had a conversation with Valdir.

Tell us briefly about Valdir and how he met the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Valdir Paulino is a missionary, catechist, Eucharistic Minister and coordinator of social projects for children and adolescents run by the Madre Esperança Association. He is 43 years old, was born in Maceió and lives with his mother and sister in the city of Joaquim Gomes, at Alagoas, in the Northeast of Brazil.

When he was about 13 years old, he moved to Joaquim Gomes with his



Valdir Paulino signing his missionary consecration

family to the same street where the Sisters of St. Joseph had a community. Like many children of that time, he began to participate in the educational activities at the community centre thus coming to know the Sisters of St. Joseph. As the years

went by he became part of the group of animators and he now coordinates the projects "Construindo o Futuro" (Building the future) and "Fazendo a Liberdade" (Creating freedom).

What were your desires when you "discovered" your

vocation? Why did you choose lay consecration?

My great mission is attentive listening, trying to meet those that no one else cares for. My day-to-day life is spent visiting families and accompanying children and youth. Through my consecration, I desire to build, together with other missionaries, animators and others, a more just and fraternal world and promote life in the society. I wanted very much to be a priest when I was an adolescent and even took part in several vocation meetings in Maceió. But with knowing and being accompanied by many sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, I

desired greatly to deepen my understanding of the history and charism of the sisters. The Little Design of Fr. Medaille was a great inspiration for me. I immediately felt the passion in how the sisters carried out their mission and their happiness in working with those who were suffering the most. This helped me understand that my true vocation was lay consecration.

You are a consecrated missionary of the Little Design. How do you live the Charism? What do you do?

I always try to be in communion with the sisters and together with them live moments of spirituality, prayer and mission which

daily reinforces the experience and the personal and communitarian moments that help me to believe and understand more each day the vocation to which I have been called. I accompany the group of animators of our Projects, the children, teenagers and youth, and families in some communities of the city.

What dreams do you have for the future?

I dream of strengthening the lay vocation and that of consecration. Together we can offer our collaboration and live the same charism, sharing the same mission and experience and serving the Gospel with joy and the example of Fr. Medaille.

PAKISTAN REGION CELEBRATES WOMEN'S DAY



S. Sumeira Joseph

Pakistan

On March 8, International Women's Day, the Sisters of St. Joseph in the Pakistan region celebrated the day

with a group of women. The aim of the meeting was to help the women to realize that they are empowered women and they can uplift

and inspire other women to be empowered. The theme "Gender Equality for a Sustainable Tomorrow" was the focus for the day's

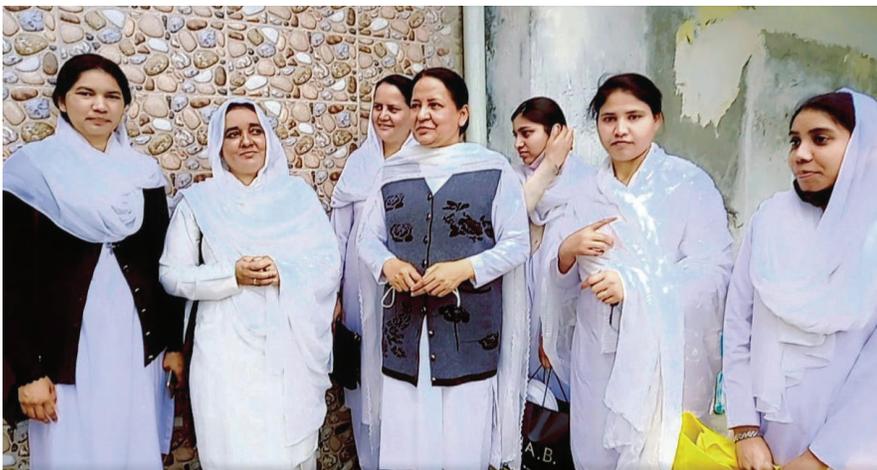
activities.

We are invited to “create a world free of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination; an inclusive, diverse, and equitable world; a world where differences are valued and celebrated. Together, we can promote equality for women and break down the wall of prejudice.” (Prayer for International Women’s Day - JPIC)

The main problems faced by women in Pakistan are: domestic violence; honour



S. Shakila giving a bible to a young woman



S. Naina, Kiran, Abida, Shakila, Kanwal, Flonia and Mehwish

killing; male domination and discrimination; various forms of harassment and sexual abuse. Women are not safe in their own homes.

International Women’s Day 2022 challenges us to fight for women’s rights. It calls us to defend the dignity of women and girls in our care, young and old. The top priority is to teach women to hold their heads high and act with dignity while dealing with men, the complementary gender, and be the voice of the voiceless.

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