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# CS JOURNAL

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry

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## GENERAL COUNCIL

## SUMMARY

### CONSECRATED LIFE - A CALL TO BE LIKE JESUS

**Sr. Celine Kalathoor**

*General Council*



**T**he Word 'Consecrated' means "to be set apart." Therefore, Consecrated persons are called, consecrated and set apart to love and live for God and for God's people. It is a call to encounter Jesus

and be transformed into his likeness, to carry on the mission of Jesus, to announce that all are loved. Pope Benedict XVI has said it rightly, "We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us

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is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. Open your heart wide to God, let yourself be surprised by Christ.”

“As Sisters of St. Joseph, the same call to follow Jesus Christ and share his mission brings us together in community.” (Const: p. 6) Our call is a call to follow, to identify and to bring the person of Jesus Christ and his mission to the forefront. Religious life becomes meaningful and makes sense only when the focus and centre of life become Jesus. In this context it is relevant to note what Pope

Benedict said about happiness. “The happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to taste, has a name, a face: that of Jesus of Nazareth. Only He can give fullness of life to humanity.”

Prayer is an indispensable part of a consecrated person’s life. Referring to prayer our Constitution reminds us “Our vocation as Sisters of St. Joseph requires intimacy with the Lord, a continual seeking for the presence of God who is the heart of our call to mission. Such intimacy is created and

fostered by a life of prayer.” Prayer is a time to encounter God who has called me and renew and relive the call anew.

It is important and necessary to stop from time to time to have an honest and sincere look into oneself and to ask: are all the activities, apostolate, mission, community life, common and individual prayer helping me to be transformed into the image and likeness of Jesus for which I am called, consecrated and set apart? Do I love and value my vocation and am I grateful to God for calling me to Religious Life?

## J P I C

# LAC - JPIC MEET IN IGATPURI

**Sr. Navya Neelamvilail**

*Province of Pachmarhi - India*



**A** two day workshop for JPIC members from Lyon, Anney and Chambéry was organised on 14 and 15 January 2023 in Nirmala Province, Igatpuri, Maharashtra. Thirty-eight participants from the eight LAC Provinces of India came together to make their presence stronger as a LAC family for JPIC India.

Mrs. Brinelle D’Souza,

from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, was the resource person of the programme. She is also the West India coordinator for JCoR (Justice Coalition of Religious). She addressed three topics: Why Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation; JPIC within the Indian Context; Gender Equality and Justice and Laudato Si.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation is important in the context of a wounded world. JPIC is rooted in the mystery of Creation and the Incarnation, a God who cares and seeks the well-being of all peoples on the earth, and the earth itself.

JPIC work involves a lot of challenges in India given the current socio-political context.

A nationalism that imagines the nation as an exclusive community of Hindus - one that is barely tolerant of secularism and pluralism. India is seeing more violence against Muslims and Christians, as well as the weakening of democratic institutions and the right to freedom of speech and expression, assembly, association or union.

Brinelle presented the Church in India as an inward-looking entity that is concerned only with itself and not really involved with the public in their troubles. The church often models a minority syndrome and its orientation to justice is limited, afraid to take a prophetic stand.

The status of Indian women was discussed at length. The statistics were alarming, urge the group not to be silent about the situation of Indian women. The group felt that they need to be part of larger platforms to raise their voices as religious women for the women of the country. Gender inequality in the institutional church was also discussed in detail with examples shared from the floor.

Brinelle also laid emphasis on Laudato Si and insisted that the participants make a plan of action and adhere to the requests of Pope Francis in this encyclical. She challenged the group to come out of their set and institutionalised mind-set and ministries to join hands with wider circles of people working for justice and harmony in the country. She said, "We are called to make a larger impact on the society."

Recognizing the need to be



**Brinelle D'Souza, the resource person, engaging with the group**

part of the larger world of social communications and to be part of the larger society, S. Navya Neelamvilail, CSJ was invited to explain about social media. Navya said, "We as religious women lag behind in our online presence and we need to be on social media and other online platforms to communicate with the rest of the world who are mostly ONLINE." If we do not have an online presence we are not doing justice to our very call to religious

life and to the CSJ charism of building relationships. Navya also introduced how to use some of the apps for editing and layout since many are not proficient in this field.

A few plans of action were drawn up by the coordinators and the dates were fixed at the LAC level for six retreats on Laudato Si from 2023 to 2026. This gathering was another milestone for working together of the three congregations in India.



**S. Navya CSJ taking the session on Social Media**

## PARTICIPANTS REFLECT ON LEADERS AS LEAVEN - INDIA

**Sr. Barbara Bozak**

USA



*The Opening Gathering of the Year-long program "Leaders as Leaven - India" was held November 9-12 in Pune, India. Following is a sample of comments by participants.*

**I** applied for the Leaders as Leaven program because of a unique tool that is the 360 profile. I think it is an amazing opportunity to grow because it involves many raters whom you can choose among your friends, your boss, the people you work with. You get a lot of information, a lot of feedback about your style of leadership. It is a unique opportunity to grow. And the methodology is based not only on content but on experience and sharing experience." **Mariaelena (Chambéry - province of Italy)**



*This is the logo for Leaders as Leaven - India. We see a hand putting leaven in a bowl at the beginning of making bread. Like leaven, which grows and changes*

*the dough, all Sisters of St. Joseph are called to be leaders wherever they are, hidden and without any title, yet being the source of growth and positive change for others.*

**A**s a participant, this program initiated me to the evolution from a hierarchical to a circular transformative leader. Also the Leadership Circle Profile with the 360 experience has given me the whole picture of myself, all my strengths and the areas where I might grow. It urges

me to move from self-realization to self-transformation." **Fatima Michael (Lyon - St. Joseph province)**

**I** found that this process helped me to look at myself with a lot of ease and comfort and to know

my reactive and creative tendencies. This program would be a great help for the sisters who are willing to grow. It brings a lot of openness and acceptance of oneself and others." **Vijaya (Annecy - Bhubaneswar province)**

“Often people think leadership is the role we play or the position we hold but in reality each one of us is a leader. It doesn’t matter what position we hold or what role we play.” **Shobha (Chambéry - Pachmarhi province)**

“This program is very vibrant, innovative and life-promoting. I got a lot of inspiration to look at life positively and be open to share myself. Each sister’s life experience and sharing was very unique and sincere. It convinced me, strengthened me and challenged me.” **Rosnita (Lyon - Nava Jeevan province)**

“This was a great journey of self-realization for me. The various dimensions of

my life are being revealed to me through the 360 profile. As a participant, when I articulate my feelings to my mentor, to my friends, I begin to discover and move forward. The beauty of this program is there is a mentor accompanying you throughout the year.” **Ritika (Chambéry - Nagpur province)**

“I am very privileged to be part of this program as a participant. The 360 profile gave me a greater awareness of what I am. Now I am challenged as well as excited to make this journey with my mentor.” **Ancy (Chambéry - Nirmala province)**

“I would say this program is truly vital to the congregation because

it nurtures the leader from the right perspective.” **Lima (Annecy - Bhubaneswar province)**

“I hope that many sisters in the congregation might have the opportunity to participate in the program, not only to enter into the new competencies of leadership but also to continue on the way of following Christ as leaders. To be a leader today is very important because to be a leader is to guide the future.” **Clementina (Chambéry - province of Italy)**

“The program was very helpful to me. It helped me to know myself better and helped me to grow in my leadership qualities.” **Brindha (Chambéry - Tanmaya province)**

# NEW SAINTS

S. Luiza Andriolli	96	Brazil	14.12.2022
S. Ana Wzoreck	89	Brazil	16.12.2022
S. Anelda Sirena	79	Brazil	18.12.2022
S. Elizabeth Fonseca	99	Nagpur	21.12.2022
S. Graciosa Tondello	92	Brazil	31.12.2022
S. Bernadette Sautier	97	France	04.01.2023
S. Joseph Theophine Akkanath	83	Nirmala	14.01.2023
S. Mary Francesca DiFederico	95	USA	20.01.2023
S. Henrika Gerdes	89	Denmark	23.01.2023
S. Jacinta Madan Annamkutty	91	Nirmala	27.01.2023
S. Mary Fitzgerald	102	USA	10.02.2023
S. Elisabeth Stenzel	91	Denmark	23.02.2023
S. Marie-Madeleine Lagarde	100	France	23.02.2023

# LIVING THE DECISIONS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

**Sr. Adelide Canci**

*Brazil*



**W**e, the Sisters of St. Joseph engaged in healthcare, seek to live and witness to the charism of communion, highlighting the values of goodness, respect, and protection of life and the common good. Having returned from the 2021 General Chapter, in 2022 we, together with our partners at Nossa Senhora da Oliveira Hospital RS, Brazil, studied, reflected on, and prayed with the decisions of the General Chapter. After this study and deepening of the decisions of the 2021 General Chapter, the Sisters of St Joseph of Nossa Senhora da Oliveira Hospital, together with our collaborators at the hospital, decided to carry out an activity that would deal with the issue of Biodiversity and expand these experiences together with the community of Vacaria and the region of Campos de Cima da Serra.

On November 24, 2022, Thanksgiving Day, we organized an event in front of the Hospital with the theme “Protection of All Creation”, engaging employees and the community in various activities. At the beginning, they were invited to participate

in the planting of three olive tree seedlings, in honor of the hospital’s name: Nossa Senhora da Oliveira (Our Lady of the Olives).

After that we explained the meaning of the activities that day and the reason we were

Several local companies participated in this event and donated seedlings of flowers, fruit trees, ornamental trees, and medicinal plants (herbal teas), which were distributed to the people who visited the Hospital on that day.



doing them on Thanksgiving Day. We also tried to connect these activities with the event’s theme: “Protection of All Creation”. We also highlighted that the hospital is not only a place for curative care, but also a place to promote preventative actions and ways to care for health, nature, and all dimensions of life and the cosmos.

Some schools also visited the place where the activities were taking place. The students received information about “Protection and Care for Creation” and were challenged to practice protection and preservation of the environment in their schools and families. During the interaction, students expressed their gratitude for this information

which had been given to all who came for the program.

It was truly a day of thanksgiving and blessings with the participation of so many who came to the tent. In an atmosphere of joy and with a pleasant interchange of listening and sharing, they received information concerning

Thanksgiving Day and the "Protection of All Creation". Everyone received a gift of tree saplings and/or herbs to plant at their homes. We felt that this is one of the ways to start raising awareness about the care and promotion of life and health in a broader sense.

It was interesting to see

that many people invited their friends and families to come to the Hospital, enjoy the event and engage in activities that prioritize the care of Biodiversity.

Care for Biodiversity, with Protection of Creation, results in greater life and health, reducing the demand for curative care in hospitals.

## A CELEBRATION OF JOY AND FRIENDSHIP



**Sr. Anette Moltubakk  
&  
Sr. Gisela Heitz**



*Norway & Denmark*

**O**n January 7, 2023, sisters, associates and friends gathered in Oslo to celebrate with S. Catarina as she pronounced her first vows. Reflecting on what brought her to this day, she said: "In the retreat (before vows) I experienced God's closeness to me and light from Jesus. Jesus is my light in everyday life and in challenging times. Now the light shines in me and I want to bring this light to all people."

Before coming to Norway, when she was in Vietnam, Catarina was very involved in her parish, playing the keyboard, acting as sacristan, being a lector. She considered herself to belong to the church as many of her

friends noted. Two weeks after her first vows she returned to Vietnam for a home visit and the opportunity to celebrate her

vows with her family, friends and parish. She was accompanied by S. Lucia who represented the Oslo community for the celebration in



*Young sisters in Norway in the chapel*

Vietnam.

In her reflection on this event, S. Gisela who was there from Denmark, wrote: "The profession of vows is a great step to take. I was privileged to participate in Sr. Catarina's feast day on January 7, in Oslo. I was invited as a member of the Europe - US formation team. Coming to this as a neighboring friend from the region of Denmark with predominantly elderly sisters, it was a great joy to be immersed in a group with "younger faces". The Eucharistic celebration reflected the step Sr. Catarina



*S. Katarina and S. Gisela in the chapel*

dared to take: desiring and accepting to be a branch on the vine (John 15). To be a witness to this is like taking a step into the future.

Different nations were gathered on this occasion, both young and old, sisters and lay people, among those some of the associates of the province. Sister Catarina was radiant with joy and gratitude and this had a contagious effect. I was struck by the impact Sr. Catarina's presence made in spite of having been in Norway only for a bit more than five years. Yes, the celebration was a true experience of being blessed with joy and friendship."

## EXPLORING AND GETTING CONNECTED WITH OUR PERIPHERY

**Sr. Dibya Anjita Lakra**

*Province of Tanmaya - India*



Sometimes we think poverty is only being hungry and homeless. There is no greater poverty than being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, rejected,

and untouchable.

Approximately 60 miles from the Provincial House of Tanmaya Province, Bhopal, Central India, lies a village named Gulgaon,

where people from the Kanjar Community live. The population of this village is around 500, which is comprised of 80 families. It is a nomadic community and bears the stigma of being a

criminal tribe, involved in burglary and theft. The act of stealing, robbing, and brewing liquor is their livelihood, especially for men. Because of their nomadic lifestyle, they face irrevocable discrimination.

But one of the interesting facts is that the women of this village are gifted with the wonderful talent of making artificial flowers. Keeping in mind their plight and non-availability of wages, Sr. Dorothy Beck and others, in collaboration with the government, are focusing on the importance of education and alternate ways of earning a livelihood. In this manner new job opportunities can be introduced, reducing the habit of stealing and enabling them to live a dignified life. Sr. Dorothy and her team help them to get raw materials and try to market their artificial flowers. In addition to this, sisters have worked to bring them together and create self-help groups in collaboration with the government, which is under the aegis of the National Rural Livelihood Mission project. This mission is really very important because the people live on the periphery, outside the mainstream of productive activity.

In the beginning, it was really difficult to dialogue with the women as the entry of the sisters in the village created a kind of fear in them. They always feel inferior to others and so refuse to walk along with them. Constantly feeling rejection from others does not allow them to see possibilities for change in themselves and their community. With the sisters' continued effort, regular visits and cooperation has made it possible to dialogue



*Sr. Dorothy interacting with women*

with them. Gradually the women became friendly, started to share their struggles and the state of their life. The sisters have created relationships so the women have felt the warmth of being loved and wanted in the society. They have now understood the importance of education. Some families are ready to send their children to the boarding. Sisters have arranged a few coaching centers for them. Working with them and being with them has brought a vast difference in their lives, bonds among themselves, and acceptance of one another,

leading to more dignified and civilized lives. Earlier the men used to run away when the sisters visited the village but now they have started approaching and conversing with them.

Being with them, listening to them and working with them itself gives a kind of satisfaction. This presence has helped to make them aware of different government schemes as well as their rights. Thus our presence is helping to build a world where everyone can live freely as child of God.



*Sr. Dorothy with villagers with their finished product, artificial flowers*

# ASSOCIATES' RETREAT IN DENMARK

**Marianne Meyer, associate**

*Denmark*



In the region of Denmark, we have two groups of associates, one started in 2007 and the other in 2012. Some years ago, these groups started to have a joint weekend retreat. The retreat takes place once a year in autumn in the retreat center “Stella Matutina”. The center, which can accommodate around 20 people at a time, is healthy for body and soul, as it is located at the Baltic Sea with a beautiful view of the water and on clear days you can see our neighbour country Sweden. The heart of the center is the chapel, in which we meet for the sessions to listen, discuss, pray and share.

The sisters prepare a theme for the retreat, and this year it was “The Eucharist”. This is not an easy topic to talk about, but relevant, since the associates belong to different denominations, including the Danish Lutheran Church and the Catholic Church. In the Scandinavian countries, Catholics are a minority. Based on the biblical view in John 6, 1-13 (Jesus feeds the five thousand) and 1 Corinthians 12, 12-13.27

(unity in the Body of Christ) it is true that no matter our color, gender, nationality – we are all one in Christ.

We keep silence during these two or three days and we take time to reflect on the topic given by the sisters. One of the three introductions that especially called for attention was a quote from the German Jesuit, Alfred Delp, who was arrested and murdered by the Nazis in 1945. While starving in prison he wrote this: “Bread is important, freedom is more important, but

most important of all is ... faithful adoration.” Adoration itself can take place in many ways, because at its heart it is about the encounter between each of us and God. Put in another way, we seek the Lord anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances. For us, this means that, although we are not in prison, we need healing of our vulnerability, trapped in a Western society of acceleration which we encounter at work, in communication and education.

We gather in small groups sharing views and our personal



*Some associates during the retreat*

experience of God in our lives through the Eucharistic celebration. Each evening ends with prayer together in the chapel: quiet music and meditation relating to the theme. Especially important to mention is the loving review of the day. This is the time when we are in a loving relationship with God, a time when we seek God's face, and God looks at us. Here too, God is healing us by God's grace.



*A beautiful location by the Baltic Sea*

In a society full of noise, rushing and social media input, these days provide very relevant instructions, and the

invitation St. Ignatius left us to seek God in all things, an invitation we also experience

through the spirituality of the sisters. We joyfully look forward to next year's joint retreat.

## THE PROMISED LAND: A COLLECTIVE TRIBUTE TO OUR DEPARTED SISTERS

**Sr. Rose Marie Dubay**

*USA*



**A**braham, Isaac, and Jacob acknowledged themselves to be strangers and aliens on earth. "Those who speak thus show they are seeking a homeland, but now they desire a

better homeland, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11: 13-14,16)

Reading our CSJournals it is

observed that many dear Sisters of our International Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry have been called to God's heavenly eternal homeland. They too, like Abraham, were

called by God to leave their individual homelands to go to a promised land of Religious Life, an unknown and alien dwelling place to consider as a life-choice. Yet God's gentle urgings propelled them and with hope and trust in this unknowable and loving God, the call was accepted and answered. They persevered through years of joys and sometimes sorrows in their numerous ministries to God's people and now have reached their eternal dwelling place.

We, who are living, and after years of joy and toil, God's "promised land" comes closer on our horizon as we see our Sisters one by one being called by God. Sadness pervades our hearts as



**Mosaic of the Last Judgment in the Baptistery in Florence, Italy**

we realize they are no longer among us. But we rejoice for they are embraced by our loving God who has promised this eternal reward to all of us. Like Abraham, we live in deep hope and trust in our God who is "not ashamed to

be called our God, for he has prepared a city" for us which is more glorious and wondrous than can ever be imagined!

May our dear Sisters rest in God's loving- embrace and may our God be forever glorified!

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