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GENERAL COUNCIL

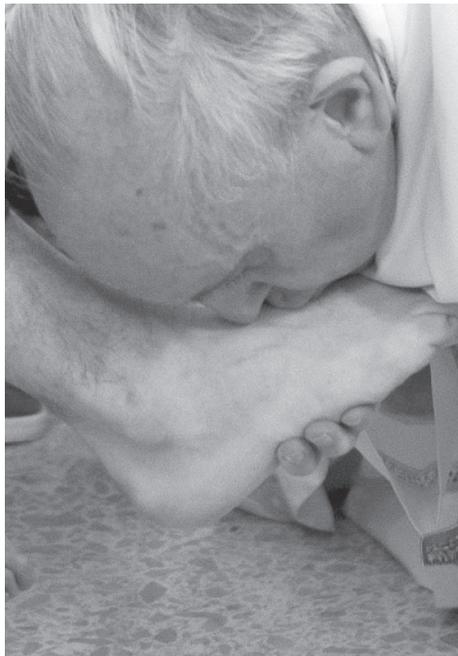
A Very Special Eucharistic Celebration!

Clementina Copia

General Council

On July 31, 2013, the feast of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Sisters Sally, Ieda Maria and I participated in something quite exceptional, a celebration of mass with the Holy Father, Pope Francis. Pope Bergoglio had expressed the desire to celebrate this anniversary with his fellow Jesuits in the Church of the Gesù in Rome, where Saint Ignatius is buried. The Jesuit Fathers took the opportunity to address an invitation to female religious congregations of Ignatian Spirituality and to their close lay associates. For the three of us, it was a truly unique and unforgettable experience.

The celebration was very simple, but at the same time, I saw a simple and humble Jesuit in the midst of his Jesuit confreres. I had to remind myself repeatedly that he was the Pope. During his homily, he told all those present of a reality that we must never forget, the centrality of Christ for all of us. To be separated from this means to be away from Christ's love, will and interest, because he is our life. Along with the centrality of Christ, he continued, there is the centrality of the Church, two



flames that cannot be separated. One cannot follow Christ unless it is in the Church and with the Church. Another point he stressed is that if we try and serve Jesus, it is because he, the Lord, sought us out before, because we were conquered by Him. To be conquered by Christ is to give this King our entire person and all our efforts. The last point mentioned by the Pope corresponds to the Gospel message, "Those who wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will save it. Whoever will be ashamed of me. . . ."

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(Luke 9:23) He pointed out the reality of shame in a whole new way. The invitation that Jesus makes, he said, is to never be ashamed of him, but to follow him always with total devotion, trusting and relying on him. Ask for the grace of shame . . . a shame that comes from the constant merciful dialogue with the Lord, a shame that makes us blush in front of Christ,

a shame that puts us in tune with the heart of Christ . . . and this brings us, he said, to live the great virtue of humility. Humility makes us aware that every day, it is not we who build the reign of God, but it is always the grace of the Lord that acts in us.

It seemed to me that I attended a Eucharistic Celebration in which Father

Médaille was vividly present and was saying: "Our dear institution must be all humility and make profession of and choose what is most humble in all things." Yes, I said to myself at the end of the celebration of the Eucharist, humility is one of the great and fundamental values that identify us as Sisters of Saint Joseph.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

If God Calls Us, Anything Can Happen...

Sr. Alice Anna Bosio

Province of Lagoa Vermelha, Brazil

**TRAVELER, THERE IS NO PATH!
STEP BY STEP, LITTLE BY
LITTLE, WE MAKE OUR WAY!**

At the beginning of my religious life in the 70's, there was a strong incentive to expand the charism to poor regions, to those in greatest need. I admired the sisters who promptly requested to go to the most challenging places of assignment, but I didn't feel ready. Then I felt a strong call from God, and with the certainty that, "If God calls us, anything can happen," I was sent to the missions in Bahia in July, 1972. Believing that God always precedes us, I realized that, in everything, the light of God accompanied me, and I stayed for 30 years in northeastern Brazil. Continuing the reflection that our mission of communion is to be among the people, walking with them and discovering together how to organize activities and work to create a more just world, I felt the strength and courage to face the surprises that life presented. We carried out important projects, and the people's witness confirms that "the Sisters of Saint

Joseph are our sisters, the sisters of the people, who walk with us. . . ."

At the end of 2005, I returned to my hometown of Concórdia, Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil, to be a support for my family, and I asked God to give me a sign, i.e., a place to continue working among people most in need. It was then that the possibility was offered to work in the Frei Lency Settlement, where I have lived and worked since then. We began to work with 30 families who had simply gathered near a highway, where they survived in hovels with poorly paid work. Many were illiterate and had no qualifications for working in jobs offered in the region. These families lived in subhuman conditions. It was urgent to have a place for them to live with dignity and for them to seek their place as citizens. These people relied on the support of a group of volunteers who had created an NGO. Through this group, they got some land, and with the help of the government, built houses. As of 2013, 309 families are residing in the Settlement. I was invited by the NGO to help organize and give support to these families. Thus a headquarters was built, where I have

lived for seven years, and which is a place to work and meet with leaders. We live the challenge of constantly starting over, because other families arrive, and this calls for receiving them and integrating them into the Settlement. Some questions are constantly recurring: "What are our achievements? Do paternalistic errors in assistance still persist? When and where do charity and communion require more consistent attitudes?"

My feelings are a mixture of love and constant indignation. It is a challenge to build experience in community process, as well as to achieve human, economic, social, religious and cultural rights in the hope of changing unjust structures and inhumane conditions. We believe that walking with the people and building new life alternatives are a way of living the charism of the Sisters of Saint Joseph today.



Sister Alice (center) participating in the Settlement Organization

Nuns on the Bus - A Retrospective

Elaine Betoncourt
USA

The experience of being part of the 2013 Network Nuns on the Bus Drive for Faith, Family and Citizenship has deepened my understanding of the situation of injustice undocumented immigrants are facing in the United States. Our goal was to gather support for Comprehensive Immigration Reform by highlighting why this is good policy for all Americans and by urging people to write and call their legislators to encourage more just laws. Although the bus ride is over our advocacy continues and joins with the efforts of many other groups in forwarding the cause of justice for our immigrant brothers and sisters. What most touches my heart is the suffering many children are experiencing under our present laws. More than five thousand children who are US citizens because they were born in the United States are in foster care because their parents have been deported because they came in to the country without the required documents. In addition hundreds of other non-citizen children whose parents have been deported are awaiting deportation, and so are living in detention homes, which are more like warehouses than homes. In these facilities, since the children live grouped according age, siblings are frequently separated and so are isolated from anyone who is familiar to them. In many of the centers children and their mothers often find themselves facing domestic violence. What are all these children, victims of



An immigrant family supporting the Nuns on the Bus

our broken immigration system learning? How will they choose to live as adults? Will they treat others as they have been treated? The need for Comprehensive Immigration Reform is urgent and legislation securing a path to citizenship must be enacted NOW. Many come to the U.S. pursuing the "American Dream." In San Antonio, Texas, Congressman Pete Gallego, with his young son by his side, put aside his prepared remarks and told those assembled that his understanding of immigration changed when he first held his infant son in his arms. He knew he would do anything to protect his child and provide for his needs. The parallel with immigrants is obvious. They come seeking a better future for themselves and their children.

As one of the nuns on the bus who traveled the whole journey from New Haven to San Francisco, I feel thankful for this opportunity to join with many women religious in promoting justice for immigrants. Not only was this a strong expression of solidarity with the 11 million undocumented immigrants now residing in our country, but it was also a palpable expression of our solidarity as women religious working for justice. The reception we received wherever we went was heartfelt, energetic, and joyous. Our credibility as nuns together espousing a cause was appreciated everywhere. In biblical times Jesus sent His disciples out two by two, and today Jesus sends His nuns on the bus by the dozen or so, bringing the good news that we are indeed our brothers' and sisters' keeper.

Apprentices in Living Well

S. Ana Amélia de Oliveira Miranda
North/Northeast Region, Brazil

The care of water as a common good, the waste we produce, planet Earth as our home, and life in all its dimensions... all of these topics motivated us to live an intense experience in the months of May to August 2013, interacting with the community of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, Associates, organized groups of the Church, civil society and government in São Raimundo Mangabeiras, Maranhão in northeast Brazil.

On several occasions, we were invited to contribute to a reflection on spirituality and to participate actively in special municipal conferences on the environment and social assistance, which dealt with sustainable development and agriculture for solidarity. These conferences were rich moments of participation, reflection, questioning, searches for solutions and proposals for public policy in the service of life and human rights for those most excluded from society, in particular.

The commitment that we, Sisters of Saint Joseph, assumed at the General Chapter of 2009 concerning the planet, and at the meeting of the Congregations of Saint Joseph in Brazil in 2012 in Porto Alegre, challenged us with regard to “a



Sister Ana Amélia (second left) participant in the Conference on the Environment

new perspective of hope in the defense of life, and the planet that cries out for liberation.” This has grown and has spread among the people, and went as far as a project to be presented in schools. We were invited to talk about the environment in five municipal schools and in a Federal Institute for education. It was nice to see and feel the enthusiasm, joy and gratitude of learners and educators, from very small children to young university students, all interacting, participating and questioning about life as well as the care and the future of the planet. These meetings in schools, in projects with young people

and educators, strengthened hope, renewed our commitment and openly denounced the capitalist development in this region, which has opted for agribusiness, with the monoculture of soya, eucalyptus or sugar cane, as well as the overuse of pesticides, which kill, destroy and cause irreversible damage, putting at risk the life of the planet, affecting the soil and aiming at unconscionable profit.

Our work has developed the realization that we are all interdependent, that everything is interconnected: water, plants, animals, and human life. We are all part of the life nature generates and renews ongoingly. Either we take care of nature, water, and the earth, or human existence will be in jeopardy.

We witnessed the importance of our charism of communion, as we live and promote meaningful relationships among ourselves, with nature, with others and with God, the Trinity. And every step of the way, we are apprentices, groups of people who promote “living well,” in harmony with others and with mother earth, learning to live with what is necessary without harming nature, and learning to live with God, who wants life and life in its fullness.



Joania, Associate, presenting reflections on the Charter of Porto Alegre at the Conference on the Environment

Reaching Out to Flood Victims in Uttarakhand

Beginning on June 14, 2013, heavy rainfall joined with the human acts of deforestation and excessive construction to unleash flash floods and landslides which claimed thousands of lives in the state of Uttarakhand in northern India. With villages wiped out and many left homeless, the Catholic Health Association of India asked five sister nurses of the Bhopal region to help with medical relief efforts in 10 villages. Two Sisters of St. Joseph, S. Sangeeta Ambackattau of the Tanmaya province and S. Mary Kochuplackal of the Pachmarhi province were among those who spent ten days travelling from village to village tending to the needs of the survivors.

S. Mary Kochuplackal
Pachmarhi province, India

We had a long and tedious journey through thick forests, but all five of us who were part of the medical team were enthusiastic and anxious to reach those in the flood affected areas. We set out on foot for the mission, carrying medicines, climbing hills, crossing streams, following narrow paths, because the roads had been washed away by the floods. After a full day's journey we reached a city where six big hotels had been destroyed by landslides.

When we reached our destination we began to work in eight villages, each at the top of a different hill. Two doctors from St. John's Medical College in Bangalore examined the patients and we sisters dispensed medicine. Most of

S. Sangeeta Ambackattau
Tanmaya province, India

Once we got off the train in Dehradun, a journey of what should have been 6 hours took 9 hours because of the landslides we encountered. Then we had to make our way on foot, climbing mountains without even a footpath. It took almost a day to reach a village and the next day we spent time with the people, treating their wounds and other illnesses before moving on to the next village. Thus we covered eight villages within ten days and attended to about 700 people. The roaring of river Ganga and the sound of landslides made our nights sleepless. We spent days and nights in fear, wondering if we would see our dear ones again.

Our target was to reach out to the unreached villages and to provide medical care and psychological support as needed. In the villages most were homeless and lacking the basic necessities of food and medicine. Since we had gone for medical management only, we could not provide any other help. In our own way we gave the people psychological support, by caring for their medical needs. Our gestures probably told them that even in the midst of all these calamities, God takes care of them by sending people like us. It was a time where our nation came together to tell them "we are with you". We never had Mass or community prayers but Eucharist became more meaningful in those situations as we communed with them in their pain.



Sr. Mary and Sr. Sangeeta with the flood affected people of Uttarakhand.

the patients were suffering from upper respiratory tract, skin or gastro-intestinal infections, cuts and other wounds. Within one week we treated hundreds of patients.

All the people were very welcoming and grateful for our services. Yet it was clear that many problems remain, not the least of which is the continuing threat of more rain and landslides.

World Youth Day

S. Ana Paula Ribeiro

Province of Porto Alegre, Brazil

World Youth Day (WYD) was held in Rio de Janeiro, July 23 to 28, 2013, having the theme, “Go and make disciples among all nations.” (Matt. 28:19) It was characterized by the friendly, affectionate, caring, prophetic and unifying presence of the Pope. About 3.7 million people from different continents, with their varied cultures, came together in the same faith and with the same purpose of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, not afraid to proclaim him and build a world of greater fraternity and solidarity. It was with great joy and a rejoicing heart, that I, Ana Paula, and five other young people of the parish of São Luiz Gonzaga, in Veranópolis, in southern Brazil, had the grace to attend this event. WYD was not simply an event but a time of consciousness raising for all the people who participated in Rio de Janeiro or through the media. The simple, fraternal presence, the friendly, supportive and welcoming gestures, and the wise and prophetic words of our beloved Pope Francis motivated us to realize our role as Catholic Christians, challenged to “Go without fear, to serve.” WYD led us to again take up our commitment to be happy missionaries, proclaiming Jesus Christ and being partners in building a better world, where



From left to right: Assis Tedesco, Moises Mazzarollo, Sara Mazzarollo, Lilia Reche, Sister Ana Paula Ribeiro, Sofia Mazzarollo

the values of life, justice, forgiveness, unity, solidarity: the values of the Reign of God.

It was clear that the young people who participated were deeply touched by the entire experience, whether they were there the entire time or for only a few days. All were delighted by the simplicity, love and dedication of the Pope. Although people had come from many different countries, cultural differences disappeared. “It was impressive to see people of many cultures, from other countries, living with naturalness. How easy it was to make new friendships”, said Lilia Reche.

The faith of the people was palpable, seeing people of good will gathered to pray and young people who have

the will to change things that surround them. One of the young people of Veranópolis, Sara Mazzarollo, summed up the experience in this way: “There, I felt the presence of Jesus, a good energy that radiated peace and tranquility. That crowd singing, praying and praising together was heartwarming. Pope Francis, with his words and his gestures of generosity, captivated the hearts of all and aroused in each a real climate of faith. WYD is proof that there are young people committed to God’s love and to building a more Christian world.” The Rio World Youth Day was simply the latest event that has continued what Pope John Paul II wished, when, in 1985, he convened the first WYD with the goal of reaching younger generations and propagating the teachings of the Catholic Church. Since then, millions of Catholics, especially young people from around the world, have gathered for a week in a city chosen by the Pope to celebrate and learn about faith, learn more about Catholic doctrine, and to build bridges of friendship and hope between continents, peoples and cultures, in addition to sharing with one another the experience of spirituality. It is clear from the response of the young people with whom I went to Rio, that many of these hopes have become realities.



Pope Francis in Brazil

S. Sandra Villela Eleutério
Province of São Paulo, Brazil

The Pope's visit to Brazil on the occasion of World Youth Day (WYD) left amazing impressions among the Brazilian people. With his simple and charismatic way, he came as one who wants nothing — "I have no gold or silver, but everything that I have I give to you," — who captivated everyone with a coherence not seen in a leader for a long time, a true servant of Christ. Stripped of all luxuries that the position favors, he touched and let himself be touched by the waiting crowds in the various places where he appeared. With a docile and fraternal manner, the pedagogy of the Master, Jesus, quickly became apparent in his attitude, as he met the people and let himself be touched by them, evoking trust and hope for the future.

In his speeches, he harshly criticized a society that discards the elderly because they do not produce and young people, by not creating jobs for them. The elderly fail to pass on their experience and the young are deprived of building the future. He consistently pointed out the always possible option of constructive dialogue. Three themes echoed in his words: dialogue as the way to mediate conflicts, proximity with people to go beyond bureaucracies, and the culture of encounter. Everyone has something to give and something to receive. "Today, we must bet on the culture of encounter or everyone loses."

Speaking directly to the Church, he called us into the world and to the "existential peripheries," pastoral action close to the people that goes beyond organizational concerns, but also encounters of affection and tenderness, lived in person. He understands the Church as a mother who embraces and caresses. Pastors must cultivate this maternal attitude



towards believers. The Church should not be a controller and administrator, but a servant and facilitator. He categorically stated that the pastor's position is not in the center, but the periphery. Pope Francis spoke with serenity about ecumenism, imbued with a deep sense of solidarity with those deprived of food and education. All religious confessions must work together on the side of victims. It matters little if the service is done by a Christian, Jew, Muslim or other. The important thing is that everyone has access to food and education. No

denomination can sleep quietly while the disinherited of this world are crying out. To youth he spoke words of enthusiasm and hope. Against a culture of consumerism and dehumanization, he called for them to be "revolutionary" and "rebels." It is through the window of young people that the future arrives. At the concluding ceremony, the joy of people was noteworthy; all were very moved and in absolute order. At that moment a feeling of great peace and affection rose over the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Sister Sandra, on the right, accompanying youth during WYD

Mini-LAC in Denmark

S. Martina Gmünder

SSJ – Annecy congregation

At the end of June, at Stella Matutina, the retreat center belonging to the Danish province, Providence had in store a mini-LAC gathering. Marianne, the provincial, Jasleen and Rathi, both members of the Lyon congregation who are in the LAC mission in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic, and I, a sister of Annecy, made our retreat in Stella, beautifully situated on the sea shore.

As Jasleen and Rathi had some days beyond the retreat to remain at Stella, Marianne offered the three of us a guided tour of Copenhagen. To begin with, Marianne took us around by car to get a first impression of this very interesting city, the capital of Denmark. The first visit we made was to the graveyard where so many Sisters who came as missionaries to Denmark from France, Germany and Poland are buried. Standing at their graves Marianne began talking about the difficult conditions the first Sisters had encountered from their arrival in Copenhagen in 1856, since they were the first Catholic congregation to come to the Scandinavian countries after freedom of religion was declared in 1849. The few Catholic priests present at that time were afraid of these nuns, who didn't have money and hadn't been asked to come. But slowly, the sisters began teaching and looking after the sick and during over 150 years built up 9 hospitals and owned 5 schools in Denmark and 2 hospitals in Iceland. Years later, they also had to face the other side of the coin, which was closing all the hospitals and three of the schools and selling the buildings. Then we went to the monument erected to commemorate the terrible event that took place on March 21, 1945, right



Jasleen, Rathi, Marianne-tomb of first sister in Denmark

before war was over. The only bomb that fell on Denmark during the Second World War destroyed Jeanne d'Arc School in Copenhagen, owned by the sisters. That day 86 students, 8 staff members and 10 Sisters were killed.

We continued our tour to the place where the first four sisters arrived on a cold Pentecost Sunday in May. Their first lodging was in two small, damp rooms in the basement of a building, which had once been a stable for horses. The only view was the graveyard connected to the neighboring Protestant church. In 2011 the Protestant parish council placed a memorial plate on the wall of the house stating that this was the first place after the Reformation, where a Catholic convent was established, and from which there were great contributions to the Danish health care and school system. This led us to think of all the Sisters of St. Joseph, who since 1650, first in the

center of France and then progressively all over the world, went out to found new missions under often very difficult conditions. We still have missionaries of that kind and among them our CSJ/SSJ sisters who came to the Czech Republic, very visible among us that day in the persons of Jasleen and Rathi. Very soon two other Sisters from India, from the Chambéry congregation, will join them to continue the LAC project.

It was a very moving start to our day in Copenhagen which concluded, in the afternoon, with a boat tour of the city, which has many canals and thousands of boats lined up. We saw that the Danish people have the sea in their blood. For the four of us it was also a day of sharing our different missions. We had great joy spending this day together especially as it was so unexpected and meaningful. Jasleen, Rathi and I really felt at home, part of the same family.

From Chambéry to the World... Living our Charism

S. Andrea Dalaqua Goulart
Province of Lagoa Vermelha, Brazil

An experience of grace... An experience of God... Living our history...

It is with this awareness that I will try to describe the wealth of experience of breathing in and walking on the holy ground where Father Jean Pierre Médaille and the Sisters who preceded us lived the mission of Communion.

During fifteen days, sisters coming from the most diverse realities and traveling great distances arrived in France with hearts full of expectations, open to live intensely what God wished of each on this pilgrimage and in this time of grace and blessing.

Each day we carried, in our existential backpack, important ideas about the essential points of our history, taking in experiences, reviewing concepts, and strengthening our living as Sisters of Saint Joseph. We heard about facts and places that, up to that time, had been narrated or described only in books. At this moment in history, however, we were invited and challenged to actualize them, to make them come alive in our everyday life, making them visible in the reality in which we are inserted. Our hearts overflowed with emotion through this experience; we were inspired and full of enthusiasm.

On this journey, we felt how God was present in the life and mission of Father

Médaille and our early sisters. We felt our hearts expand, and we let ourselves be led by the desire to respond with fidelity to God's will. We realized how challenging it was for them to overcome the difficulties of their time, in the context of war, poverty, and the non-acceptance of the Little Design... They had, however, the clarity of how to respond to the call of the signs of the times, remaining in hiding and cultivating an interior life of prayer, simplicity, and humility in the certainty of being guided by God.

For more than 360 years, our Congregation has spread the intuition of Father Médaille and our sister founders, through the witness of each sister's life and mission in the most diverse places in the world. Today, we are challenged to provide continuity, to sow and make

flourish this charism of unity, being witnesses of our vocation as consecrated women, attentive to the challenges of society. God continues to bless us with grace and strengthen our hearts in love and the sowing of Communion.

In this seminar, we also had an experience of being an International Congregation, by living and sharing with our sisters: having an enriching contact with other cultures, apostolic commitments, nationalities and the challenge of communication.

From this experience, we have been challenged to strengthen our life in the following of Jesus Christ, moving from an idealization of our history to the new story of our charism today. May it continue in the present day, inspiring each Sister in a whole new way, without losing its essence.



Group photo

S. Agata Nguyen	Norway	28/09/2013
S. Anna Hoang	Norway	28/09/2013
S. Anna Vy Nguyen	Norway	28/09/2013
S. Catarina Tran	Norway	28/09/2013
S. Elisabeth Nguyen	Norway	28/09/2013
S. Maria Phan	Norway	28/09/2013

FIRST
PROFESSIONS

Protecting the Environment on a School Campus

S. Fabiyola Morris

India - Nirmala Province

As school principal surveying the campus of St. Joseph's Convent School in Edamon, Kerala (south of India) I noticed the problem we faced with disposing of food waste. I had a great desire to see every corner of the school campus neat and clean with no open pit waste disposal. After consulting with various people and taking seriously the desire of others for clean waste management, we decided to install a Biogas plant, a project that was accomplished within one month.

The first step was to meet with Biotech consultants, whose office is situated within 10 km of the School and Convent, thus making it easy to meet responsible persons and plan the project. After a few meetings with the Management Director of Biotech we finalized the plan to put up a Biogas Plant for the use of St. Joseph's Convent and the School.

This project not only brought an answer to keeping the campus clean and hygienic but also saves us the expense of purchasing fuel for kitchen use since the Biogas generated from the plant is sufficient to cook food in St. Joseph's Convent School Hostel.

The students were kept informed



from the Left : Sr.Sarita, Sr.Jacinta, Sr.Maria Grace and Sr.Fabiyola in front of the Biogas plant

about the progress and witnessed the installation of the Biogas plant, which gave them a sense of being part of this new project. In fact they were shown the operation of the plant and were given information concerning its usefulness. And all, Sisters, staff and students, alike, share the responsibility to separate out the organic waste that is used to generate the gas.

We were happy to see that our decision has had a ripple effect, since some of the people in the area are planning to do as we have done. This is one way in which we are addressing the needs of present day India where, with unprecedented economic growth, rising aspirations, and rapidly

changing lifestyles, many citizens have higher expectations concerning public health and quality of life. The expectation of remediation and recovery of misused resources needs to be met in order to raise the quality of life for the citizens. We now know that pollution of air, water or land results in long-term reduction of productivity and consequently to a deterioration of the economy. Controlling pollution, on the other hand, reduces the risk of poor health, protects the natural environment and contributes to the quality of life.

Our decision for more sustainable living through the Biogas plant is a small but significant contribution to a better India.

**NEW
SAINTS**

S. Maria Vitalina Martinhuk (97)	Paraná	16/07/2013
S. Elpidia Magalhaes (62)	Paraná	20/07/2013
S. Rosa Filomena Simioni (89)	Paraná	21/07/2013
S. Maria Irma Farina (89)	Porto Alegre	24/07/2013
S. Amabile Comim (89)	Paraná	24/07/2013
S. Laura Regina Beine (87)	Lagoa Vermelha	28/07/2013
S. Maria Edith Küller Horning (83)	Paraná	01/08/2013
S. Frances Joyce (89)	USA	08/08/2013
S. Rose Mary Konikara (77)	Nagpur	12/08/2013
S. Marie Françoise Chenu (77)	France	12/08/2013
S. Adelayde Furlanetto (77)	Caxias do Sul	16/08/2013
S. Lucinda Moretti (71)	Caxias do Sul	16/08/2013
S. Gema Molon (72)	Caxias do Sul	31/08/2013

Sisters of Saint Joseph Encompassing the World

S. Rita Tessaro

Province of Lagoa Vermelha, Brazil

S. Marilene Marcon

Province of Caxias do Sul, Brazil

In the city of Le Puy-en-Velay, France, at the International Centre of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, a seminar having the theme “Expanding the Global Heart” took place August 3 to 12, 2013, under the guidance of Janet Gagnon, CSJ of Lyon (Province of Maine, USA) Gloria Philip, CSJ (Argentina), and, via Skype, Carol Zinn, SSI (Philadelphia, PA, USA).

In attendance were 24 Sisters from 13 different countries and continents, Africa, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Peru, India, Haiti, Tanzania, Madagascar, the United States, Mexico and France.

The meeting challenged us to use the lens of our history to look at the heritage left by our predecessors, asking us where we are today and where we should go.

The agenda included dialogue, reflection, prayer, liturgy, visits, and journaling, music and self-expression, as well as sharing stories about our founders.

We shared the origin and history of our provinces and congregations, recognizing the wealth of our charism, which has expanded on five continents in different contexts. Imbued with Trinitarian love, the charism has sustained our spirituality to love and serve the dear neighbor. Today, we are challenged to meet again as Sisters of Saint Joseph and learn from the Trinity to dance in our differences, to pray our life and to “share the state of the heart,” because sharing is a requirement of our vocation.

We had the opportunity to experience the beauty and depth of our charism and spirituality through a pilgrimage to the holy places of our Congregation and Provinces. At the rooms of Mother St.

HAVE FOR HIM AN EXPANSIVE LOVE, WHICH INCLUDES ALL THAT LOVE IS CAPABLE OF AND ALL THAT A HEART CAN LOVE IN GOD AND FOR GOD; AN EXALTED LOVE FULL OF PURPOSE AND ARDOR, TRANSCENDING THE MASS OF CREATURES; A PROFOUND HEARTFELT LOVE WHICH IS AT YOUR HEART’S CENTER AND CANNOT BE UPROOTED BY AN CREATED POWER.

(MAXIM 9.2)



Group visiting the rooms of Mother St. John Fontbonne in Lyon, France

John Fontbonne, we contemplated the journey of so many sisters at different times in our history, those who dared to make a difference and who boldly created new communities to respond to the calls of the Church and needs of the people. We are grateful to the pioneers who traveled from France to other nations and who expanded our Congregation throughout Europe, America, Asia, Africa, Oceania and all parts of the planet. Our heart beats and opens to embrace the world. In Le Puy we renewed our

dreams of communion. With Mother St. John Fontbonne, we recaptured our missionary spirit. We realized that we need to be women of faith and courage, to be daring and creative in order to respond to the challenges of the world in different realities and contexts. We believe in each other, women of today. We believe that God, who has sustained us for more than 360 years, continues to lead us to be witnesses of reconciling, unifying love, to be brave women, full of hope.

Barga: 101 years of Presence

Maria Cristina Gavazzi

Italy

The civil and Christian communities of Barga have sadly placed in the archives a piece of their last century's history. The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry have permanently left the territory – where they were the only female religious presence – and with them goes so much history, so many works, so many memories etched in the recollections of the many generations of Barga.

As announced in the latest issue of *The Hour of Barga*, the parish magazine, "This news was already in the air for some time, and now it is official," writes Don Stefano, Pastor of Barga. "Our sisters are leaving the community of Barga. Last year we solemnly celebrated the centenary of their presence among us, and now in this summer of 2013, came the final decision. The Josephite community of sisters, present in Barga since 1912, has returned to Rome, to Casaletto, where other sisters have already been transferred." The reasons for this painful decision are easily perceived and characteristic of the Church today and will be for years to come. The crisis of vocations, in Italy, as in Europe, has forced religious congregations to close valuable ventures and to open communities where new urgencies are identified, to which they can still respond. Even the Italian province has been facing this problem for some years.

The sisters who have reached an advanced age are transferred and come together in places where caring assistance is provided for them, after their many years of service in schools and other institutions and local communities. This reality is disconcerting, but the people also feel gratitude for the service which was provided, because in Barga, the sisters were an important point of reference not only for religious educational activities, but also for generations of children, adolescents, young people, girls and families. The sisters were a precious and quiet testimony of concrete and total adhesion to Jesus Christ in apostolic service of the Gospel and in charity. "We hope that parish communities and families do not forget all that we have received from them. For this and many other individual personal experiences, we want to extend our thanks to the sisters, ensuring them of our perennial remembrance and our constant prayer," kept repeating Don

Stefano.

To say goodbye to the sisters residing in Barga, to give them the greetings of the Christian community of Barga and others, a Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in the Church of San Rocco on August 4, with the Provincial Council members who came from Rome present for the occasion. And so, the city of Barga said goodbye to this discreet and thoughtful presence that took care of the education and training of many generations in Barga. Below is an affectionate remembrance of the sisters written by Professor Graziella Cosimini: "Yes, we must accept the reality, the Josephites are leaving Barga permanently. This means accepting the idea of losing a centuries-old religious institution, to continue without a silent and industrious presence that has radiated throughout the community. This is a serious loss to Barga. It has been not so much a social service, so very important especially for children, but, above all, an opportunity for formation able to guide life choices."



The Barga Community with Sr. Concettina, Sr. Giuseppina (center) and Sr. Barbara

EDITING

Barbara Bozak
Andréia Pires

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Andréia Pires

TRANSLATIONS

Agnès Moussière
Cristina Gavazzi
Joyce Baker
Margherita Corsino
Maria Elisabete Reis
Marie-Kristin Riosianu
Marie-Pierre Ruche

CIRCULATION

Rosalia Armillotta
www.csjchambery.org

E-MAIL

icc@csjchambery.org