

French

**English**

Italian

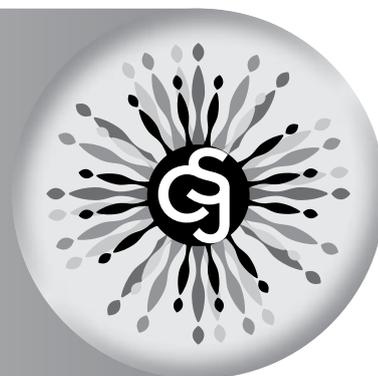
Portuguese

Norwegian

# CSJOURNAL

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## GENERAL COUNCIL

# Living Reconciliation



**S. Sally Hodgdon**

*General Council*

In the recent issues of the CSJournal, the General Council has been reflecting on our 2015 General Chapter and its Theme, "Living the Dynamism of Reconciliation and Unity in the Peripheries of our Fractured World." In the last issue, Sister Ieda spoke of the peripheries. I would like to reflect on reconciliation.

The 2015 General Chapter theme originated at the 2013 Extended Council. It was a result of our sharing the multiple "cries" being heard in

the neighborhoods of our different provinces, regions and missions. These were cries for life from those whom others have abandoned; those whom others have failed to recognize as deserving respect and recognition as part of the human community. As a congregation of women whose charism is to create union, what is our responsibility or place in the lives of these people?

I believe our responsibility is to "live," with every ounce of our being, the "dynamism of reconciliation." This characteristic of our charism is needed more than ever at this very moment. What does the "dynamism of reconciliation," really mean? According to the Merriam Dictionary, "dynamism"

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is “a vigorously active, forceful and energizing quality.” To live the dynamism of reconciliation is to actively be open to offering and receiving both forgiveness and acceptance. It is to allow God’s love to energize us to let go of hurts, criticism and control, to forgive ourselves and then to forgive the other. It includes letting go of being right and allowing the other and ourselves to make mistakes. It means to love as God loves. Without forgiveness and healing there is no reconciliation, and without reconciliation, our charism of unity or communion will not be present.

Living the dynamism of reconciliation requires us to accept and articulate our own truth at all levels: as sisters; as provinces, regions and missions; as congregation; as church and as a globalized society. We need to deepen our respect for the other, to nurture our ability to be humble and to learn to wait for the other to be ready to

be reconciled. True reconciliation will transform a situation, bringing it into the light of truth and new possibility. One scriptural example of the dynamism of reconciliation is the story of Joseph and his brothers from the Old Testament. It was not until Joseph was ready to forgive his brothers, that he was then able to be present to them and to share his resources in an effort to help transform their reality.

This call to live the dynamism of reconciliation is both personal and communal. We need to pray for the grace to grow in our ability to be “living and dynamic reconcilers” through our personal presence and our interactions in community, in our ministry and in the provinces, regions and missions. But we are also called to listen more attentively to discover in what areas and how God is asking us to share our charism in new ways. How are we being called to be reconcilers in the public sphere: in areas

of conflict between gangs, with youth, within families, among diverse religions or political parties and communities? How can the congregation prepare sisters and lay people to work in these critical areas of conflict?

Certainly some of members of the congregation have worked within this sphere, but how do we continue this as a congregation, given our new realities of increasing median ages, declining health and other ministerial responsibilities? Can we see where God may be asking us to do more, to be present with a different perspective or a different understanding, or to work in new areas of conflict? Living the dynamism of reconciliation is not only for those under retirement age. Reconciliation is about being a non-judgmental and welcoming presence. It is sensed, felt and experienced by others in how we receive them and how we listen to them. All ages are called to be engaged in this mission!

## PROVINCE/REGION/MISSION

# The Consequences of Our Gestures of Solidarity

### S. Aldenice Tres

*Province of Porto Alegre, Brazil*

At the 2009 General Chapter, participants discussed discontinuing the tradition of each province or region presenting the participants with something specific from their country or reality. The gifts were usually distributed on the day that a province or region was responsible for prayer/liturgy. The suggestion was that, instead of using the money on many items to give to each other, we would contribute money to a charity or mission. Thus, during the Extended Council of 2013, held in Brazil, each participant made her donation during a moment of

celebration.

The money was sent to the Seed of Hope Project maintained by the Sisters of Saint Joseph, Province of Porto Alegre, in partnership with other entities. It is situated in São José do Norte, in southern Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and was founded April 17, 2001. The municipality, at the time the third poorest in the state, held the last position in terms of education and health. Its economy is based on fishing, especially shrimp, the production of onions and the recent installation of a shipyard for the construction of crude oil extraction platforms. The reality is one of squalor and family disorganization that constantly exposes children and adolescents to

situations of social risk and vulnerability. The Seed of Hope Project is changing this reality through psychosocial support, supplementary education programs based on cultural activities, physical and recreational activities, sports, leisure and crafts, thus contributing to the development of self-esteem, socialization and improving the quality of life. Different activities are offered, including soccer and capoeira, crafts in wood and fabric, computer chess, cooking, gardening, story-telling and guitar. The money raised during the Extended Council was presented to Sisters Aldenice Tres, Maria Domeneghini and Lourdes Domeneghini during the visit of the General Council, a few

days after the closing of the Extended Council. This money helped to complete the construction of a Seed of Hope multi-purpose sports arena which was inaugurated October 21, 2014. Sister Laura Gavazzoni, Superior of the Province of Porto Alegre, Sister Nilva Dal Bello, Vice President of the Saint Joseph Beneficent Association, and Francisco Elifalet Xavier, Deputy Mayor, were present. In addition to several local authorities, representatives of different entities and employees participated. The opening ceremony, which included ribbon cutting, an unveiling of a plaque as a tribute to partners, the awarding of medals and the inaugural kickoff, thrilled the children, because they now have a safe place for sports and recreational activities – a dream there for 11 years. The multi-purpose sports arena provides



*Tournament participants receiving medals*

the community and the participants social and community protection, as well as a confirmation that it is possible, with planning and dedication, to realize collective dreams. The whole concluded with refreshments and a tournament between young people participating in

the project and invited guests, followed by the awarding of medals. The local community expressed its gratitude to the Sisters of Saint Joseph for its caring and generous gesture contributing to the realization of this dream, providing life and dignity.

## Spiritual Directors for India

**S. Sheila Rose Kollattuthara**

*Pachmarhi province, India*

**S. Archana Kanakunnel**

*Nagpur province, India*

As the days for the 2nd phase of the Spiritual Direction Training Program, offered by S. Jean Sauntry of the US province, was fast approaching, nine Indian sisters (Philomena Pazhoora, Molly, Sheila Rose, Marcelina, Prabha, Archana, Bibiana, Vimala and Rashmi) were waiting and longing with nostalgia to come to the cradle of their religious life: Fox Rock, Pachmarhi, the motherhouse of the Indian province since 1925. On 25th September, 2014, the group was warmly welcomed by Sisters Alice, Rose and her band of Sisters to our motherhouse in Pachmarhi. During the days together we became more and more aware of the fact that Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality for everyday



*The participants from left: sitting Marcelina, Jean Sauntry, Philomena, Prabha, Molly; standing: Sheila Rose, Vimala, Rashmi, Bibiana, and Archana*

life, seen in its insistence on the fact that God is present in our world and active in our lives. As a pathway to deeper prayer, good decisions guided by keen discernment, and an active life of service to others, it invites us to go deeper and encourages us to a sense of wonder. We learnt to access our own spiritual intuition, through our desires, feelings and experiences, all of which lead us to

God's ways. Faithful practice of the daily Examen, Contemplation and the Spiritual Exercises lead us in discernment and decision making. Through this we felt confident to respond to God's promptings within us and meet the challenges of the ministry of spiritual direction. Today, more than ever, we need to recognize Christ in suffering and ugliness, including the political situation in our

County, as in the Passover. 'Seeing God in all things' calls us into a mystical relation with all creation and to healing our fractured world. The charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph calls us to renew relations, to challenge intellectual and spiritual commitment and contemporary formation, to profess a deep engagement with creation and learn from the Book of Nature to be co-creators sharing in the fullness of life.

This time the programme included our directing an eight-day retreat for the novices, solidifying for us living the Ignatian way in life, prayer, ministry. We learned to identify the movements of the spirit, desolation and consolation, and how to deal with them. All of this was done through individual and group supervision by S. Jean Saunry. Our twenty-five day programme concluded with a meaningful and touching

prayer service during which each one of us reflected and shared her experiences of these 25 days. We learned that we should not seek to simplify the complexity of scientific, social, ethical or spiritual issues, nor to make the pluralism of approaches more uniform, but to bring many viewpoints together. We will continue to live from this wisdom until our next session at Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

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# A Reflection on Living Interculturally

S. Gisela Heitz  
*Czech Republic*

As I approach the 20th anniversary of my arrival in the Czech Republic, I have reflected on what it means to live an intercultural experience. When I crossed the Czech border on my way to Pilsen on May 11, 1995, it was far from clear where the journey would lead. My intention was certainly not wanting to learn "intercultural competence" or to try it out. Nor was the Czech Republic a "personal objective." I knew no one there. The language was foreign to me, and the Czech that I had experienced in a crash course was insufficient to understand what people were saying. But at some juncture, the "point of no return" came: I knew that I would go to Pilsen – and I knew I would stay. I felt called and sent at the same time, by God and my superiors. In this confidence I set out.

The term "letting go" describes a fundamental movement of basic importance for intercultural experiences. If my head and heart are so full of their own images, projections, judgments and prejudices, if I go by my own standards, however subtle they may be, I cannot

genuinely encounter other cultures. A critical reflection on my own attitudes is thus the pathway to understand individuals in other cultures. The point of departure for the encounter can only lie within myself. It is not the other person who must change. I must change; I must begin with myself. Mahatma Gandhi

says it with these words: "If you wish to encounter a person, be changed and transformed into the person you wish to encounter."

My willingness to let go was regularly put to the test. Did I truly want to stay in this foreign land, with this foreign language, in this unknown culture? Did I truly want to understand these people, with their history, culture and characteristics? Would I have the strength to let others be themselves, without expecting this or that change? Would I have the strength to say "You may be and remain just as you are"?

Beginnings – particularly in other cultures – while often accompanied by loneliness and fear, also contain a



certain magic. As H. Hesse, a German poet and writer, said: "A magic dwells in each beginning . . . telling us how to live." In these words we find the second prerequisite for encountering other cultures. We have to find and discover the magic that helps us to live. This magic should not be confused with romantic magic, sentimental emotions or loss of touch with reality. No, discovering the magic of the Other, in the other culture, means to become aware that we are both human beings – images of God – in spite of the many differences we have. To perceive magic is the gift of a child. Unless you change and become like little children, you cannot engage in intercultural communication,

you cannot learn another language, you cannot encounter foreign cultures. The openness and trust of a child is a third prerequisite that is important if we want to live in an intercultural context. Understanding becomes possible when I perceive the world with the openness of a child. This means that I encounter the Other with so much trust that he or she feels accepted, because I convey the message: "You don't have to become like me, in order to be/remain who you are." Conversion, metanoia, a strictly biblical

and theological term which means change of heart, rethinking, a turnaround, is an essential element in intercultural contexts. Encounter in other cultures always demands a change of heart – turning away from one's own self, one's own values and convictions towards the other. This leads to esteem, a basic positive attitude towards another person. Even though I may value the language of another, his or her culture, achievements and material advancements, esteem is nevertheless independent of these. In

the end, esteem of the person is most important: to understand why the Other – the foreigner – acts as he or she does. To accept the "otherness" of the Other opens the way to freedom for dialogue. That is a process which requires patience, with myself and with the other(s). Mutual esteem enables us to think and feel alike beyond cultural borders. The differences diffuse although they continue to exist. Respect and patience are part of the esteem we owe others and ourselves.

## Triennial Meeting of Associates

**Orlando Mesconto Ramos**  
Region of N/NE, Brazil

The triennial General Assembly of Associates of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry of N/NE Brazil was held October 2014, at Pastos Bons, Maranhão. There were three days of enjoyable conviviality and debates, healthy discussions interspersed with spontaneous prayers, chants, and group dynamics and, of course, decision-making.

The Identity of an Associate, the subject of our meeting, was deepened through readings and reflections on various biblical texts, reinforcing in us Associates, the Christian experience of faith, hope and charity. It also fostered in us the desire to build the Kingdom of God with justice, equality, and fraternity, and increased our longing to see bread, work and full peace in the life of all families. Upon leaving, the 54 Associates from several northern States and communities of northeast Brazil, along with the Sisters who attended the summit, put into practice a key virtue in the circle of Trinitarian love, that is, knowing how to



*Participantes da Assembleia Trienal*

listen. We identified the themes to be further explored and reflected upon during these three days, realizing that community life is not always easy. But it is a providential terrain for our hearts to turn back and contemplate the divinity of God in its fullness. There will always be conflicts and misunderstandings, and we will need to face them and solve them, since it is in community life that we are called to grow in mercy, patience, tolerance and charity. As a result of what was discussed in the plenary session and approved by the Assembly for the 2015-2017 period, in addition to our plan of action, it was decided that coordination will be in Sao Luiz and that the next

Assembly will continue in Pastos Bons, scheduled for November 15 to 17, 2017. It was agreed also that the new Coordinator, Benidia, will be part of the interim coordination team to prepare the national meeting of 2016, where coordination at the national level will be established, with full participation of Associates supported by the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

That is Mission! It is the effort to transform into deeds what we learn, improving spiritually every day and empowering ourselves to better serve the cause of God. Why? Because every time each person opens their heart to God, it allows the deeper structures of personality to be put into action.

# A Pilgrimage to the Land of St John Paul II

**S. Jaya Mathew**

*Czech Republic*

In October 2014 a parish in Pilsen went on a pilgrimage to Poland to follow in the footsteps of St. John Paul II (papacy 1978-2005). Poland is one of the four countries neighboring the Czech Republic. In contrast to the Czech Republic, Poland is a country which is deeply rooted in Catholic traditions and has a great number of believers and religious.

Among the destinations of the pilgrimage was the birthplace of John Paul II, Jasna Gora, with its Marian shrine. Of course the famous Black Madonna of Czestochowa is a must for every pilgrim. This large pilgrimage place provides blessings for those in prayer. The peaceful and spiritual atmosphere is very outstanding and one's faith and God experience grow deeply here. The royal town of Krakow symbolizes the spiritual wealth and faith of the country and its people. It is here that Karol Wojtyla spent most of his adult life, before becoming pope. His presence and power is felt and experienced in many places and corners of the town. Krakow is known for its 19 churches,

basilicas and monasteries. Coming from the Czech Republic, where churches are often empty, it was striking that convents and monasteries are large, with many members, most of them quite traditional, hospitable and very friendly. The churches are overflowing with faithful for all the services.

To Krakow also belongs the name Helena Kowalski (1905-1938), in the church recognized as Saint Faustina. The visit to the convent of this woman, canonized by St. John Paul II, was another experience of prayer and faith. A huge modern church and a spiritual center have been built there at the request of John Paul II. All this speaks of the spiritual heritage and wealth of the Polish people. In the same country is found Auschwitz, a name that recalls the most horrible cruelty and inhumanity history ever has brought forth. The pilgrims visited this largest and most brutal of all Nazi concentration camps during Second World War (1940-1945). Auschwitz stands as an admonition today, recalling for the pilgrims not only the sufferings and injustices done at that time, but also the sufferings that continue today in other places. The sufferings and injustices in the world remain a challenge to each one of us. Here all were moved to tears and sadness as they spent time in silence and prayer. In Auschwitz Christ has been crucified more than a million



*A statue of the parents of John Paul II*

times.

This pilgrimage deepened for the pilgrims their understanding and knowledge of the church, of Europe and of Poland with its history and culture. With gratitude all returned to their respective places, inspired by what they had experienced.

**NEW**  
**SAINTS**

S. Marie Audrey Varappadavil (82)	Tanmaya	12/10/2014
S. Clarice Francis (77)	Tanmaya	17/10/2014
S. Madalena Rui (87)	Lagoa Vermelha	29/10/2014
S. Lucia Fernanda Batagelo (79)	Caxias do Sul	01/11/2014
S. Mary Forster (95)	USA	02/11/2014
S. Teresina Dini (92)	Italy	10/11/2014
S. Teresa Ann Sheehan (90)	USA	24/11/2014
S. CiryI Thekkemuriyil (82)	Nirmala	29/11/2014
S. Maria Dolores Miotto (93)	Lagoa Vermelha	07/12/2014
S. Maria Crescentia Becking (95)	Norway	09/12/2014
S. Santina Matté (93)	Caxias do Sul	10/12/2014

# Finding God's Movements, Wonders and Grandeur

Sumaira Emmanuel and

Naina Javed

Pakistan

**W**e, the novices of Region of Pakistan, found our Novitiate to be a grace-filled and sacred time, full of intense reflection and wonderful pastoral experience as well as the studies which brought us to a deeper understanding of religious life. Growing up, neither of us had any contact with Sisters. We are both from the same town, Chowk Azam, a 5-hour (almost 230 km) journey from the city of Multan where there is a community of the Sisters of St. Joseph. In this area there are only a few Catholics: about 200 in a population of 150,000, and no missionary educational institutions or convents. It is seldom that a priest comes to celebrate Sunday Mass. But the Catholics are firm in their faith. Although we were educated in Muslim schools, our faith is unshakable. When we were in 10th Grade, we felt a call to join religious life, although we didn't have any personal knowledge of sisters. Our parish priest, who had been taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph directed us to this community. The sisters visited us and invited us for their Come and See programme, the first step on our journey to religious life. After our schooling we went to Multan where we completed our college study with the sisters. We were impressed by their very simple life style and a life fully devoted to others. Our two years of novitiate included studies and pastoral experience. We studied the Bible, Church history, spirituality, and learned about the congregation: the history, Constitution, Maxims and Eucharistic letter. A

computer course and pastoral work filled out our novitiate experience during which we learned to live life to the fullest and to be a presence of selfless love. We were given time to contemplate and come to know the depth of God's mystical providence. The importance of our prayer life was modeled by the sisters with whom we lived in community. And through the study of spirituality we became aware of the need to meet God in all that life is and offers, and were grounded in listening to God. Under the compassionate guidance of our Novice mistress, S. Catherine, we were challenged to reflect on the object of our life, on what God is calling us to be. We are proud to have a spirituality of littleness and oneness as our Charism emphasizes love and union. Our pastoral work experience was varied. In the Multan community Naina went to the sewing center to help young uneducated women, helping them achieve some basic knowledge, while in the school she helped students

who were poor in studies. This was complemented by visiting sick people in hospitals and visiting homes. Having had an advanced computer course, she gave computer lessons to the teachers in the school. In Lahore Sumaira was given the special task of translating the Maxims into Urdu as well as working with poor children who were not going to school, preparing them to be admitted to school. She also joined the sisters for home visiting and vocation promotion. In Quetta we both taught catechism to children and prepared them for Christmas and a St. Joseph's Day play. There we celebrated our foundation day with the sewing center, and were engaged in vocation promotion in different parishes. We also had the experience of gospel sharing with lay people, home visiting and visiting the sick in the hospitals. Through it all, we experienced that our sisters are among the poor to love and create unity, living out our charism among those around us.



# The International Centre Celebrates Ten Years

S. Barbara Bozak

USA

The St. Joseph International Centre in Le Puy-en-Velay, France, reached a milestone in October with the celebration of its tenth anniversary. Realizing a dream voiced in the year 2000 during the 350th anniversary celebration of the Sisters of St. Joseph held in Le Puy, the Centre opened on October 15, 2004. At that time the house was blessed in the presence of a small international gathering and the staff of three began to organize both the material and the programmatic aspects of this undertaking.

Those who knew the beginnings can see now how many changes have occurred over the past ten years. Both the Global Coordinating Group, which did not exist ten years ago, and the Board of Directors of the Centre were present for the Eucharistic liturgy and the festive meal which followed. They were joined by S. Janet Gagnon, the first board president, and the three sisters who formed the first team: Mary Diesbourg, Josette Gocella and Sheila Holly.

The guests joined the community of the Church of Les Carmes for a Sunday parish liturgy. The internationality of the Centre was visible in the prayers of the faithful offered by four sisters in their own languages: French, English, Italian and



*The invited guests enjoy a meal together at the Centre*

Portuguese. At the conclusion of the liturgy, Line Rioux (Lyon congregation, US province), the present director of the center, spoke of her experience in Le Puy and with the parish. In spite of the pouring rain, many parishoners joined the Centre guests at a reception offered by the parish, which was followed by a festive meal at the Centre for the invited guests.

The International Centre has grown over the ten years of its existence with many more programs now than at the beginning. It has welcomed hundreds of persons each year, some as simple visitors for the day, others as participants in programs offered by or simply hosted at the Centre. Safety upgrades for the

house have just been completed, so now it can accommodate persons other than sisters.

The past ten years have been blessed in many ways, including the fact that the Centre is on a more secure financial footing and is moving forward with its strategic plan. Nonetheless the Centre continues to struggle in some areas, including that of finding sisters to form a three-person permanent staff. If beginnings can be precarious, it can also be challenging to keep a project like the International Centre moving into the future. The dream of 2000 became reality in 2004. Now, at the tenth anniversary, the hope is that the dream will continue for many years to come.

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