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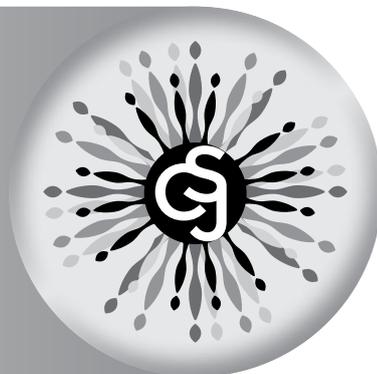
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GENERAL COUNCIL

Daring to Meet



Daring the Mystery of Encounter

A compassionate journey

Extended Council 2017
Oslo/Norway, from 9/16 to 10/1

S. Ieda Tomazini
General Councilor

The sacrament of encounter was one of the themes that emerged in our last Assembly held in 2015, in Rome. At that time, this phrase caught my eye because it seemed a little strange. I read about it and was confronted with a vast bibliography, but the most interesting aspect was that I began to realize how difficult and challenging it is. Generally, meetings are provocative; they arouse curiosity, fear, desire, desires, pain, passion, growing disagreements. There are good meetings or less good ones that make us move, see new horizons, shift, and grow as individuals, as communities, as nations. This year, when we chose “Dare the

mystery of encounter, a compassionate journey” as the theme for our Enlarged Council, to be held in September, 2017, in Oslo, Norway, I don’t think we had in mind the deep meaning of each of the words: mystery, encounter, path, compassion. They all have a deep meaning and will be fleshed out on the occasion of our meeting. But, what does the word encounter mean? Why do we need this? What prevents people from meeting? The word is derived from the Latin word “incontro” and means “contro,” meeting of opponents, meeting of opposites. In this sense I think it bears the logic of the popular expression: “opposites attract and at the same time repel.” It is meeting the other who is different from us that moves us forward, to be competitive, to grow and to reinvent history and the world. People today have more facility and more ways to

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meet than in the past. There is a diversity of media that facilitate virtual meetings in real time, more information and access to education, to culture, to reading, all possibilities for meetings. Nevertheless, people seem to live in a more isolated and less interactive way. People seem more apathetic and indifferent to everything they hear, see, and know. Everything seems to be within reach of everyone, yet many feel less of a need to meet another as a human being. There's the desire to meet, but no commitment. Every meeting leaves the person different in the end, because it causes questioning, interaction and requires commitment, and effort. Real

meeting assumes an interaction, and there is humility, openness and trust. Today many families and many religious and religious communities, eat lunch or dinner together, pray together, but do not meet. It's not the amount of time that defines the meeting, but the ability to "be fully present" in every moment of the meeting. Often the expression of the eyes, silence, and a gesture show more compassion than words. The Pope is someone who, in everyday life, meets people. He doesn't wait for programmed meetings to express his tenderness, his compassion, his zeal and love for human beings. He doesn't hesitate to confront,

with his own gospel convictions, political ideas that enslave and exclude people. He interacts with Christians and non-Christians in relationships of equality and protects the most vulnerable. Going out to another is always a challenge, because the other is different and disagreement may not be very pleasant, but it surely promotes growth.

In our September meeting, we will have the opportunity to meet very different people. We will be Sisters of 13 different nationalities with different experiences and life histories. How can we prepare to experience this meeting? Will we be open to walk together, welcoming diversity?

PROVINCE/REGION/MISSION

Break the Chain – No More Violence

S. Josiane Mota Coelho

Tanzania, Africa

For the second consecutive year, the women's group "Mkomanile," located in the village of Msalaba Mkuu, in Tanzania, Africa, with which we work, organized a manifestation against domestic violence. As is the custom among women here, that kind of "shouting" is done through theater, with songs that aim to get the message out and to say the women know they have rights. They are aware that the sexist culture allows and even, in many cases, legitimizes violence suffered at home. However, knowing about their rights, women are aware that this violence is illegal and that Tanzania has laws that protect them, as in any other country. February 14, known as "Valentine's Day" – held on different days in different countries, is more than Valentine's Day for the women of Mkomanile. It is the day to tell their husbands and/or partners: "We respect each other and we respect the tribal customs, but we repudiate this



aggression that subjugates and humiliates us before our children in society." So, they organized an event in which they called upon the people of the village and the local authorities. It was interesting and hopeful to see the village stop and listen to the cry of women. Bravely, they presented the reality they experience, and also gave explanations on the legal steps to combat domestic violence. This event, in an isolated village such as Msalaba Mkuu, really makes a difference. However, it is challenging to know that domestic violence is still more experienced than spoken. We know that, although they have shouted out against it, women suffer

such violence silently and often. Yet one cannot deny that it's a big step when our women get up from their sewing machines, by which they support their families and, in a public way, say they are tired of being violated.

It is important to note that all the art produced by the Tanzanian women, which is sold not only in the African territories, but has already reached countries such as France, Italy and the international events of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, will be accompanied by the cry that characterized February 12, 2017, a day that anticipated "Valentine's Day": Break the Chain – No More Violence.

Maintain Our Rights!

S. Eliana Aparecida dos Santos

Brazil

Brazil is living a tense and delicate moment in its political-economic system. It can be said that this is one of the biggest crises ever experienced in the country. The population, outraged about labor and welfare reforms discussed in the National Congress, held a mass rally April 28, 2017. The strike was judged to be one of the largest in the history of the country. Hundreds of groups teamed up and went to the streets, with the aim to stop the reforms. In all States, workers were out on the streets to protest a system that oppresses, that favors the few, killing the poorest, through stealing their right to education, health, sanitation, safety and a dignified life.

The Church in a Catholic and Evangelical Brazil has supported and encouraged the strike. Representatives of the churches publicly criticized the reforms. The Secretary General of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil, and the President of the National Conference of Religious, along with several bishops and pastors, released a note supporting the demonstrations.

"I attended the manifestations in the belief that, as a citizen, I can't avoid being present at a time when we are being deprived of our rights won the hard way in the course of history. My participation was also a response to the request of the bishops and our religious organizations, who called us to participate in reaffirming the mission of the Church and ours as well, in defense of the common good, of social justice and the dignity of life for all," said Sister Cecilia Berno, who took part in the protests on the streets of Caxias do Sul, in southern Brazil.



People in the streets

Sister Maria Ana Pinto, who accompanied the demonstrations in Curitiba said, "I participated with the intention of being present as a Sister of Saint Joseph near the people who are suffering. Being together with people on this journey inspired me, seeing that the people are not afraid or silent, and they are not accepting these impositions, which undo the achievements reached with sweat and blood. Our presence counts, because the people understand that, as a church and congregation, we are with them fighting for a more humane and supportive country."

Another Sister of Saint Joseph to join the people in the streets of Caxias do Sul was Sister Enedina Pierdoná. For her, participating in the popular mobilization was living more closely the struggle of the working class. It was seeing the light of hope at the end of the tunnel, light manifested in the cry for help for the most humble: youth, women, farmers, educators, workers...

"We join with millions of Brazilians in defense of labor and social security

rights that are at risk of being extinguished. According to organizers, there had never been a demonstration with the participation of so many movements and with such a large number of people in the streets, 8,000 to 10,000 people in Campo Grande alone. It was very meaningful to have the participation of youth of the Landless Movement, as well as the Eldorado settlement where we live," says Sister Maria Olga Peirera de Oliveira, who participated with her community, in the demonstrations on the streets of Campo Grande.

The Brazilian population, despite suffering with the current reality, is a people of courage, faith and hope. Their struggle in defense of the dignity of acquired rights and freedom is the struggle of all people. And this is also the cause for which the Sisters of Saint Joseph struggle. A more humane and fair country will only be built with the participation of all in the promotion of a culture of peace and justice. Maintain our rights!

Agents of Change

S. Olinda Fernandes
Province of Nagpur- India

Over the past year, the Archdiocesan Board of Education in Mumbai, India, in partnership with School Leaders Network (India) worked with 19 private schools to pilot a System Leadership Programme. National Leaders for Education in Mumbai, India, pioneered a system, which contextualized world class methodologies for school improvement, including leadership models in the education setting. This potentially low-cost, high-impact and sustainable approach to school improvement worked with school leaders from a mix of schools and from different boards of affiliation. Our school, St. Anthony Girls' High School, Chembur, Mumbai, was one of them and we were paired with St. Joseph Convent High School, Bandra, Mumbai, India. Both of these schools have an enrollment of about 3000 students, including both the poor and the well-off. Both St. Anthony's and St. Joseph's were struggling with weak students. So we shared our methods of remedial classes with special attention and various methods to increase the learning capacity of students. Providing opportunities and giving incentives for encouragement, we kept evaluating our methods with the progress of the individual child's performance. As partner schools, we worked with teachers and students, sharing skills and expertise through various activities and sessions. This was followed by evaluation and feedback. The conversation engaged not only administrators but also teachers



sharing their experiences. The leaders in high poverty areas on this programme faced many challenges – poorly trained teachers, inadequate facilities, highly marginalized students – yet there were flashes of innovative practice in every corner. We, participants felt that working with a peer creates a safe space to share the real 'pressure points' in our school, and tackle attainable goals together. The vision of this pilot project is to build the capacity of the paired school leaders to provide regular high caliber coaching to each other and achieve rapid school improvement. The school leaders set measurable goals using school data and supported each other to codify and share their leadership practices. Reflecting on important aspects from our Pilot Programme in Mumbai we learnt why System Leadership was such a powerful tool for change. The term 'System Leader', carried an explicit collective moral purpose: that we, leaders, strove for the success of all students, not just our own. Thus, at the heart of the System Leadership Programme in Mumbai, was a regular high quality coaching conversation about each other's School Improvement Priority.

This allowed for practical, on-the-job problem solving and for flexible and responsive follow up. As our initial programme in Mumbai drew to a close we were seeing the potential of the system leaders to take on wider school improvement responsibilities. We emerged as agents of change, with strengthened relationship, networks, and skills in recognizing and articulating effective school improvement practice. In our concluding meeting with the education inspectors, we shared our rich experiences and the great impact of this programme on our school learning and teaching methods. We were not merely encouraged but challenged to share this programme with the less developed and poorly managed schools around us. We as the pioneering team, aim at partnering and reaching out to such less privileged schools in our locality and sharing our experiences through similar projects, making 'teaching/ learning' interesting and effective. We plan to walk the extra mile by working together, sharing our own resources, skilled personnel and techniques. We desire to work and move ahead unitedly, towards a better and brighter future...thus being "Agents of Change."

Women's Issues Voiced at the UN

S. Barbara Bozak

USA

“Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” was the main theme for the 61st meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, held at the UN headquarters in New York, March 13-24, 2017. While the focus of many sessions was women in the workforce, many other issues were addressed, all of which involve the empowerment of women, as expressed by SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

One topic that was addressed by different groups this year is that of violence against women, which takes many forms. In a session on the Gender Dimensions of Modern Day Slavery the panelists noted how the situation of immigrant and refugee women puts them at greater risk of becoming victims of trafficking. In areas which suffer from conflict or natural disasters, this likelihood becomes very acute. And certainly poor women seeking employment often fall unknowingly into the hands of traffickers and find themselves enslaved. While slavery and trafficking are illegal across the globe, the traffickers often escape prosecution because they can stay one step ahead of the law and laws are not able to be enforced across national boundaries.

Women’s groups in some areas of the United States and Bulgaria address the issue of violence against women through a system of court monitoring. When cases of



Indigenous women prepare to address the assembled women

domestic violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking or child abuse come before the court, one or two members of the public are visibly present to monitor both the substance of the case and the procedure. In this way the justice system is held to the highest standards and corruption which might lead to lack of conviction is made visible. Any action that might be intimidating is noted and suggestions for improving the system are offered, often with positive results. This year for the first time at the CSW, the Secretary General of the UN, António Guterres, held an open meeting with the NGO representatives. In speaking of his experience as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, he noted the importance of gender parity as a response to violence against women. Interestingly, the Security Council gives more attention to drug trafficking than to human trafficking, for the former is considered a

universal problem, unlike the latter. Yet human trafficking is contrary to human rights and touches the most vulnerable in the society, with women often being victims.

During the interactive dialogue on the empowerment of indigenous women the theme of violence was addressed yet again. A Kenyan woman noted that certain forms of violence against women, such as domestic abuse, child marriage and female genital mutilation, are rooted in the culture. Yet, she said, it is imperative to separate violence from culture. While Argentina and Mexico say they are addressing the issue through public policy, in these and other countries, discrimination against indigenous women persists. Only with economic and social empowerment as well as a stronger voice in government and society, as proposed by the EU Gender Action Plan, will women have the tools needed to bring an end to the violence they all too often suffer.

Our Lady Aparecida Visits Vacaria

S. Adelaide Canci

Brazil

In the year 1717, three fishermen found an image of Our Lady in the Paraíba do Sul River in São Paulo, Brazil. This image was black and filled the three poor fishermen with emotion. One of the fishermen, the oldest, took the image home, before which he and his family began to pray. Gradually, people began flocking in large numbers to the modest fisherman's house in order to ask for graces and miracles from the Virgin, who had "appeared" in the waters of the river. So began the devotion to the patron saint of Brazil, Our Lady of Aparecida. In 2017, the Church in Brazil is celebrating the "National Marian Year," which began on the solemnity of Our Lady of Aparecida, October 12, 2016, and will be completed on October 12, 2017. The National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) established the Marian Year in the context of the celebration of 300 years of finding the image of Our Lady of Aparecida. The celebration is a great thanksgiving. Since 2014, the dioceses of Brazil have been preparing for this commemoration by receiving the visit of the Pilgrim Image of Our Lady of Aparecida. The image of our Lady roams the countryside, towns and outskirts, remembering the devotees, the poor and most abandoned who are the favored of the merciful heart of God.

The community that receives the visit of the patron saint of Brazil lives a special time of God's grace, having the opportunity to be close to Jesus



and live the dynamics of salvation. This time of grace also happened at the Nossa Senhora da Oliveira Hospital, in Vacaria, in southern Brazil, March 21-25, 2017. Nossa Senhora Aparecida was received with a Eucharistic Celebration, with the participation of the employees of the hospital, patients, and people in the community. The image created a lot of excitement, joy and concrete gestures which manifested faith.

Over the days that the image was in the hospital, she visited patients in their beds, walked the halls, remained in the wards and at night, went back to the hospital chapel. These were days of petitions and giving thanks. They were days of great emotion, because people wanted to touch the image, pray, and talk to her. All this is to say how much she is beloved among this simple and humble people, who suffer the consequences of a terrible crisis caused by an unjust system of exploitation, that the Brazilian government has no interest in solving. Our Lady was welcomed, passed from

hand to hand, embraced, and kissed, hearing many conversations, secrets, requests and prayers. In the eyes of the people wiping their tears, you could tell their joy in receiving Our Lady of Aparecida into our house, in our city, in our work. For many who have visited the sanctuary in Aparecida do Norte in São Paulo, she came to repay the visit. For others, it was simply the joy of receiving for the first time the unforgettable visit of our dear mother. She was among us, and she was here. Nossa Senhora Aparecida came to us through her Pilgrim Image as a woman of service, and her mere presence leads us to realize the importance of the will of God.

The visit of Our Lady of Aparecida is a way to repay the visit of the pilgrims to her Sanctuary, which now receives more than 10 million pilgrims each year. It is also a way to reach out to those who have not yet had the possibility of visiting Aparecida, and who, in their daily lives, rely on her for help in the most difficult moments of their lives.

Indigenous Voices at the UN

S. Barbara Bozak
USA

This year, which is the tenth anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 16th Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the UN emphasized “Leaving No One Behind,” which is the primary focus of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. From April 24 to May 4, 2017, the halls of the UN in New York were filled with hundreds of indigenous people from throughout the world, who, in their native attire and feathered headdresses, brought color to every part of the buildings. Several speakers noted that, while the Declaration has been accepted by the member states, its implementation has yet to occur, with many countries still needing to develop laws and policies that actually protect the rights of indigenous groups. Joarez Saw, the leader of the Mundurucu Community in the Amazon region of Brazil, spoke of how the government is polluting their water through the development of a hydroelectric project which will not help his people in any way. Armindo Goes, of the Yanomani Community in Brazil, recounted that the government has demarcated their territory but takes no responsibility to protect it from those coming in illegally to exploit the gold and other resources. Chief Perry and Chief Hawthorne of two different native American tribes,



A group of indigenous leaders of North and South America

told of how the US government is more concerned with supporting projects having economic value than protecting the rights of indigenous Americans. This is seen in the construction of oil pipelines through aquifers and areas sacred to tribes. Another example is the way zoning laws have been applied to deny groups the right to assemble, taking away a basic right. It was interesting and thought-provoking to hear these peoples, whose very existence is closely tied to mother-earth, speak of water as the life-blood of the earth. Through pollution, exploitation of resources and destruction of nature, the earth has, in their words, become ill and is trying to heal itself by reacting through what we call climate change. They bring their unique wisdom to the conversation of ecological well-being. This was part

of the message of Carolyn Bennett, the Canadian Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, whose remarks during the opening ceremony proposed that Indigenous groups be given a permanent voice at the UN itself. Whether from Polynesia, the Americas, Africa, Scandinavia or Indonesia, the repeated message was the need to respect these groups and heed their wisdom. The connections made among different groups across the globe, together with the steps taken to become united and to speak with a single voice, are important outcomes of this gathering. The voice of the indigenous peoples continues to gain strength and their wisdom to reach beyond their own groups. Thus will they gain the respect they deserve and be accorded the rights held sacred by the UN.

NEW
SAINTS

S. Mary Olivia Murray (103)	USA	01.03.2017
S. Mary Canisius Chakkalakal (79)	Nirmala	05.03.2017
S. Maria della Presentazione (90)	Italy	13.03.2017
S. Marie Emélie Chinal (93)	France	19.03.2017
S. Carmelina Molinari (90)	Brazil	24.03.2017
S. Lúcia Zandoná (75)	Brazil	16.04.2017
S. Marie-Lucile Buthod-Garçon (88)	France	19.04.2017
S. Marie Joséphine Ramel (98)	France	12.05.2017
S. Lizia Pinto (62)	Nagpur	17.05.2017
S. Marie Rubat (95)	France	18.05.2017
S. Marie Raiwet (94)	USA	19.05.2017
S. Odile Velloothara (82)	Nirmala	26.05.2017
S. Marina Lobo (91)	Nagpur	27.05.2017
S. Teresa Pasa (94)	Brazil	29.05.2017

Catechetical Mission in the United Arab Emirates

S. David Delaney

Nagpur Province, India

At the beginning of the year I presented an address entitled *The Catechist as Servant Leader in the 21st Century*, to over 1,000 catechists in Muscat, Oman (27th and 28th January) and Dubai, UAE (3rd and 4th February).

My address was part of the Christian Formation Conference held each year, both in Muscat (Sultanate of Oman) and Dubai (United Arab Emirates) to empower and motivate the many Catechists who are responsible for building up the faith of more than 10,000 Catholic children and youth. This is an important event for the close to 2 million Catholics in Oman and the UAE, who are about 9 % of the population which is majority Muslim. Almost all the Catholics are expats, guest workers from other countries, with a large Indian cohort among them. These Catholics belong to one of the twelve parishes there, eight in the UAE, four in Oman. While there are now about 100 priests and 80 sisters serving the Catholics in the parishes and in the nine Catholic schools in the UAE, the laity are an important component of the vitality of the Church. They take a leading and active role in the catechetical classes, at



Sister David addressing the catechists

the Liturgy and wherever the Kingdom of God needs to spread and flourish. I was greatly delighted and highly impressed at their passionate commitment and the positive energy that these catechists inculcate and share among themselves. Focusing on Jesus, the Servant Leader, I made the sessions practical, using live and tangible examples to boost the image and mission of Catechists, who are doing an amazingly overwhelming and wonderful ministry in the Emirates where there are very few priests and religious.

I held up Pope Francis as a role model of a servant leader, stooping down and bending low to serve and reach out to all, especially those who are on the periphery and margins of society.

I stressed that a Catechist is a close

disciple of Christ who goes into the world to proclaim the good news. This mandate can only be accomplished with a strong prayer life and interiority. The Catechist, as Servant Leader, needs to have a close, intimate and vibrant connection with Abba Father, with Jesus His Son and with the Holy Spirit. A deep experience of the Trinitarian God helps the Catechist to be bold, courageous, innovative and dynamic to reach modern children and youth

This invitation gave me the opportunity to meet our sisters who work in St. Mary's Parish and Catholic High School in Dubai. I was extremely happy and proud to see how Sisters Archana, Pushpika and Hazel are consciously keeping the Charism of the Sisters of St Joseph alive in the Emirates.

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