

French

English

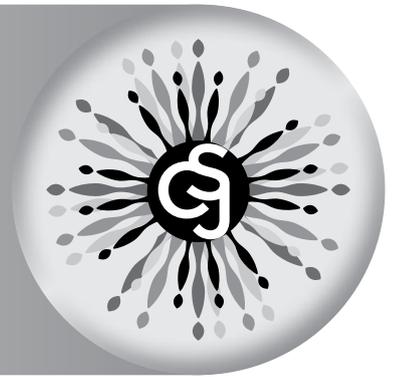
Italian

Portuguese

Norwegian

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GENERAL COUNCIL

Contemplative Dialogue during the 2017 Extended Council



S. Sally addressing the group

S. Sally Hodgdon
General Council

The Extended Council meeting, held September 15 – October 1, in Oslo, Norway, was designed to be prayerful, process oriented and led by the Spirit. We gathered together as leaders of our congregation, to pray with each other, to reflect on and

discuss important aspects of who we are as women religious, to make some decisions regarding the implementation of the 2015 General Chapter and to see how we could continue to help our sisters grow. It was a time to share ideas, possibilities, desires for the congregation and, in so doing, to enlarge the circle of participation and decision making. Throughout our 2015 General Chapter

SUMMARY

GENERAL COUNCIL

Contemplative Dialogue during the 2017 Extended Council

COVER

PROVINCE/REGION/MISSION

Mozambique: Loving and Serving with Jesus

3

Tanzania: Back in Tanzania

4

Brazil: Daring the New

5

Czech Republic: Mission: UNITY

6

Pakistan: Our Mission in Multan

7

New Saints

7

USA: Sisters of St. Joseph at the UN

8

France: Celebrating Missionary Presence in France

9

Norway: Learning Together and Making Connections

10

Brazil: The Challenge of Being Communicators

12

we spoke about being a prophetic and dynamic presence of reconciliation and unity. We also challenged each other to be bridge builders through honest dialogue and reverence; and we called each other to be sacraments of encounter, which became our theme for the Extended Council.

The Extended Council opened with a call to more time spent in personal contemplation, going deeper into ourselves and our relationship with God, to be silent and vulnerable before God, so that we might live more fully the love which is God and bring this love to our encounters. Through personal contemplation we create a space within us, more space for the energy of Love flowing in and through us. Contemplation is transformative and its prolonged silence may also allow the new to emerge.

Through a process called Contemplative Dialogue the same experience of deep silence and experiencing the mystery of God can be moved from the personal to the communal. This process leads the group to enter into a space that allows the new to emerge from their sharing at a deeper level, resulting in the transformation of the group who are engaged in it. If we fully enter into Contemplative Dialogue, we are engaged in attentive listening,

discerning hearts, sacred encounters and building bridges, some of the calls from our General Chapter.

Contemplative Dialogue is rooted in living with awareness and thus is a foundation for building communion; it is about being connected and interdependent. It is about the “we,” not the “I.” In Contemplative Dialogue, which is a communal process, each person builds on what another says and in doing so, we create something new, grounded in the spirit and energy of the group. It is not the sharing of ideas or reflections, but rather attentive listening to the others in the group and connecting with or building on what they have shared. This requires holding lightly or letting go of one’s own idea to create together something new. In contemplative dialogue, as we slow down and notice more of what is present, we listen with all of our senses, and pay attention to what emotions are arising. In the sharing, the collective awareness reflects not the sum of the individuals gathered, but the deep wisdom and tradition of the group. By maintaining a focus on the collective mind of the group, dialogue is able to draw on the strength of a group’s common ground. It is an experience of how rich communal dialogue can be when it is rooted in

reverent listening with an open mind and open heart.

Certain values are basic for the Contemplative Dialogue process: basic trust in each person involved; the ability to listen not only to the words but also to the emotions conveyed by the person speaking; suspending all judgment about what is being expressed by the others, recognizing that it is their reality, their experience; letting go of preconceived opinions. Assumptions are obstacles to entering into Contemplative Dialogue we need to be free of them. When we don’t check out our assumptions, we make judgments and then we act on them as if they are the truth.

Gathered in small groups of 5-7 sisters, we used Contemplative Dialogue several times for various topics during the Extended Council. Each time we engaged in this process, we became better at listening to one other and to building on the other’s reflections. Through this process we were able to see the new emerging in the group. All agreed that Contemplative Dialogue was a graced experience, offering both time for deep silence and greater freedom. It is a process that many hope to use in their own countries as we move together into the future.



Participants and support staff at the 2017 Extended Council in Oslo

Loving and Serving with Jesus

S. Eliane Costa Santana
Brazil

“Loving and Serving with Jesus” was the motto chosen for the profession of perpetual vows of Sister Sandra Vel Eleutherius, the first Sister of St. Joseph to profess vows in African lands, in Mocimboa da Praia, Mozambique on July 30, 2017. A beautiful celebration in African style, fully imbued with the spirit of unity of our Congregation, marked the occasion. Sister Sandra went to Mozambique for a missionary experience before her final vows and chose to continue in this mission. Sandra is a teacher with a degree in the Portuguese language. In Mozambique, she works in various ministries: youth, catechesis, formation of leaders, and she is also studying theology.

To describe the celebration is to picture a great witness of sharing, commitment and energy, a community with four sisters that has expanded to involve Benedictine monks and parish communities. It was an ecumenical celebration that featured the collaboration of several Muslims, a celebration of unity, where love and respect dictated the rules.

The key words that could define this celebration are unity and presence. Unity is created through respect for and acceptance of differences. The dream of Father Médaille, a total double union in a divided world, could be seen in Christians and Muslims participating in the same preparation, with the same sensitivity. It was an ecumenical celebration not just for the day, with the presence of Muslims, but more, an ecumenical achievement, each giving



S. Sandra pronouncing her vows in Mozambique



At the consecration of the Mass

what they could, just by being present. The unity between the various religious congregations in the Diocese was expressed by sharing presence and commitment. Unity with the family and friends of Sister Sandra, who came from Brazil, showed that in fact, distance does not exist when you love. The Church of Brazil was represented and showed its unity by the presence of Sister Fatima, representing the Conference of Religious of Brazil (CRB). And the whole

Congregation was present, in unity with Sister Sandra through the participation of some Sisters from Brazil. And what is Presence? The perpetual vows of Sister Sandra became a landmark in our historical presence here, which began in 2003 with the first group of Sisters and a dream that carried no certainties, no security, but which was full of hope and courage and especially of the desire to be Sisters with these people.

With her choice of making vows here in Mocimboa da Praia, Sister Sandra professed her conviction that religious life as a Sister of St. Joseph is a worthwhile endeavor, and she professed publicly that this mission here, despite all the challenges and all its limits, is continuing and getting stronger. Her profession was our declaration of love for the mission in this place, the crowning achievement of a journey, and the assertion that we were, we are and we will be the presence of God's inclusive love.



Children at the vow ceremony

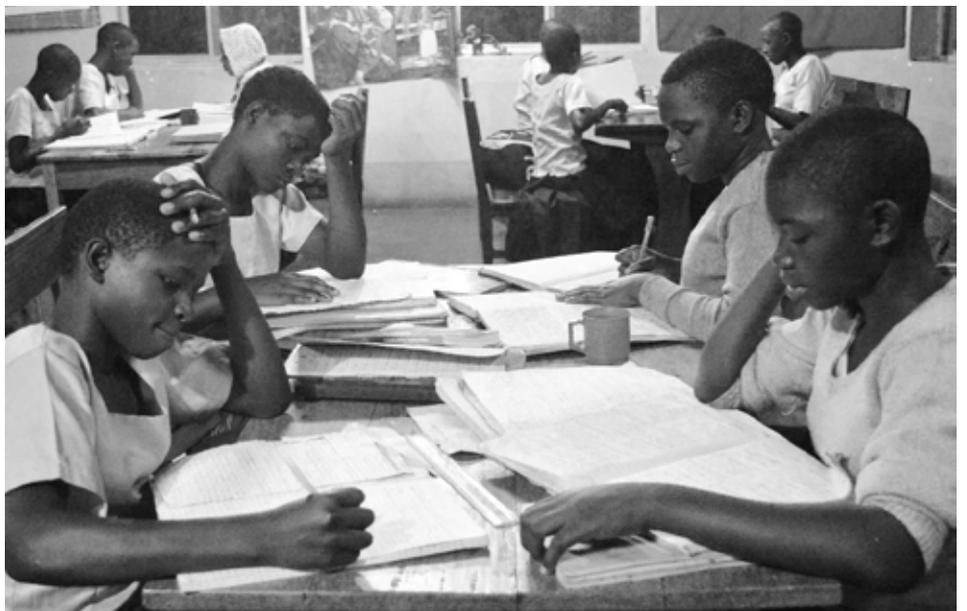
Back in Tanzania

S. Marian Connor

Tanzania

At the end of last year I returned to Tanzania after almost 14 years away. I was happy to return, but a little apprehensive, wondering how much had changed in all those years. I noted great changes in the roads, the houses and, above all, the education. The road from Dar es Salaam (where the plane arrives) to Songea, the city where the community is located, had improved. More of the road was paved, covered with tarmac even though a lot of it is still under construction. But to my dismay the road from the town of Songea to Matake, where our house is situated, is still a dirt road, although a few months ago the road department did try to improve it.

So what had changed? For me it is EDUCATION FOR GIRLS. It is heartwarming to see so many girls going to school; not just primary school but secondary school also. Back in 2003-4 I did not see any girls going to secondary school but I was doing other work and may not have been fully aware of them in school. But now I see both boys and girls going to school, with the girls going to both first and



Girls studying in our hostel in Songea

second level. Sadly, one policy has not changed. If a 12 year-old does not pass their 7th class exams they have no chance to go to secondary school. So their lives are at a standstill as far as further education is concerned. A few may go on to get training in sewing, construction, or other trades, which is good but the important aspect, that of further education, is missing. And in certain parts of the country there is a growing number of young people whose education ends with the 7th class. For those who succeed in secondary school and go on to university, there

have been some positive changes. More young women are now doing university studies. I have been to the university for Mass on a couple of Sundays and I have seen this change. It is clear that young women as well as young men have dreams for their country, wanting to lead it forward and hopefully make a better future for all. As Sisters of St. Joseph we are supporting this trend of more education for girls and young women. Our own hostel gives young girls and young women the opportunity to study and mature into responsible women for the future of Tanzania.

Daring the New

S. Luiza Rodrigues and the
Provincial Council

Brazil

During these twenty months of the existence of the Province of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Brazil, we have experienced the novelty of an entity being built by many hands. The life and the soul of each Sister are intertwined in a single joint weaving, “in unity, embracing the mission of communion”. We are challenged to continue on the path of “daring to make all things new” in everyday life. We are aware that we are part of a Congregational Body, inserted in the fragmented and diverse reality of Brazil and Mozambique. From the calls of the General Chapters of 2003 and 2009, as Brazilian provinces, we intensified our thinking and searched for new forms of government and circularity, where we could put our gifts and abilities at the service of the mission of the Congregation.

The Province was formed as of January 29, 2016. The form of government and participation is composed in this way: Provincial Council and Enlarged Council, made up of the Coordinators of the nuclei and/or Coordinators of the different teams; Chapter and/or Provincial Assembly. The teams are: formation, administration and finance, care of the Sisters (Sisters’ health facilities), missionary animation and animation of vocations and youth service in the Congregation of St. Joseph (CSJ). Throughout this period, some groups were forming based on various needs.

With our gifts and abilities, we can be a major force within the Province



enabling us to share what we have and what we dream for the present and future of the Province and Congregation. In this sense, this is a propitious opening to new urgent missions, according to the decisions of the General Chapter.

We feel that attentive listening is critical to personal and community discernment. What we are daring to do is a challenge, demanding respect, patience and a compassionate heart to welcome differences, delays and unexpected situations with confidence. Within the Province, there is a mixture of hopes and fears: fear of the unknown, of the new, and of changes. On the other hand, there is a walking in confidence, enthusiasm, and courage to go back, if necessary, and start over if need be.

From the study of the reality, from reflection and re-reading of our missionary presence, we want to re-dimension our mission spaces. And, in response to the challenges and the moment, we wish to extend

our horizons of mission, making the Charism of Communion known and lived.

Within the Province, we perceive signs of more life, involvement, and commitment of the Sisters to the process. There is a growth in spiritual development, in fraternal relations, sharing of gifts, hospitality and acceptance of cultural diversity and of our differences.

The communication that circulates in the Province is an instrument for bridging distances in order to make us feel connected in different spaces of experience.

The Sisters, who at all levels, took on the weaving of COMMUNION, did not spare their efforts so that the construction of the One Province could happen. The weaving of this process is not completed, and as the Provincial coordination team, we have the conviction that God led us here and will lead us to the end. God’s grace and blessing have accompanied us so lovingly and abundantly.

Mission: UNITY

S. Gisela Heitz

Czech Republic

The annual meeting of the International Interconfessional Congress for Religious took place from August 24th to 29th. The aims of this congress are to live the joy of Christian unity expressed in religious life, to know each other's traditions, history and churches in the hope of creating friendships and to deepen our common life in Jesus Christ, in fidelity to the different Churches and following Scripture. The emphasis of the Congress is always on sharing the common life and worshipping together in the different traditions. These are the traditions of the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Church, different protestant Lutheran Churches, different orthodox churches.

This year the congress was held in the community of the Casteller Ring, a protestant religious community in Bavaria (Germany). As the place is not very far from the community in Plzen/ Czech Republic (only 3 hours by car) all three members of the community in Plzen participated in this important ecumenical event. Women and men religious from all over Europe (France, Germany, England, Switzerland, Sweden, Ireland, Belgium, Greece, Czech Republic, Spain, Romania), the United States and Australia gathered in order to pray and share the Word together, to listen to each other and to explore the different Christian traditions of religious life. Sharing the traditions of so many brothers and sisters is a pure gift – the gift of experiencing that God is One, and that Christians are One in God.

The theme of this year's congress – "renewal" – was inspired by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation (begun in 1517 by Martin Luther in Germany).



A group photo with our sisters Gisela, Celine and Jaya in the middle of those standing

Being in a place with a Lutheran tradition, the group opened itself to the inspiration offered by Lutheranism.

In one of the keynote addresses, Sr. Anna-Maria aus der Wiesche, CCB, prioress of a protestant sister-community of the "Brotherhood of Christ," offered five important points for the ecumenical renewal of religious life: (1) Living the Gospel authentically, which is at the root of who we are and goes beyond our different spiritualities [Benedictine, Ignatian, Dominican, Augustinian, Orthodox ...]; (2) The Com/passionate Love of God, which, enflamed by the Holy Spirit, keeps religious life burning for God and neighbour; (3) Adoration of the Triune God, which is a source of religious life and includes intercessory prayer for those who no longer know how to pray; (4) Offering a place of silence, a gift not only to religious, but also to the "busy world"; (5) Living in community, since, as the society is more and more individualized and even "atomized", the witness of life in community has a healing power.

The Congress was invited to celebrate the Eucharist with the catholic Bishop of Würzburg, Friedhelm Hofmann, in St.



S. Jaya (L) with two other women religious

Kilian's Cathedral at Würzburg. With an overall length of 105 metres this is the fourth largest Romanesque church building in Germany, and a masterpiece of German architecture from the Salian period (1024–1125). At the same time it is among the oldest cathedrals in Germany. During this precious moment of celebrating the Mystery of Death and Resurrection, the Bishop said: "If we have the courage to "go out to the roads and hedges" (Luke 14,24) and are not afraid of dented churches, as Pope Francis said, the Church will stay alive and will continue to be alive among people".

Our Mission in Multan

S. Naina Javed

Pakistan

Since we, Sisters of St. Joseph moved to Multan in 1980 we have been working with and empowering people in different ways. In our sewing center, which has been serving the local women since 2004, women get training and skills not far from their homes. Each one who completes the two-year program receives both a certificate of completion and a sewing machine which she can use to help support her family. The sewing machine makes it possible for the women to make clothing at home, which they can sell and thus earn money. Often part of the money is used for their children's education.

At the present time we have about 25 women who come to learn stitching and other handcrafts. While the majority are Christians, Muslim women are welcome and a few are part of the group.

We also offer the women different programmes and seminars to help them grow in confidence and in spiritual and ethical decision-making. Twice a month a group of about 25 young women come for prayer and spiritual activities as well as handcrafts. Through our life style, spirituality, and loving presence we offer them the possibility of inner transformation and



A group of girls in the church

joyful living. We try to live our call to be a prophetic presence, bringing Christ to those suffering from poverty and need. We support the women in their joys and sorrows. These women and their parents are highly appreciative of all the sisters who are helping them learn new skills and giving them a model for virtuous living. Through our reaching out to the poor and needy we are living our charism of loving God



The sisters with some girls

and neighbor while strengthening our society.

NEW

SAINTS

S. Anna Pasuch (88)	Brazil	25.08.2017
S. Else Maria Øigaard Wolff (79)	Denmark	25.08.2017
S. Maria Zancan (85)	Brazil	08.09.2017
S. Marie de Lourdes Mas (95)	France	10.09.2017
S. Louise-Cécile Régis (97)	France	08.10.2017
S. Gemma Amabile Sangalli (91)	Brazil	18.10.2017

Sisters of St. Joseph at the UN

S. Marianne Sennick
(Brentwood) e Barbara Bozak
USA

The Sisters of St. Joseph have an ongoing and varied presence at the UN in New York. The presence of S. Justine Senapati, our full-time NGO representative, is expanded by the regular presence of S. Marianne Sennick (Brentwood) and S. Barbara Bozak (Chambéry/West Hartford). Together they actively participate in the monthly meetings of several NGO committees including Funding for Development, Committee on the Status of Women, Committee on Social Development, Committee on Migration and the Committee to Stop Human Trafficking. Through their participation in these and other committees, they have input into the agenda of the various commissions (Social Development, Status of Women, Population and Development) which are official arms of the UN Economic and Social Council.

With our annual grounds passes, we have access to the UN building and can engage in dialogue with the UN delegates concerning issues being discussed at the UN. We are also able to give input to final documents of the Commissions, which undergo constant revision until the closing of the Commission meeting. This opportunity for us and all NGOs to shape final documents does not differ from that of member states.

By being present at different meetings, we have the opportunity to interact with country delegates who write the resolutions approved by the General Assembly annually. While these resolutions do not have the force of law, they are the basis for the development of global and national policy. Based on the topic of the meeting, we choose



(L to R) Sisters Barbara Bozak (Chambéry/USA), Justine Senapati (Anney/India) and Marianne Sennick (Brentwood, NY, USA)

those at which we wish to be present and thus become aware of the position of various states. At times NGOs can intervene during the meeting. But it is always possible for an NGO to approach a delegate and offer suggestions on issues that people on the ground are facing.

Each year we have participated in the Commission on Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Population and Development and, more recently, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development which began with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This latter, held in July, gathers representatives of all member states and specialized agencies. It includes Voluntary National Reviews by member states in which they report on how they are progressing in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. By our ongoing presence at the UN we are linked to the international community and, hopefully, can have some influence on decisions and policies that touch

the lives of all in our society. As the Congregations of St. Joseph we operate out of our charism, seeking to engage in dialogue in order to establish a more just society. Our presence offers us the opportunity to both gather information to be shared with all our constituents and to influence decision making. The value of our advocacy in this setting cannot be downplayed.

During the CSJ International Justice and Peace meeting in Marywood, Florida, in 2016, a core committee of six sisters was formed, having as one of their tasks to send out information and gather material relative to our presence throughout the world and the work of our NGO at the UN. Each federation and international congregation has a contact person to disseminate and collect information through their respective Justice and Peace coordinators, with Linda Pepe filling this function for the Chambéry congregation. While the process is still being developed, we recognize the importance of grassroots information finding a voice in the halls of the UN.

Celebrating Missionary Presence in France

S. Odile Gay and
S. Bénédicte de Vaublanc

France

After the Extended Council in Norway, whose echoes reached us every day in Savoy, we waited for the General Council and several Provincials to join us in the Province on October 4. That day, two days before the birthday of our founder, all the Sisters from Brazil, India and Madagascar who came to live the mission in France would really “be sent” on their mission. The Sisters of France-Belgium would thus be renewed in their mission by welcoming and living the same project. How to describe what we experienced on October 4, Sisters from different countries, priests, friends and collaborators?

In the beautiful church of the district of Biollay in Chambéry, the choir space offered our eyes the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth painted by Arcabas, framed by the theme of the Extended Council, whose words became significant for us: “Dare the Mystery of Encounter, a Compassionate Journey.” The globe in front of the altar symbolized the world. The priests came forward, followed by the General Council, the Provincials, the Superior General of Aosta and all the Sisters continuing the missionary presence in France. “We are the body of Christ”, sang the choir of La Ravoire and the large assembly, supported by five musicians and the voice of Yves, a good director. At the invitation of Sister Sally, Superior General, the missionary Sisters came forward, called by their Provincial and carrying small candles.

After words of welcome from Sister Jona, Father Pierre Viale, the delegate of our Bishop, opened the Eucharistic celebration. The diversity of languages for the readings, the participation of the assembly in the beautiful chorus in English “Here I am, Lord. . . I will go, Lord, if you lead me” opened us to the world.

The procession of offerings by our Sisters from Madagascar and three Indian Novices, the universal prayer in five languages, the Indian rite of Aarati before the Our Father, were truly universal experiences of our life in the Church. They touched our friends, who told us: “An extraordinary celebration;” “A wonderful celebration;” “Sisters coming from elsewhere remind us of the place of the body in liturgical prayer”.

After communion, each Sister who came



Sisters and friends who gathered for the missioning ritual

for the mission in France was sent forth, called by her name; then all together were blessed by the General Council. Immediately the Magnificat broke out. The priest blessed all the assembly, "Christ today calls us, Christ today sends us!" Joy was visible on all the faces. It was a joy also to go to Bellecombette,

to a tent installed in the meadow for the evening. A hundred Sisters and lay friends were gathered. We cannot but thank all the Sisters who had taken on the task of organization and the professional team which accomplished it all with much friendliness. Exchanges, chants, and applause punctuated the evening. A good number of the Sisters

from Clos St. Joseph desired and were able to be there for the celebration and dinner. We cannot help but feel this experience of universality as a grace received! Father Viale concluded the celebration by giving thanks, as he said, "We are amazed witnesses of this adventure." Let us entrust it together to the one who calls and sends.



All those sent on mission in France with the General Council behind them

Learning Together and Making Connections

S. Marie-Kristin Riosianu

Norway

This summer two of our young Vietnamese sisters, S. Anna and S. Anna-Vy, had the opportunity

to participate in a seminar in Turku, Finland, which was organized for seminarians and candidates for religious congregations. It was planned by a group called "Pro Scandiae Populis" (For Scandinavian People) with the

purpose of offering an opportunity for those pursuing a vocation in the priesthood or religious life to get to know one another and become familiar with the work of the Catholic Church in Scandinavia. These goals are important

since vocations are few and the Catholic population is mainly an immigrant group, coming from more than 50 different countries,

This annual four-day program includes lectures, excursions and liturgy, both the Prayer of the Church and Mass, as well as opportunities for social gatherings. Sr. Anna and S. Anna-Vy enjoyed their experience and shared their impressions with us: "We were twenty-eight participants, candidates for the priesthood and religious life. The rhythm of the days was varied. Each day we had Mass and prayed the Liturgy of the Hours together. In addition, we had different programs each day, with lectures, group discussions on the lectures and sharing of our call in small groups. We also visited different churches: Lutheran, Orthodox and Catholic. One day we enjoyed an excursion to the summer residence of the Finnish President and to the town of Naantali. The social gatherings we had each evening gave us an opportunity to relax together and get to one another informally. Among our visitors were representatives of Ansgar Werk in Osnabrück, Germany (which gives financial support to the Church in Scandinavia), the bishop of Finland and Bishop of Denmark. For us it was a wonderful experience to meet like-minded people and share our call and our experience of God and the Church. It encouraged us in our vocation. Through this meeting, we became familiar with other participants in Scandinavia and we learned more about the country and area where the meeting was held."

This annual meeting is very important for the young women and men in formation, since the Catholic Church in Scandinavia is a minority church, consisting of less than 2% of the population, with most Catholics being immigrants. Although the Scandinavian countries themselves are rich countries, the Catholic Church is poor since most

of its members are migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. While the Norwegian state or the municipality gives a certain amount of money per Catholic, based on what the Norwegian church receives, the small number of Catholics limits what the Church receives. In 1967 the dioceses of Hamburg and Osnabrück, Germany, decided to support the Catholic Church in Scandinavia through Ansgar Werk. The priests in these German dioceses, who have a

much higher salary than the priests in Scandinavia, agreed to voluntarily give a percentage of their salary to support the church in Scandinavia. Thus support comes from Germany for the expenses of the bishops, the church buildings and seminary studies. Among the services offered by the Church in Norway are Norwegian courses for different language groups, as well as pastoral care by priests, social workers and teachers.



Sister Anna



Sister Anna Vy

The Challenge of Being Communicators

S. Eliana Aparecida dos Santos

Brazil



Sister Eliana

As new technologies and new media present themselves, we are surrounded by different ways of putting us in instant communication with people almost everywhere on the planet. It has never been so easy to communicate. Social networks are amazing phenomena that facilitate life, work, and contacting people. Therefore, we can say that all of us, in a way, are communicators. Communication is in our hands. It's part of who we are. How do we deal with it in our daily life? We use social networks for work, for information, for personal matters, to have fun. We are not always aware that we are exercising

our skills as communicators through these media.

Maybe we thought that to be a good communicator, we need talent to write well, speak well, have great resourcefulness in expression ... I'm sure these factors help. However, what makes the difference in a good communicator is the ability to listen. Before talking, communication is listening intently to the other.

Perhaps one of the greatest failures in current communication is that we talk too much and we listen little. We all want to speak, we have something important to say and so, we all speak at the same time and end up not listening. People have beautiful stories. The communicator is a storyteller of everyday life. However, before this, one needs to listen carefully. As religious, we have the opportunity to hear a great deal in our mission. We are involved with the most diverse people and events. There is, therefore, a range of stories that we can communicate, our own or those of people with whom we work and groups with which we are involved.

Our life, charism, and mission need to reach the four corners of the world. People are in need of communication that reaches the heart, that makes them look around and see the neighbor who suffers, the immigrant, the sick, and the poor. Our eyes need to leave computer screens and smartphones and we can



work together to make this happen. ...

So, why don't we communicate more easily and quickly? What do we fear? What are we missing? Our mission as communicators goes beyond writing good articles, taking pictures, organizing papers, websites ..., a group does this. However, as Sisters of Saint Joseph, we are all called to communicate who we are, what we do.

An idea that has been considered in the Church of Latin America is that evangelization is the Communication Service of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The document of Aparecida says, "Knowing Jesus is the best gift anyone can receive; having found this is the best thing that has happened in our lives; making it known with our words and works is our joy." Thus, we have the mission as church and as congregation to communicate the good news of Jesus to all people, so that they have life and have it to the full. And we can do this through communication.

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