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Italian

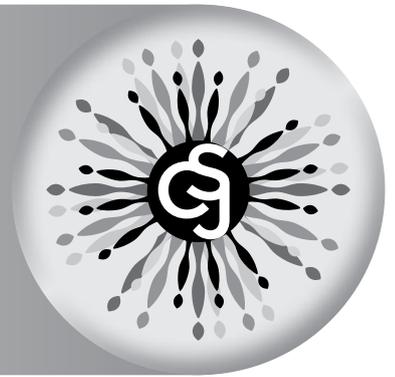
Portuguese

Norwegian

CS JOURNAL

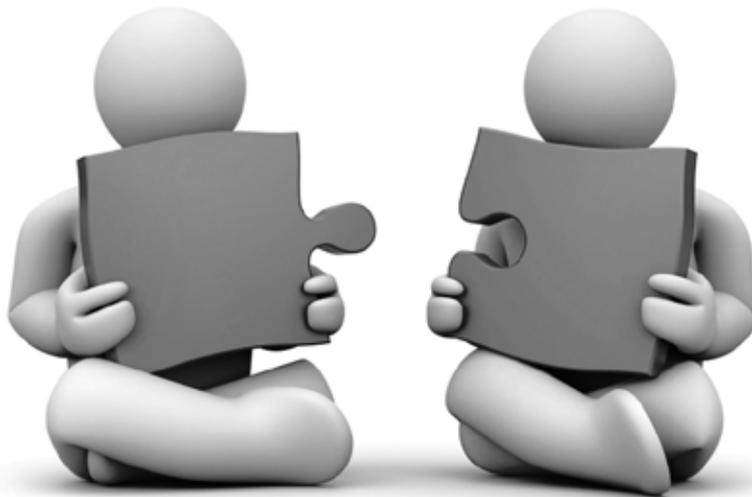
Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry

March - April • Year 2018 - n. 2



GENERAL COUNCIL

Recognizing the Good that We Do and Proclaiming It



S. Mariaelena Aceti
General Council

We need to recognize the good we do and proclaim it, speak of it among ourselves, within communities, between communities, between the nuclei, the Provinces, and, when convenient, even beyond. We need a word that encourages rather than corrects. We must learn to let ourselves congratulate each other. This belief was reinforced in me through my visits as a General Councilor.

How much love is lived in daily life in our communities! This is not the time to take it for granted and point out what is missing, to let ourselves be glum due to negative consciousness exams and lists of shadows and fragility, or weaken each other, underestimating or looking suspiciously at the seeds of life, what is new and different among us. It's time for "Let us congratulate each other". I know that talking about "Congratulations" may not sound appropriate, in light of our experience of artificial eulogies and pleasantries in place of rejoicing honestly with someone for the good and the beautiful they are or do. In

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fact, a Jesuit scholar reminded me often in our spiritual direction conversations that we do not know how to receive and give compliments. We know well how to speak of things that are going poorly. In the mirror, and in front of each other, we are critical and demanding, hardly recognizing the positive. The education we have received in our families, to say nothing of that in religious life, has not helped us in this.

In a conversation with our Sisters in Brazil during their Provincial Assembly last March, we reflected on the fact that, unhappily, we can even “protect ourselves” from positive people. This happened to Jesus. His newness and his freedom shook the equilibrium felt by the people, their “comfort zone”, and

in order to defend themselves, instead of acknowledging the good he did, they discredited him. Jesus calls this “a kingdom divided against itself” (Mk 3.24) that has no future, and such an attitude, a sin against the Holy Spirit, is the only one that cannot be forgiven.

It seems to me that at various levels and in different ways, we are moving along paths of unity and collaboration. There are those among us who are engaged in the laborious processes of incorporation. Everything brings us geographically and culturally closer. But what is most important is “the incorporation of hearts”, when we feel so much a part of the other that the good that the other does belongs to me. So I admit it. I support her. I promote her. We want to

be the “beloved community” but, if “the essence of love is in compelling the other to become something infinitely more, to become the most her gifts allow her to be” (Rilke), then there is no better way to do this than joining with her strengths. So it is time for “mutual sponsorship”, time to make our compliments authentic, those that touch our identity and bring out the best in us. This is not naiveté or being a “do-gooder”. Rather, it is to adopt the logic of “the good seed” of the Gospel which reminds us that in the eyes of God, a single ear of grain is worth more than all the weeds of the field. It is the logic “of talents” which speaks of a God-investor with a ‘high risk’ profile. It is to believe in the success of our history, communal and personal.

PROVINCE/REGION/MISSION

Working for the People in Majhapara

S. Navya Neelam

Pachmarhi Province

For more than thirty years our sisters have ministered to the people of Majhapara, Odisha, India through health care, social services and educational support. At present there is a team of four sisters: Priya Kullu, Jacinta Soreng, Deepika Kandaiburu and Serophina Ekka, each one responding to one or more local needs. The people of the area live below the poverty line, most being daily-wage earners with seasonal jobs. They often live hand-to-mouth, unable to even cultivate the land, due to lack of water. In fact some villages lack immediate access to any water,



S. Serophina with the farmers group

resulting in villagers walking miles for a pot of water. The poverty leads many young girls to leave the villages in search of jobs, while many women and girls are trafficked.

There is a dispensary, located on the same grounds as the convent, where S. Priya, who is a nurse, treats hundreds of patients from the villages. People attacked by bear or elephant are brought here to be treated. Even some on the point of death are brought back to life with the care given to them there.

Another nurse, S. Serophina Ekka, is engaged in community health and development in 16 villages which embrace 2604 families, 12,305 people. Having learned that people were suffering due to lack of health care and distance from a medical facility, she started taking medicine and treating the sick people in the villages. The district hospital is 200 km away and a primary health center of the government, 20 to 30 km away. People die due to ordinary sicknesses like Malaria. Thus she visits one village clinic practically every day, travelling 10 km, leaving the convent at 7 a.m. and returning by 6 or 7 p.m. S. Serophina is also involved with projects to improve the lives of the people. She has made it possible to dig seven bore wells for the villagers, using a government financial advantage for those living under the poverty line. She has also worked to have solar systems installed for pumping water from tube wells. At present Serophina is applying for



Girls from Majhapara hostel

projects that can help them dig more wells in the villages since lack of water is a major issue. These are but two of the ways she is engaged with the people. Beside this, she is involved with organic farming, quality seed production and storage, a sewing centre, bore well projects, electricity projects, getting ownership of the land for the people, and helping those who are trafficked to return home. The sisters also support education with their hostel, where S. Deepika helps to meet the educational needs of almost 120 girls from interior villages around Majhapara. The girls in the hostel are studying in Grades 1 to 10 in the diocesan Odiya medium (local state language) school. S. Jacinta is

engaged in pastoral ministry in the parish, visiting families and taking care of the sacramental needs of the villagers. She goes to the villages along with the priest in charge, on a two-wheeler, ministering to the people from far away villages who cannot come to Majhapara church for mass every Sunday due to the distance and lack of conveyance. Over the past thirty-one years the Majhapara convent stands as a witness to the many positive changes taking place. The four sisters of St. Joseph are working together and in collaboration with the others for the development and well-being of the poor tribal people in these remote villages of Odisha.

NEW SAINTS

S. Izabel Irene Serenato (88)	Brazil	04.03.2018
S. Otilia Bertoli (89)	Brazil	15.03.2018
S. Veronica Luiza Simioni (85)	Brazil	16.03.2018
S. Laura Rosa Baldissera (100)	Brazil	21.04.2018
S. Luisa Odila Giusti (91)	Brazil	24.04.2018
S. Adelina Capeletti (83)	Brazil	02.05.2018
S. Francis Xavier Naduvathezath (81)	Tanmaya	07.05.2018

Our Contribution in Search of Life!

Nilva Rosin and JPIC Brazil

Brazil

In the face of recent events that endanger democracy and human rights in Brazil, we, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry, stand against these threats to democracy, instigated by international capital and its political allies in the country, perpetrated by the political and legal systems with the full support of the media. Decisions that hurt the Brazilian Federal Constitution, and create a state of exceptions and judicial weights and measures favorable to the powerful, have harmed the principle of the full defense of any person, guaranteed in the Constitution and the code of criminal law.

Once again, the economic elites have control and the guarantee of privileges in their favor, blind to their responsibility



JPIC Commission – Brazil

to ensure the rights of the low-income population and their access to knowledge and good employment. This intolerance reflects an historical level of social inequality, seen also in the escalation of violence and crime.

The current scenario is challenging and requires an ethical commitment to inclusion. And we, Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry in Brazil, through the Commission for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, join with the entities and organizations struggling to build a fair

Brazilian society for everyone. We cannot be complacent about what is going on in the country.

It is the Easter season! More than ever, it is time to persist in the hope that the risen Christ brings to us. It is time to overcome hatred and intolerance, to embrace democracy and believe in the truth of justice that comes from the Gospel. We want to reaffirm our contribution to the search for life in abundance for all. We are called to the cause of justice and life, members of a church going forth.

Combining a Retreat and a Justice Issue

S. Marie-Kristin Riosianu and Helga Haass-Männle

Norway

When working with the JPIC-plan in autumn 2017, a small group of sisters and associates in Norway got the idea to try something new: Invite both sisters and associates to a weekend retreat combined with a seminar on the topic 'Migrants and Refugees' on the Saturday morning. Although the silence of the retreat had to be interrupted by a colloquium on an important issue in Norwegian society and politics, we thought that this could be an exciting and interesting way to implement the JPIC-plan and offer the participants a valuable

reflection during Lent.

Based on the theme of the 2017 Extended Council, "Daring the Mystery of Encounter," we invited all the associates and all the sisters. The colloquium was organized by Helga Haass-Männle, the contact person for JPIC in the Norwegian province and Sr. Marie-Kristin Riosianu, the former contact person. It was incorporated into the retreat, held March 9-11, 2018, directed by Sr. Marit with prayer focused on meeting the other as mystery and encountering God as the great mystery.

We were blessed with the presence of two resource persons and a refugee who shared their insights and experiences. Tjodan Felland, who teaches Norwegian to refugees in the municipality of Oslo,

spoke of how the meetings with her students from many different countries are characterized by mutual appreciation and generosity. In countless ways the students express their gratitude for the support they receive and their desire to take responsibility for their own lives. She is inspired by her students who help others across cultural barriers.

Amal, one of Tjodan's students, described how she, a Muslim woman about 40 years old, found her way from Syria to Norway, traveling through Turkey and Greece. She spoke of the fear she felt crossing the Aegean Sea in a small boat, knowing that many have drowned there. When she arrived in Norway she faced difficulties with the attitudes toward morality and sexuality she found there, especially the

behavior of men toward a young and attractive woman. For her it felt much safer to meet Syrian women and stay in their company.

Alexander Golding, who works in the area of migration and the integration of migrants, posed some thought-provoking questions, including: What does it mean to me as an individual to be close to people with a refugee background? He also addressed some myths about migration, and noted that cultural and economic growth is a result of people with different backgrounds meeting and doing things together, a fact plainly neglected in today's discussions on migration. It was also interesting to learn that 3 percent of the world's population lives outside their own countries, including many of the sisters in the Norwegian province as well as some of the associates. Golding presented many interesting facts, which were eagerly discussed by the participants. The retreat clearly bore some fruit.



Seminar on JPIC topic 'Migration and Refugees', in front from the left: Amal, Tjodun Felland and Alexander Golding

Besides everyone gaining an increased knowledge about migration and refugees, at least two associates made contact with Tjodun Felland so they might help refugees coming to Norway to find their

place in the Norwegian society. The experiment of combining a retreat with a JPIC topic has been successful and fruitful. We are thinking of repeating the format in 2019 with the JPIC issue of 'Non-violence'.

Leaven in the Dough

S. Navya Neelam (from a project for the Communication Training Program in Pulluvazhy, Kerala, India)

Tanmaya Province

“You are like a unifying factor among the staff; you relate to all of us without making any distinction,” said Mrs. Elsy, one of the teachers of St. Sebastian's Higher Secondary School, Gothuruth, Ernakulum, Kerala, India, on the day of saying farewell to S. Sheela Koottala, who worked in this diocesan school for 17 years as a teacher and will be leaving in June.

“You worked quietly and gave us a surprise whenever there was some common function. Not a word of complaint escaped your lips at any time. We were edified by your presence. It was fun to be in your company,” said Juliet Rose, another teacher.

S. Sheela was in charge of the faith formation of all the catholic students in this higher secondary school and was the animator of Kerala Catholic Students League (KCSL) in the same school. Srs. Sheela, Esther and Valsa form the local community of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Gothuruth at present. They are engaged in many parish activities – Basic Christian Community meetings, teaching catechism, Christian Living Community (CLC), Holy Childhood, and preparation of the altar and people for the reception of sacraments.

“In spite of her old age S. Esther does not miss any Basic Christian Community prayer meetings of the parish,” said Mrs. Gracy, one of the parishoners of St. Sebastian's church. Sister Esther is always available to the people of the parish and maintains a good relationship with them. Mrs. Gracy further added, “The Sisters give Jesus to us and they visit the sick. I am very happy to have them here in Gothuruth. They are a blessing to this

place.”

Gothuruth is a village surrounded by the river Periyar – the longest river of Kerala. Fishing, masonry and carpentry are the main occupation of the people. A few years ago the families were engaged in distilling alcohol as a result of which many became alcoholics and a few even died. The mission of the sisters of St. Joseph at Gothuruth started in 1994. The local community launched into pastoral and education ministries. Vocation promotion was another purpose for beginning this mission.

“A strong foundation is given to the little ones in education. The sisters visit the sick. They work very silently in all the activities of the parish,” said Mrs. Thankam. The people of the place appreciate the sisters' simple life style. No one is ever turned away who comes to their door asking for help. “I am grateful to the sisters for helping me to build this house for my family,” said Mr. Sabu.

Sixteen parishoners committed themselves as Lay Associate members from this parish. Mrs. Mini said, "In thirty two years of my marriage, I never got a chance to visit families of the Parish. After becoming a lay associate I got the opportunity to visit the families and the sick with the sisters."

Mr. and Mrs. Kunjachan said, "We are happy that our daughter Merlin joined the sisters of St. Joseph. The sisters of this community inspired her to commit herself as a religious."

Like leaven in the dough the sisters of St. Joseph have a great impact on the people of Gothuruth. They witness by word and deed and continue to spread the charism of communion through their lives.



From left: Srs. Sheela, Priya, Prasanna and Maria Grace with Mrs. Mini

Serving God and Others in Quetta

S. Sumera Joseph

Pakistan

In March and April this year Sister Sumaira offered two reflections on spirituality and justice in Quetta. One was given at St. Francis' Grammar School; the other was offered to a group of women in the local parish church. The focus was the same for both groups: living our humanity by serving both God and others.

St. Francis' Grammar School is a large boys' school, teaching students from kindergarten through high school, even up to Cambridge O levels. As a science teacher at this school S. Sumaira is part of a faculty which includes two Dominican sisters as well as teachers of both the Muslim and Christian faiths. In the morning assembly there is a time of prayer and reflection. During the assembly and for every programme, verses are read from the Bible by a Christian student and from the Quran by a Muslim student, showing mutual respect for the two religions. At the



school S. Sumaira engaged students, faculty and staff in reflection on how service to our brothers and sisters is service to God. She was inspired by the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph, speaking of the importance of caring for one another and the planet. At St. Eugene's Church, S. Sumaira was joined by S. Permila and a candidate who together offered a reflection on spirituality to a group of women. With this group, it was easy to speak of love and unity, having the time to develop the theme of how serving others brings us close to God. It was an opportunity

to help these women see and understand how serving God is much more than going to church and praying. As Rabindranath once said in one of his lyrics, "God is with the farmer tilling the field, with the laborer laying the path. We should therefore spurn the age-old practice of searching for God in a temple of bricks. If God is in me, god is in others too, in the rich and the proud as in the lowly and the lost." The pastor encouraged the sisters to continue with similar programs with the women and other groups, as part of their pastoral work in Quetta.

Challenged to Live Inter-culturally

S. Barbara Bozak

France

When people from different countries and cultures find themselves living together, reactions can be varied. Some adjust easily while others struggle to move forward together. Living a multi-cultural reality has its challenges, but trying to living inter-culturally is even more challenging. For many, this situation never arises, but among our sisters in France, it is a daily occurrence. In the community of Biollay (a neighborhood of Chambéry), two French sisters recently welcomed an Indian to form a community of three. In Albertville, one community is composed of a Brazilian, an Indian and a French sister. The community of Bellecombette has four French sisters and four Indians, while the community of Bois Joli includes a sister from Madagascar. Challenges abound but life is flourishing.

Sisters Elizabeth Jorens and Anne Chatel opened the doors of their community in Biollay to Shanthi when she arrived from India last year. Although they did not have a common language, two speaking only French and one only English, they managed to communicate in the first weeks thanks to a translation program on the computer. While they all feel that they have more in common than different, all three have discovered new realizations thanks to living with someone from another culture. Both Elizabeth and Anne welcome the way Shanthi has opened them to new forms of community prayer. Shanthi, when she discovered that daily Mass was not an option, had to rethink how she lives God's presence not only in the Eucharist, but every day in ordinary ways.



Sisters Anne, Shanthi and Elizabeth at a community meeting



Sisters Marie Thérèse and Isabelle relaxing with a game of Scrabble

Sisters Marie Thérèse Bonin and Isabelle, a Sister of St. Joseph of Aoste from Madagascar who is now living at Bois Joli, spoke of how living with those of other cultures leads one to greater openness. They noted that too often we get comfortable with the way we live and don't consider that there may be other ways of doing things. In the words of Marie Thérèse, "when we are confronted with those of another reality and people who are different from us, we are challenged to make changes. We discover there are other ways to live, other ways

to pray." Isabelle said: "When we live side by side with someone from another country or culture, our way of living and thinking is enlarged and we begin to pay more attention to others." They both appreciate how they have been led to greater openness by living with sisters from another country and culture. While many think of our French province in terms of aging and diminishing numbers, it is filled with life. Our sisters there are leading us forward with their unique opportunity to model multicultural and, hopefully, intercultural living.

Violence against Women Addressed at UN

S. Barbara Bozak

USA

An important topic discussed during the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held at the United Nations in New York, March 12-23, 2018, was that of violence against women. Although the focus of this year's session was "gender equality and empowerment of rural women and girls," the need to address violence was brought to light many times.

Gender violence cuts across all countries and societies and is frequently bolstered by social norms, as the UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Muhammed, noted. In the European Union one third of all women have suffered physical or sexual violence from the age of 15. While gender-based violence is all too common, indigenous women often suffer from structural and cultural violence to a greater extent than other women. But as they become more aware of their rights, this issue is beginning to be addressed in indigenous communities. Femicide, or the killing of women, is found in every country. A woman may be killed by an intimate partner or die as the result of practices harmful to women. These practices include unsafe abortions, female genital mutilation, and lack of adequate medical care in childbirth. Also, data is being collected



in some countries concerning what has been considered accidental death or suicide, to see if such deaths were caused by gender violence. Only when such situations are well-understood, can the cause be discovered and addressed. The European Union has joined resources with the United Nations to address gender-based violence, having initially committed 500 million Euros to work toward gender equality and women's empowerment. This "Spotlight Initiative" clearly states the importance of the project: "Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today. It is a major obstacle to the fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights and to the achievement of the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development. It occurs worldwide, cutting across all generations, nationalities, communities and spheres of our societies, irrespective of age, ethnicity, disability or other background." The UN Secretary General, in his remarks at a town hall meeting during the commission, spoke of the need to eliminate sexual exploitation by UN agents, be they peace-keeping agencies or others on the ground in various countries. And at the UN headquarters itself, there is a need to deal with sexual harassment. Since gender-based violence is rooted in the power structures which give men the authority and control, it is necessary to educate men and boys on the one hand and to work for gender parity, on the other, as the UN is now doing.

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