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CS JOURNAL

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry

May - June . Year 2018 - n . 3



GENERAL COUNCIL

Daring the Mystery of Encounter



The community in Ireland: S. Betty, Sarah and Mary Peter (seated); S. Joan, Joan Margaret, Joan, Celine, and Eileen (standing)

S. Sally Hodgdon

General Council

During my visitation these past five months I have been reminded repeatedly of the theme of the 2017 Extended Council, *Daring the Mystery of Encounter*, as it relates to our present experiences of living community life. As I visited Ireland, Denmark

and France, I saw what the living of these mysteries and sacred encounters actually looks like within our diverse local communities. In Ireland, last summer the “walls” of our community in Raheny expanded. In addition to welcoming relatives, our sisters welcomed two Capuchin seminarians from Poland who came for an extended cross-cultural experience.

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The Capuchin priests who offer Mass in our convent each week asked our sisters if some of the seminarians could stay with them. Each day the seminarians shared with the sisters what they had enjoyed the day before. The sisters also welcomed Vanessa, one of our temporary professed sisters from Italy who came to study English for a month. During the “Beast from the East” snowstorm this past March, the sisters welcomed a couple of lay nurses for several days so they could be available for their shifts in the hospital. Our sisters remarked that during these days and weeks of sharing with their community guests, they felt new life, which is one of the graces of daring the encounter. In Denmark, our elderly sisters are now living in

a municipal residence for older persons who need medical assistance. Their community life has expanded exponentially to include the staff and lay residents in their building. Reaching out to their neighbors and opening themselves to learning the mystery behind each person, our sisters have experienced the sacred in so many new ways. They not only visit and engage in activities with their neighbors, but when they are ill or dying, they sit with them. On the top floor of this old castle-like building, there is a space where the sisters have Mass each day, welcoming lay residents including Christians of other denominations. On Wednesdays there is no Mass because the sisters leave this space open for the gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual

community of the residence to gather. Although the plan is that our sisters will move into a new municipal residence on our former provincial house property in 2019, the staff and residents are already asking our sisters to consider staying in the current “expanded community” they have helped to create.

Our sisters in France/ Belgium continue to expand this call with whom we share life in community. In Bois Jolie residence, we have a community made up of 6 sisters and approximately 11 lay men and women and a refugee family with two daughters. They come together two or three times a month to share a potluck supper but some also join the sisters for daily mass, and most residents



Sisters in Denmark gathered for Mass

are in conversation with the sisters throughout the day. They share plants, recipes, news, concerns and special events. They welcome each other as they return from vacation and share the care for our earth in their projects on the property. They support our sisters in our mission to meet unmet needs and to offer a place of welcome to many. This same community also

welcomes outside groups to use the multipurpose space in their community for gatherings, such as meditation, yoga and other diverse religious practices. One Sunday when I was there, there were several groups coming and going throughout the day and all of us were welcome to join them. I saw first-hand the light and peace on the faces of our sisters as they engaged

with this larger community of which they are an integral part. This light is a reflection of the many facets of the sacred they experience in listening to and coming to know the mystery of their new community members. My prayer is that we continue to be open to new experiences of the sacred in our ever evolving communities.

PROVINCE/REGION/MISSION

More than a Prize - an Achievement

S. Josiane Mota Coelho
.....
Tanzania

Access to a quality education is one of the major aspirations of the youth of Tanzania, as well as one of its greatest challenges. No doubt there is a concern for this on the part of the government. However, the lack of a solid initial base hampers access to education and/or satisfactory development for students in the educational system of the country. This is one of the reasons why we, the Sisters of St. Joseph, missionaries in Tanzania, assume this reality as one of the commitments of our mission and a big challenge.

Our “hostel” is a boarding facility with 58 young women. Some can pay, but the vast majority of the girls are assisted by CSJMissioni. The



Restuta and the Director of the School of Paul where she studies

hostel’s main mission is to contribute to a satisfactory development of the young women, providing them with adequate space for their studies, school reinforcement, good nutrition and, when necessary, psychological help.

To carry out the work and attend to the young women, we collaborate jointly with the Imams, each offering their gifts for a better service. Even if it still lacks great results, it has brought us joy and accomplishments that feed

hope. We want to share one of them here.

The Tanzanian Government decided to reward the best students of the country with public recognition and a cash prize, as a way to encourage the student's own efforts as well as those of others. And here is the reason for this article. Restuta, who is assisted by our hostel, comes from a poor family - her mother earns a small salary in a bakery and her father is a taxi driver, but without a steady income. She was recognized by the Tanzanian Government as one of the best students in the country. At the school

where she studies, two boys were recognized as the best students, but the prize money, which will certainly help her, was given only to Restuta because she is a woman. This action of the government is meant to encourage female education. Restuta's achievement is also the achievement of her colleagues at our hostel who achieved a good result in their studies. This is one reason why we feel excited in the hope and the certainty that the presence of the Sisters of St. Joseph for 15 years in the diocese of Songea, Tanzania, leaves an important mark and makes a difference in the

lives of those searching for a better life.

We are grateful to the Congregation and CSJ Missioni for allowing us to contribute to the education of Restuta and other young people served at our hostel. What we do is still little, but it is the result of a sincere effort and a great love for this mission. We were sent here for this work and commit ourselves to live the most pure and perfect love, the legacy given to us by Father Médaille and the witness of so many missionaries in these 367 years of life and mission at the service of communion and unity.

Communication Training in India

S. Laveena D'Souza

Tanmaya Province

Fifty-six sisters from Pachmarhi, Nagpur, Nirmala and Tanmaya Provinces, India, actively participated in the three-day communication training programs held from the north to the south - in Nagpur, Bhopal, Bilaspur and Pulluvazhy - in February, March and April, 2018. This was the immediate fruit of the Indian Provinces' Communication Commission (IPCC) meeting held in Igatpuri, Maharashtra, on 25-26 Nov. 2017. With the support and cooperation of the four provincials, it was prepared and conducted by the IPCC



From left: Laveena, Cecile, Navya and Fabiyola at Igatpuri meeting

members: Sisters Navya, Cecile, Fabiyola and Laveena. The main purpose of this training program was to give the sisters in the Indian provinces a good platform to

communicate the lived experiences of the charism of communion by writing articles for the CSJournal and the websites. During the opening prayer, the



From right: Field visit of Archana, Jaya Sudha and Pratibha in Bhopal

song ‘There is a magic which can heal the world’ invited the participants to heal the fractured world through the art of communication.

The introductory session, which focused on the importance and purpose of communication as well as the psychological impacts of writing, gave the participants a desire to improve their communication skills. The presentation of “story structure” helped the group to understand how to logically put together information for a news story. Four types of story writing: profile story, hard news story, feature story and opinion story were explained with examples. The exercise of writing a ‘Lead’ (the opening sentence of a news story) for their own articles enthused the group and initiated them into the process.

The guidelines for the CSJournal, using examples from the published journals, enabled the participants to have a clear understanding of how to write an article. The group was able to see that the CSJournal articles are a combination of profile, hard news, feature and opinion stories. After the explanation of the difference between articles for a journal and a website, the second exercise for the group was to write a piece for the congregational website. A few of their website articles were critiqued in the common session. A short input on photography enabled the sisters to have an idea of the type of picture needed for news articles. The group was excited about the photography exercise they did, using a DSLR camera.

On the second day, after input

on how to interview, the group was sent out to use what they had learned. The groups spent two to three hours with sisters in various ministries and gathered information for an article. Back home, each group sat together for four to five hours to compose an article together.

On the third day two to three articles written by the groups were critiqued by the whole group. “This process of editing the article in common really helped us to understand the points explained in the guidelines,” said S. Deepika D’Souza. The practical session on videoconferencing using Skype and Zoom gave the participants an experience of how congregational meetings are held online. How to save and share

various documents through Drop box and Google drive expanded their learning. The session on the Appropriate Use of Social Media like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp cleared many doubts and fears of using these channels for social communication. The participants understood how social media can be better used to mobilize, to coordinate, to publicize, to protest or to demonstrate. The participants were given a brief idea about software like Adobe Light room and Photoshop for editing photos, Adobe Premiere Pro for video editing.

“Earlier I attended training programs in communication, but this one was quite different.



From Left: Harshita, Merlin, Helen, Manjushree, Bibiana, Sirisha in their group in

It was very simple and apt, at the same time reaching our level of grasping. It enabled us to find our own potential for writing,” said S. Anila Asharikunnel. Many of the participants asked

for more training programs at the inter-province level. These workshops not only enhanced knowledge but also created new bonds and relationships among the sisters of the Indian provinces.

Go! The Mission Calls Us to Leave ...

S. Rosalba Scaturro

Italy

“Go!” The mission calls us to leave. But in life it’s tempting to stay, to not take risks, to settle for having the situation under control. It is easier to stay at home, surrounded by those we love, but this is not the way of Jesus. He sends us: “Go!” He uses no half measures. He does not authorize reduced-fare travel or reimbursed trips, but to his disciples, to all his disciples, he says one word: “Go!” This is a powerful call that resonates in every nook and cranny of the Christian life, a clear invitation to always be going out, to be pilgrims in the world looking for



Youth Catechesis

the ones who still do not know “the joy of God’s love.” These words were delivered by the Pope on May 5 and strongly challenge each of us - sisters

and lay people of the Little Design, whose founder was a great missionary!

To accept the command of Je-

sus to make these words flesh - which means welcoming, listening, offering warmth, smiles, hugs, but also, experiencing rejection, misunderstanding, doors closed in my face - provides much joy because it unites us deeply to the life of Jesus, creating and strengthening bonds of communion in the Church. This is the experience that five sisters of the Italian Province and the parish community of Maria SS. Immacolata in Pontecagnano (SA) have lived. "I come looking for you ... God comes right to your door!" is the slogan of this popular mission, announcing that God always goes tirelessly in search of God's children. It is not a simple enterprise. Along with a large group of committed lay people, collaborators with the parish priest Don Antonio Pisani, promoter of the mission, the sisters helped 10,000 parishioners.

Very demanding days indeed,



Final celebration party – Sisters Rosalba, Cristina, Clementina, Annamaria, Stella

those from April 30 to May 6, between visits to families, the sick and the elderly, catechesis for adults and young people, and centers for listening to the Word, all "sustained" by Eucharistic celebrations and ongoing adoration in the church, while the missionaries tried to awaken slumbering hope in the hearts of people who are

sometimes suspicious and lonely.

The mission week, we can say, was an opportunity for the Italian province-and, especially for the sisters who took part, to profoundly thank the God for being called to bring God's merciful love into the peripheries of existence.

"I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Even though this week's mission with the Sisters of St. Joseph is now finished, now it is up to all of us of the church community to cultivate the seeds scattered during these days. Thanks to Sister Cristina, Sister Clementina, Sister Stella, Sister Annamaria, Sister Rosalba, and Maria and Leila for the words and the witness of a welcoming Church bringing joy and hope; may the Lord safeguard them and guide them always. "I come looking for you ..." is a message that has embraced children, youth, adults, and seniors, the words of a God who makes himself the sower and pastor and who cares about all of us! We entrust these days to Our Lady such that, placed in God's hands, they may soon bear much fruit of faith, hope and charity for a plenitude of joy.

(A Post from the Parish Community)

S. Marie Des Neiges Romanet (95)	France	11.05.2018
S. Maria Mechtilde Brand de Moraes (99)	Brazil	11.05.2018
S. Rosa Pasa (98)	Brazil	25.05.2018
S. Luiza Crippa (96)	Brazil	16.06.2018

**NEW
SAINTS**

Offering Support to Adolescent Girls

S. Maria das Graças Silva

Brazil

The Children of Maria Project serves girls in the age group 8 to 14 years on the outskirts of the city of Caxias do Sul (southern Brazil). It is an alternative for supporting and helping girls who are from fragile or broken families, and/or in situations of social vulnerability. The project was created with the goal of providing emotional, social, and educational support needed in the building of self-esteem.

The initiative was launched in a local parish with the participation of the Sisters of St. Joseph and volunteers. Sister Cleonice da Cruz Yoshizawa has, along with the community, the responsibility to directly monitor the work. There are 20 members in the group, which meets three times a week in the late afternoon, concluding each meeting with a meal.

This project aims to stimulate,



to ensure and to improve the quality of the relationship between fathers and daughters, seeking to minimize situations of conflict, encouraging harmonious and healthy interaction between them. For this, we seek to stress the need for teamwork, intervening immediately in conflicts, be they personal, or in family groups, etc., and in this way to be able to contribute to strengthening ties, and if necessary, to reintegrate the child into other options for living if the family

isn't a safe environment for her.

Girls who participate in the project have the opportunity to develop various skills through the workshops provided. For example, they can improve motor skills through arts and crafts and dance. There is also the promotion of educational and cultural efforts in the areas of environment, human rights and health, always aiming to improve relationships among girls, with the family, friends and with the church community.



The workshops are diverse and seek to involve the participation and integration of each member of the group. They include personal knowledge, care of the body, development of feminine skills, home care, food preparation, and so on. Activities such as dance, crafts, singing, school reinforcement, spirituality and liturgical participation are also offered.

A Happy Life for the Elderly

S. Sneha Gonsalves

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Nirmala Province, India

St. Joseph's Home for the Aged, Siolim, Goa, is a second home to many elderly who are poor and needy. It is managed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery, Nirmala Province, India.

"It's my home," says Mr. Lobo, one of the residents. He visited many homes for the aged but likes St. Joseph's because he enjoys a lot of freedom here. "The sisters here are very flexible and allow guests to visit me any time," says I. Joseph, "They even allow us to visit our families and friends."

The elderly at St. Joseph's live a very happy life. Their life span seem to get longer with the love, care and attention given to them by the sisters. The guests who come here cannot but remark on the homely ambiance and the cleanliness of the place. Anyone who visits St. Joseph's speaks highly about this home. St. Joseph's is an ancestral house gifted by Mr. and Mrs. Francis Fernades to the sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery in 1965. Four daughters of this couple dedicated their lives as nuns in the same congregation the S. Veronica and Stanislaus and the late S. Angela and Juliana.

This ministry was an outcome of a survey conducted to assess the needs of the time in Siolim. While doing the survey, the sisters found many aged people in their homes but neglected, and not treated



S. Cecilia with one of the residents

with respect. They were lonely, isolated and unable to handle their personal needs. There were no homes or institutions in the surrounding area to care for the elderly. The sisters moved with zeal and compassion to care for these elderly. It was here that the need to serve the elderly emerged as a clear vision to the sisters. Thus, St. Joseph's Home for the Aged started as a new mission of the province in Siolim in 1965.

The first resident was a blind lady who lived 29 long years in dignity with the care and attention given by the sisters. One by one the aged were brought in; some came with painful memories, and some others out of necessity. One hundred eighty-six residents lived a happy and secure life and had a dignified death. At present St. Joseph's is

able to accommodate only five persons; it is under repair and renovation. In May 2018 the place will have the facility for 30 residents. Anyone is admitted irrespective of caste, color or race.

A few decades ago India did not have many homes for the aged because the joint family system made it possible to care for the elderly at home. Then society changed, with small nuclear families, globalization, modernization and better job opportunities. This led people to move to the cities or to other countries, leaving behind the old. Today there are 728 old age homes in India as per 2016 statistics. In this context, this mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph goes a long way in witnessing to the values of the gospel by recognizing the importance of the elderly in our midst.

From Lemons ... Lemonade

S. Eliana Aparecida dos Santos

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Caxias do Sul – Brazil

The Eldorado settlement of landless families occupies a large farm in the municipality of Sidrolândia located in Mato Grosso do Sul, in Brazil's center west. The Sisters of Saint Joseph have been active in this location for 8 years. There are 2,480 families in the settlement with a large number of young people. However, these youth lack prospects and the ability to dream about achievements in their lives. After a robbery carried out by young people at the residence of the sisters, we began a search for alternatives that can change their reality.

The project "from lemons, . . . lemonade" is a demonstration that hope conquers fear. The sisters who experienced fear, being trapped for 5 hours in their bathroom and having their vehicle stolen, show that it is necessary to believe in humanity to build the utopia of a New Earth. One of the young people who participated in the robbery belongs to the community and is known to the sisters. After he was caught by the police, he confessed. He had not been recognized because he wore a mask at the time of the robbery.

This occurrence raised many questions about the situation of youth in the area. According to Sr. Josiane Leopoldino, who is a teacher at the local public school, the young people of



Young people of Sidrolandia

the settlement display great passivity. "The daily life of youth here is marked by idleness. The school is their meeting place. It's the only space for relationships. In the family environment, since the lots are kilometers away from each other, relationships are restricted to the family," said the sister.

The idea of the project is to undertake cooperative action. The goal is to use meaningful activities to awaken in young people pleasure in life and enhance the well-being of the people and the community. The police officers who

responded to the sisters on the night of the robbery made themselves available to assist. They offered dance teachers, football and volleyball to help in the project. They offered to work with the youth in activities that go beyond sports and dance. Issues such as motivation, self-esteem and appreciation of youth will be addressed, along with sports and recreational activities on weekends.

The sisters are committed to facilitating the implementation of this initiative. The challenge of transforming reality starts from a change in mindset



Young people who will benefit from the project

and life plan. For this project to happen, some financial resources will be needed, such as transportation of students from their homes to school on weekends, among other things. Resources are being sought from public agencies,

through volunteers and the Congregation.

Stimulating young people to dream about a better future and plan their lives to transform the world are the goals. Enabling change in youth behavior is reflected in

changes that transform society. This is a dream of the sisters and the people involved in the project. In the words of Dom Hélder Câmara: "The dream you dream alone is only a dream; the dream you dream together is reality."

Caring for Those Who Care

Jorge Sonda de Godoy

Vice Director of the Colégio São José/ Caxias do Sul - Brazil

The Colégio São José in Caxias do Sul in southern Brazil has sought to invest in training its employees for more than 100 years. The

College has a philosophy geared toward enhancing the growth of the entire educational community within a culture of peace. To this end, and always seeking to prevent violence, a group of 50 teachers was organized in order to prepare them to be facilitators in Peace-building Circles of Restorative Justice.

The circle is a process of

dialogue that works for the purpose of creating a safe space to discuss difficult or painful problems, improve relationships and resolve differences, finding solutions that work for each of the participants.

Caring for those who care, so that they can exercise with excellence the process of education, is the purpose

and the intention of the College - to gradually involve all teachers and employees (a total of 150 people) in a training course of 20 hours. The course participants will have the mission of replicating the learning in the classroom and in the mediation of pedagogical activities. They will also be prepared to be mediators for peace circles in other environments (family, community, business, etc.).

This initiative arose from the 2018 Fraternity Campaign which takes place every year in Brazil during Lent, promoted by the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB). This year's theme, "We are all brothers and sisters," was focused on fraternity and overcoming violence. One way to achieve and experience this peace is through the circles of peace.

In this way, the work that is being carried out in the schools of the Sisters of St. Joseph stands out, since it seeks to form a network of education through a strategic planning process, integrating the spirituality and charism of the Congregation. This is an opportunity to review and evaluate practices and improve work in education by promoting life in all its forms and manifestations.



*Circles of Peace, caring for those who care
(teacher participants in the course)*



Círculos de Construção de Paz da Justiça Restaurativa



EDITING

Barbara Bozak
Eliana Aparacida dos Santos

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Navya Neelamvilail

TRANSLATIONS

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

CIRCULATION

Rossella Galli
www.csjchambery.org

E - MAIL

icc@csjchambery.org