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GENERAL COUNCIL

SUMMARY

LAUDATE DEUM: URGENT CALL OF POPE FRANCIS

Sr. Cristina Maria Gavazzi CSJ

General Council



“The world sings of infinite love. Why not take care of it?” was stressed in the new apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum*, published on October 4, 2023.

In response to this urgent call also made by our 2021 General Chapter, as a Congregation we have chosen to join the *Laudato Si'* platform,

putting in place concrete actions in light of our ecological conversion.

In reality, there is not much time left. The appeal launched by Pope Francis was taken up and relaunched by important persons from various areas of knowledge, from the winner of the Nobel prize in physics, Giorgio Parisi, to the

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Indian environmental activist, Vandana Shiva, to the founder of Slow Food, Carlo Patrini. These, together with other environmentalists and scholars, participated in the conference organized by the Vatican Press Office and the the Dicastery of Communications in the Vatican Gardens right after the publication with the theme: “Laudate Deum: voices and testimonies concerning the climate crisis.”

Giorgio Parisi bluntly affirmed: “Governments couldn’t care less about climate change and the voice of those who support the importance of this struggle is a voice crying in the wilderness.” As a scientist he appreciated that the Pope had used scientific data in the apostolic exhortation, “presented in language much clearer than that we we scholars use.” He

gave a personal interpretation of the “breaking point” to which Francis refers: “With the ongoing conflicts it is difficult to imagine humans able to be united to resolve problems such as climate change.”

Carlo Patrini emphasized the drama of the historical moment that prompted the Pope to return to the topic of the environment after the 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’*: “Eight years during which political consciousness has not moved forward on this topic. And Pope Francis is aware of this.”

Vandana Shiva, who for years has been fighting against seed monopolies and the global agricultural giants in India, notes passages in *Laudate Deum* in which the Pope criticizes technocratic arrogance.

The novelist Jonathan

Safran Foer spoke of climate denial: “The earth is telling us a story that we are not able to accept, and so the climate deniers deny it. Others, on the contrary, are willing to believe what the scientists are saying and the fact that should shake our collective consciousness and push us to make small sacrifices to avoid a future catastrophe. A political revolution is needed, but collective revolutions are made through many small individual revolutions.”

Then some young activists from around the world spoke. The first was Luisa Neubauer, an activist from the Fridays for Future movement. She said: “The government leaders from the whole world are moving backwards, doing everything to please those who produce fossil fuels and then they tell us green-washing tales.”

CELEBRATING THE SEASON OF CREATION

Sr. Gracy Fernandes CSJ

Nagpur



The Season of Creation, an annual liturgical period (1st September – 4th October), is a time to seriously reflect and take action to protect the environment. It encourages individuals and communities to recognize the moral ethical imperative of caring for the earth. We, members of Kamptee Community, spaced out our activities over the month of September and early October.

Our Community gathered in the midst of nature for a

nature walk. We created a prayerful atmosphere thanking God for the pleasant weather, surrounded by nature's beauty. Nature walked with us and we felt a deep sense of peace within. Nature has the remarkable ability to reduce stress and anxiety. As we were about to turn in, we experienced a deep sense of responsibility for the preservation of nature.

During our prayer centered on the relationship with God, nature and humanity, we

assumed the responsibility of ethical and moral responsibility concerning how to conserve and protect the earth.

The students of our school participated in a tree planting campaign. While planting saplings around the boundary of the school they took an oath to protect, care and preserve the fruit of their hands' labour and thus restore the earth's balance. They were challenged to ensure that the newly-planted trees survive and thrive. Children went around



the neighbourhood with placards to make the public aware of their responsibility to plant, save and care for trees.

International Peace Day was celebrated in the school on 21st September, a call to recognize our individual and collective responsibility to foster peace. The celebration commenced with a prayer as a dove was released as a sign of peace and freedom. Groups of children and teachers tied a "Rakhi" (bond of protection) to the oldest tree in the campus to raise everyone's awareness of the need to protect and nurture the environment.

The entire school had a peace march with lit candles to invoke unity, peace and

harmony. The headmistress, Sr. Claudia, carried a globe to signify our need to protect, save and nurture our planet earth. Appropriate songs were played as children formed a circle of unity, love and peace. The day ended with a prayer for the Season of Creation.

On October 1st we celebrated "Shramdaan," a term that translates into voluntary labour and community service involving individuals who unite to contribute their time, effort and labour for the betterment of the environment. It is also meant to instill, at an early age, the value of zero waste.

St Joseph's Convent High School, Kamptee, commemorated Shramdaan

Hour with great zeal and enthusiasm, recognizing that "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." To pay genuine homage to our beloved Mahatma Gandhi and fulfil his dream for a cleaner India, it is essential that habits are learned early. Students were made aware of the importance of the dignity of labour.

We Josephites are proud to be part of this noble cause as we look forward to continue our Shramdaan efforts in the future.

On 4th October, we ended the Season of Creation with a prayer, thanking God for the gifts and blessings received.

BLESSED MOMENTS WITH THOSE LIVING IN POVERTY

Sr. Mukti Ekka CSJ

Nirmala



“Whenever we encounter a poor person, we cannot look away, for that would prevent us from encountering the face of the Lord Jesus.” (Message for the World Day of the Poor, 2023)

Pope Francis declared

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Sunday, 19th November 2023 to be the seventh “World Day of the Poor”, with the theme of “Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor” (Tobit 4:7)

Every day we encounter variety of people and meet many who are less privileged

than we are.

We took the invitation Pope Francis seriously and reached out across the province to some of those in need.

Some of our Sisters traveled to remote villages in Lodhivali, Maharashtra, to meet the teenagers of classes 8th



Sharing a meal with a poor family at Nongiri, Meghalaya

to 12th to create awareness and to teach them the use of the latest technology and different mobile apps. Around 80 teenagers from 3 different villages and belonging to different religions, availed of this opportunity. Along with digital teaching, the sisters offered career guidance. The teenagers were eager, interested to learn and looking for more such opportunities. The teenagers and their parents appreciated this programme and wished to have more opportunities like this.

In the state of Karnataka, at a place called Devadurga, our Sisters are working in collaboration with Don Bosco Priests in the field of Education. They came across a very poor student of class 5th who needed financial support to continue his education. He is bright and works hard in his studies. Seeing his interest and determination, our sisters

felt the need to help him and provided financial support. He and his family were thankful to God and the sisters for the great help and support.

In the mission at Nongiri, Meghalaya, our Sisters are working with Khasi people in the areas of education, healthcare, pastoral care and providing for the hostel girls. They chose the three poorest families and visited them with cooked meals and also brought raw cooking materials. They spent an evening praying, talking, sharing, laughing, smiling and having dinner and fun with them. The families were surprised and yet overwhelmed with joy.

Khamariya, a village in Madhya Pradesh, is in a Tribal belt, surrounded by forest and fields." Here the main livelihood is agriculture. People of this place depend fully upon natural resources to survive. People walk miles and miles to move

from place to place due to lack of transport. On this occasion the Sisters traveled extra miles, to stop for a moment, to smile, to listen, to laugh, to sit around and share moments of love and companionship with the sick and suffering, with the troubled, the broken hearted and with those who were alone and lonely. Clothes collected by the city

These moments renewed our encounter with God the creator of all human beings. This day will be remembered with gratitude for the works that the Lord has done for us and for them.

Let us continue doing good for the Poor, inspired by the words of Pope Francis "What the poor need is certainly our humanity, our hearts open to love," and with the spirit of our Founder Fr. John Peter Medaille, to encounter the face of Jesus, in encountering a poor person face to face.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCE COMMISSION MEETING

Sr. Neuza Maria Delazari CSJ

Brazil



The International Finance Commission (IFC) is one of the Commissions defined by the General Chapter, 2021. The aim of this Commission is “to evaluate the finances and to provide input to the General Council in view of the sustainability of the life and mission of the Congregation” (FDGC 2021, p. 12).

From the time the Commission was formed, we had online IFC meetings once a month for 2 hours. Along the way, we realized that it was necessary and important to have a face-to-face meeting to share our experiences of the mission, draw up documents and align the next steps.

Therefore the members of the commission met in Rome at the Generalate from October 9 to 15,

2023. At the beginning of the meeting, Sr. Dolores Lahr, the Superior General, stressed the significance of this meeting and said that it’s important to learn from each other and know the different realities in which each one is working. She pointed out that this Commission offers suggestions and input to the General Council regarding the Congregation’s investments and finances. The good management of finances is important, because it is at the service of the life and mission of the congregation.

Sr. Cristina Maria Gavazzi, the representative of the General Council, took part in the entire meeting while the other members took part in specific moments.

Sr. Mariaelena Aceti, the Bursar General said that our in-person meeting

would be intense but very rewarding. At the beginning of the meeting, S. Bárbara and S. Cristina helped us, creatively, to get to know each other and build a team spirit. They showed a short video about the importance of collaboration and looking for alternatives together.

Over the days, we spent a significant time drafting the documents “Economic Procedure Manual” and the “Investment Policy Statement.” These documents will serve as a guide so that the investments of the congregation, provinces, regions and missions will be made in ethical and sustainable companies.

We were joined by two members of the Steyler Ethik Bank, owned by the SVD Congregation in Germany. The bank was created with



Sr. Marianne (Denmark), Sr. Mariaelena (General Treasurer), Sr. Dolores (GC), Sr. Shilpa (India), Sr. Cristina (GC), Sr. Snehal (India), Sr. Celine (GC), Sr. Barbara (USA) - in video: Sr. Apolonia, Sr. Neuza (Brazil), Sr. Eliza (GC)

the aim of investing only in ethical and sustainable companies. They showed us how can we invest to have a stable income while preserving and caring for nature and all forms of life.

Through the zoom platform, we met with the investment manager and advisors from Geneva and the USA. Both presented the market situation and how unstable it is. That's why it's important to diversify our investments and monitor our portfolio.

The advisors highlighted three issues: updating the portfolio, ethics and sustainability, and investment perspectives and strategies. In response, the Commission stressed the importance of having all investments of the Congregation being made in ethical and sustainable companies.

The insistence on this is based on the document *Mensuram Bonam* (Good Measure), from the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, published on

November 25, 2022. This document sets out criteria for sustainable and responsible investments and calls for discernment on sensitive issues, such as armaments, pornography, fossil fuels, human rights violations, government corruption, etc.

In view of what we had experienced we thank God for all that happened during our in-person meeting. We are grateful to all the people who contributed to making this meeting a reality.

ENHANCING ECONOMIC WELLBEING THROUGH COLLABORATION

Sr. Shilpa Kochumanoor CSJ

Tanmaya



In the spirit of working together the bursars from the Indian Provinces gathered at Snehalaya, Nagpur, from 12th to 14th November 2023 accompanied by Sr. Maria Cristina Gavazzi and Sr. Eliza Fatima Zuanazzi, General Councillors and Sr. Mariaelena Aceti, General Treasurer. It was the first time that the Indian bursars met all together to support each other and to enhance provincial economic wellbeing through collaboration and dealing with common

financial challenges.

The meeting aimed to evaluate the implementation of the administrative area of the provinces as discussed and approved by the respective provincial councils. Among the topics the bursars discussed were how to make the Province Finance Commissions more operational, what training to offer to the members in the economic field and how to support the communities and institutions in financial planning and budgeting.

The respective auditors, with whom the bursars analysed at length Form 9, were invited to the meeting. Study has helped them to have a better understanding and greater clarity about the assets of the Indian Provinces.

Among the administrative obligations, however, the Fixed Assets Register still remains to be established. The bursars have decided to make its preparation compulsory by all communities and institutions. This year some concrete steps



Sr. Lisy Vallooran (Nagpur), Sr. Shila Alvamkudy Jose (Nirmala), Sr. Snehal Pazhanilath (Pachmarhi), Sr. Mariaelena Aceti, Shilpa Kochumanoor (Tanmaya), Sr. Maria Cristina Gavazzi, Sr. Elisa Fatima Zuanazzi

were taken to start its drafting but still a few entities were updated.

There is also a need to clearly outline the responsibilities of both the Provincial Bursar and the Finance Commission, to define their roles and establish clear handover procedures for all those holding a position. The four Indian bursars expect that the International Finance Manual, currently being drafted, to be a useful reference for this work.

Given the complex horizon it is not surprising that we are seeing that the bursar's job is more and more demanding and the sisters who are covering this role need to get full support from their Leadership Teams and Province Finance Commission. Their priority should be this mission entrusted to them rather than any other



commitment and they should also be able to share some tasks with a few trained sisters. Some Provinces have identified Sisters and will send them for training.

The bursars expressed their

gratitude and appreciation to the General Councilors for their presence and contribution and to the General Treasurer for her support at all times, especially during these days of our togetherness and sharing.

NEW SAINTS

Sr. Marie Denise Peloso	96	Fr-Belg.	20.10.2023
Sr. Angelina Bavaresco	89	Brazil	25.10.2023
Sr. Cristiana Do Coração de Maria	101	Brazil	26.10.2023
Sr. Peter Pyanappilly	93	Nirmala	22.11.2023
Sr. Elsa Lorenzi	83	Brazil	27.11.2023
Sr. Maria Vitorina	89	Brazil	29.11.2023
Sr. Mary Veronica Alapatt	91	Pachmarhi	18.12.2023
Sr. Luisa Ingaramo	80	Italy	20.12.2023
Sr. Angelica Ines Batagelo	89	Brazil	20.12.2003

WORLD YOUTH DAY 2023

Sr. Elisabeth, Sr. Anna Vy, Sr. Mai Teresa CSJ

Norway



We, three of the younger sisters in Norway, had the wonderful opportunity to participate in World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, August 1-6, 2023. Before the opening of this extraordinary event we had the opportunity to visit the town of Benedita, a rural area which produces wine and apples. Our visit to Fatima was very special and we learned about Mary's appearance to the three children.

The first week was dedicated to visits of different dioceses. We stayed in Abrantes where we were welcomed by a host parish and stayed with local families. During this time we participated in a program planned by the local group. All the pilgrims who had lived in the same diocese as us had an opportunity to meet toward the end – an experience that

was a mini World Youth Day festival.

Finally we arrived in Lisbon for the main events. While some pilgrims stayed in host parishes or with host families, some of us went to a

gymnasium for the night. Our experience in the gymnasium that first night was terrible. There were over 600 people there with only five toilets and two shared bathrooms. It was very dirty but the worst



S. Anna Vy, Bishop Erik Varden of Trondheim and S. Elisabeth



Two sisters from another congregation, S. Mai Teresa and S. Elisabeth

was that there were ants everywhere. We were grateful that we only spent one night there. After that we went to another school which, in the words of one pilgrim, was like going to heaven.

In Lisbon we participated in many events with a festival atmosphere. During this week we experienced how diverse is our Catholic Church.

At the end of the week we traveled to a large square just outside the city, joining participants from all over the

world. We arrived there on Saturday afternoon and spent the evening in Eucharistic adoration, after which we slept under the open sky.

On Sunday the Pope celebrated the closing Mass with all 1.5 million of us who were there. It was a wonderful and memorable experience!

We did have a good time including fun together, but it really was a spiritual journey. It was both a meeting with young people from all over the world and an opportunity to deepen

our own faith. We prayed together, we celebrated Mass together, attended catechism sessions and got to know Jesus Christ better in the days before the Pope's arrival.

This was a special experience for us, to get to know more young people and how, as Sisters of St. Joseph, we could join with the youth. We were together with them all the time, talking, sharing, dancing and praying until we left for home on Monday, August 7.

GROWING IN LEADERSHIP: A LIFE LONG JOURNEY

Sr. Dr. Shobha Oliakkattil CSJ

Pachmarhi



The closing of the “Leaders as Leaven – India” programme was held in Inigo Sadan, Pune, November 07-10, 2023. Seventy sisters from LAC (Lyon, Annecy, Chambéry) Congregations gathered for the programme. Since the group was familiar with one another, they reconnected easily through table sharing and one to one.

The Trinitarian dimension in the Synodal Church was brought to light by Sr Linda Buck, CSJ, (Orange, California) through her clear and distinct explanation. She

also helped the participants to explore their own leadership circle profile. We discussed, in small groups, various hard and soft skills for leadership competency.

Marita Ishwaran conducted sessions on the ‘being and doing’ of leadership using an arrow-model to visualize the process and offering various ways to celebrate the leadership journey.

This was a great realization that true leadership has only two rules: that is, ‘leadership is not about you’ but ‘only

about you.’ The Leadership Circle Profile provided us with ample insight into our own inner self and the various degrees of creative and reactive tendencies in each one of us. “Leaders as Leaven- India”, a one-year long programme inaugurated in November 2022, was truly a time to do some real soul-searching to find one’s true and authentic self.

Throughout this year long programme, Sr. Barbara Bozak kept sending monthly ongoing Learning Modules to both the participants as well as to the mentors. These



Those gathered in Pune for “Leaders as Leaven – India”

reflection - guides along with study materials helped us to develop qualities to improve our leadership-skills. Some of the modules dealt with emotional intelligence, appreciative living, inter-culturality. There was also a module entitled 'Are you a people pleaser?' These were read, reflected on, discussed and shared among the table groups and also with the mentors.

This one-year programme was a blessed time for conversion. It was a period to choose to balance between reactive and creative tendencies as well as relationship and task balance. Surely it's a process and a life long journey.

Jack Welch correctly said: "Before you are a leader,



S. Shobha talks with a participant from the Annecy congregation

success is all about growing yourself; when you become a leader success is all about growing others".

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION : RETREAT IN THE DANISH REGION

Sr. Gisela Heitz CSJ

Denmark

Every year, the first weekend in October, the associates of the Region of Denmark meet for a retreat along with a group of the sisters, at the region's retreat center "Stella Matutina"

(Morning Star), which is located on shores of the Baltic Sea.

This year, the focus was "Forgiveness and Reconciliation". A main ingredient of the retreat was

the movie "The Great silence" by the Danish director Katrine Brocks.

Katrine Brocks' portrait of a young woman is that of one about to take her final vows as a religious





The sisters and associates who gathered for the retreat.

sister and who, during this time, is tormented by her turbulent past. Guilt weighs on her and prevents her from finding inner peace. Without reconciliation and forgiveness with one's past, inner peace cannot be found, is the message of this movie that won numerous awards.

Using the movie as a starting point, the retreatants worked individually and in groups on the topic of reconciliation and forgiveness. Some of them shared their reflection on the day.

Marian Connolly: *We were all very moved by this film and it fitted the theme of Forgiveness and Reconciliation. I loved the silence we kept, except when we met in groups to discuss the theme of our Retreat, where we could share our thoughts and feelings on this important subject. This*

sharing allowed me to find inspiration and food for thought in the times of silence. In the chapel we sat together, and our sisters had prepared different activities for us to inspire us in this area of forgiveness.

Birte Kjølby: *After watching the very good and thought-provoking movie "The Great silence" with the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation, we entered into a retreat filled with silence, reflection, thoughtfulness, care, community, good conversations and the Ignatian "Review of the day"*

Lisbeth Arbøl: *During a meditation, I realized that Jesus means that I and we should not be paralyzed by sin, past, conflicts and all that a human life is challenged by, but be true to our personal journey with people and with God and to our personal vocation.*

I have known the Sisters

of St. Joseph for many years and in recent years as an associate. In sorrows and joys, I have always encountered wise, patient and caring respect and support for my personal journey and vocation.

Ellen-Margrethe Laugesen: *This was a retreat where I was reminded of the importance of self-care. I was part of the community; I experienced care. When I walked in the garden on Sunday morning, I saw an apple lying on the ground; a bird had been picking on it. The thought came to me: with God there is room for everyone and everything - we are all part of God's creation, and the birds are, too.*

The dandelion is also God's creation. Some time ago, I understood that when I find a dandelion on my path, it is a greeting from God.

BRINGING THE CHURCH TO LIFE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

Sr. Marie-Josèphe Chorot CSJ

France



During World Mission Week, that began on Sunday, October 15, we were invited to unite ourselves more closely with our brothers and sisters across the world, through prayer and sharing. The gospel of the road to Emmaus which the Holy Father invited us to meditate on during World Mission Week 2023 is a treasure for our times. The theme was “hearts on fire, feet on the move,” and we chose two symbols for this : fire and shoes on the road. In conjunction with the Congregation’s feast and the opening of the World Mission Week the province of France organized two days of celebration. About 150 people participated at this celebration, under the tent set up at Jacob-Bellecombette.

We organized a Loto for the mission, an event that helped us keep in contact with all the friends of the congregations present in Chambéry since 1812 and to forge new relationships : a challenge to be constantly renewed in our daily lives.

The province of Brazil

decided to not abandon the people of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique many of whom are now in refugee camps. They want to support them as they struggle for more dignity. Those who are displaced need help to build homes, find food, medications and other necessities. To support them in this difficult situation the province of France organized a Loto on October 14, 2023, with the profits going to Mozambique.

To celebrate the feast of the congregation and

the opening of the Mission week, about forty lay friends and twenty sisters of the province came together to experience this time with its dual missionary dimension. We were invited to come together with our brothers and sisters across the world through prayer and sharing during this World Mission Week which began on October 15. For the day each participant received a symbol : a footprint of different colors, on which was written a maxim of Father Medaille, our founder.



Sr. Jayarani with two young girls present for the day



Ir. Barbara explains her role with the UN

The two symbols of fire and shoes on the road led us like a compass to be missionaries, wherever we are, by adapting ourselves to the contemporary reality.

The most important moments of that day were three in number. Sister Barbara Bozak of the United States told us about her mission at the UN. Following the acts of terrorism in Israel and in Palestine, these countries are in the grip of

the spiral of violence and suffering. This led us to pray for all who are victims and to be peacemakers in communion with other countries at war. We formed a circle with the flags of these countries in our hands. Then we honored the many missionaries from Savoy who went to the four corners of the earth to bring the love of Christ, noting the number of sisters who left for various places. More than 700 French sisters left their

province to carry our charism of communion.

It was a fruitful weekend. Meditating on the three aspects taken from the letter of Pope Francis which outline the itinerary of missionary disciples, we renewed our zeal for evangelization in today's world. May we be signs of brother/sisterhood and witnesses to the mercy of God in our mission, building relationships of love and peace!

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