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GENERAL COUNCIL

SUMMARY

YOU ARE MY FRIENDS

Sr. Elisa Fátima Zuanazzi CSJ

General Council



In times of changing human relations, we are called to strengthen the bonds of social friendship using the person of Jesus of Nazareth as our great model.

Friendship is very necessary for our existence as human beings which is why "it is a gift from God, a universal human phenomenon, which is born from the free offering of oneself to be open to the mystery of the other". Friendship is a journey of being human and renewing

relationships, esteem, forgiveness, and responsibility towards others.

Pope Francis challenges us to a friendship which commits us to dialogue and listen to what others have to say to us, a friendship that is visible and possible, where everyone lives with dignity and humanity.

In friendship with Jesus, a love is manifested which embraces everyone, overcoming the barriers of prejudice and place. It invites

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You are my friends

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us to live our commitment to the reign of God, which acknowledges, values, and loves all people.

Friendship for Jesus is so important that he presents himself as a friend: “I no longer call you servants, I call you friends” (John 15:15). The disciples heard Jesus’ invitation to be friends with him; a call that did not force them, but gently invited them to come and see: “Come and see; and they came and saw where He was staying and they remained with Him that day” (Jn 1:39). After that intimate and unexpected encounter, they left everything and followed Jesus.

Without this experience that God is love in us, the gospel will not have access to our being and our lives. This experience, when cultivated

in daily Christian life, has therapeutic and transformative power in the person, especially when we experience fragility and vulnerability.

Friendship with Jesus is everlasting. It never leaves us, although sometimes it seems silent. The grace he gives us strengthens the bonds of this friendship. And with the same love that he pours into us, we can love him and extend his love to others with the hope that they too will have their place in the community of friends founded by Jesus Christ.

At Jesus’ supper, everyone is invited to participate as friends, brothers and sisters with no one left out; even those who are absent are included. Everyone participates, and everyone enters his circle of communion.

As Renato Teixeira sings, “True friends know how to understand silence and maintain their presence even when absent”. We are inspired and encouraged to deepen our experience of friendship with Jesus and to revisit our understanding of social friendship, as Pope Francis asks us in the Encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*: “to live a love that extends beyond borders”.

Therefore, let us be friends with each other, and in this way, let us live fraternal relationships, paying attention to the words of Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, which tells us that friendship is not a “fleeting and passing relationship”, but a solid “relationship of affection that makes us feel united”.

FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Sr. Eliete Dal Molin CSJ

Brazil



Floods, forest fires, and record high temperature in different countries are alarming climate scientists. These events recorded over the last few months

reinforce the urgency for countries to intensify their fight against climate change. The UN climate conference is a platform to discuss this problem.

The 28th United

Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) took place from November 30th to December 12th, 2023, in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. This event brought together the



198 “parties”, that is, the 197 countries and the European Union, that signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The main discussion at COP 28 was the global assessment of the measures that the world has implemented since the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2015 to face the climate emergency, called in English the Global Stocktake, and pointing out ways to limit global warming to 1.5°C by 2050.

During the conference, there were critical moments which gave the impression that the main document which should result from this meeting, namely the Global Stocktake, would not materialize. However, in the end, a plenary session surprisingly approved the document without objection, thus representing a significant moment in the global climate change scenario. In terms of mitigation, the text presents notable advances, such as highlighting emission targets aligned to limit global warming to 1.5°C, with specific reductions until 2035. The substantial improvement in its language

proposes a coherent energy package that aims to shift from fossil fuels and emphasizes the importance of abatement technologies in sectors that are difficult to mitigate, such as the commitment to reducing methane, and measures for road transport and low-emission vehicles. They also recognized the acceleration of low-carbon technologies, emphasized the protection and restoration of ecosystems, and encouraged ocean-based solutions. Financing also received attention, with the reform of the financial architecture and the recognition of climate risks to the financial system.

However, there are worrying aspects. The energy package lacks strong indications of how just transitions will be financed and reflects ambiguity regarding transition fuels. The loss and damage part is considered weak. The exclusion of human rights and gender issues, as well as indigenous participation, are also critical points. The language about eliminating fossil fuel subsidies is vague, focusing only on a subset of inefficient subsidies. There are

uncertainties about how effective the proposed report on financing will be for adaptation.

The UAE Consensus brings not only advances but also significant challenges. The need for adequate financing, clarity in energy transition policies, and the inclusion of social and humanitarian aspects are key to ensuring that climate goals are not only ambitious but also equitable and effective. Given the urgency with which climate action needs to be implemented this decade for temperatures to have a chance of remaining within 1.5 degrees of pre-industrial levels, these agreements could not have come sooner. At the same time, there is still much more to be done, both in terms of implementation and in terms of boosting actions by the public, private, and financial sectors so that cuts in greenhouse gas emissions become a reality. As COP28 President Ahmed Al Jaber says, “An agreement is only as good as its implementation. This historic consensus is just the beginning of the path.”

THE JOY OF THE LESS FORTUNATE

Sr. Flonia CSJ

Pakistan



I am a temporary professed sister from the region of Pakistan who is the contact person from our region to the JPIC commission. All our communities in Pakistan observe the annual World Day of the Poor, which we consider a meaningful expression of the Father's mercy and a source of support

for our communities. As this observance, held toward the end of the liturgical year, becomes increasingly integrated into the Church's pastoral life, it continually leads us to rediscover the essence of the Gospel. Despite our daily efforts to welcome the poor, there remains a pressing need for

more profound action. A pervasive river of poverty is coursing through our cities, reaching a critical point of overflow, challenging us with the urgent pleas of our brothers and sisters for help, support, and solidarity. We come together around the Table to receive afresh the gift and strength to embrace lives





of poverty and serve those in need. The directive from Tobit 4:7 resonates: “Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor.”

Our congregation extended invitations to provinces, missions, and regions, urging them to join hands in solidarity with the less fortunate. The region of Pakistan, embodying the spirit of compassion, tirelessly pursued this mission, demonstrating unwavering concern for the impoverished, including an observance of the World Day of the Poor on November 19, 2023,

As the joyful season of Christmas approached in December 2023, the region

of Pakistan orchestrated a charitable project within its communities. Inspired by this noble cause, our community collectively deliberated and devised a plan to gather funds for aiding those in need. To accomplish this, we organized an eating stall within our churches, and the proceeds generated from this initiative were dedicated to supporting the less privileged. The act of charity was not merely a financial transaction; it was an expression of love and service that resonated with the true spirit of Christmas.

Members of our community engaged joyfully in this endeavor, recognizing the profound impact it could

have on the lives of those facing hardships. We took the initiative to visit the homes of deserving individuals, presenting them with tokens of love, allowing them to partake in the genuine essence of Christmas.

The words of the Bible echo the divine call to serve and care for the poor. As it is written in Matthew 25:40 ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ This scripture underscores the significance of selfless acts of kindness towards those in need, mirroring the very essence of our community’s charitable efforts.

LIFE FOR CABO DELGADO

**Sr. Joana Alexandre de Arruda,
Sr. Vanda Celia Gomes Silva CSJ**

Mozambique



“Life for Cabo Delgado!” This is the silent and inaudible cry of hundreds of families who for centuries have suffered from situations of slavery, war, hunger, disease, insecurity, and severe malnutrition.

In August 2023, the Brazilian province of the Congregation, with courage

and great hope, opened a community of sisters in the district of Mecúfi, Province of Cabo Delgado - Mozambique. Sisters Joana Alexandre de Arruda, Josiane Leopoldino Garcia, and Vanda Celia Gomes Silva went there to live and promote the charism of communion in this challenging reality.

The sisters soon realized

that one of the great challenges facing these people is the serious problem of malnutrition, especially among children. According to available data from the local hospital, around 500 of the children monitored every two weeks suffer from malnutrition. Malnutrition is caused by the lack of adequate food in the families.



Sisters Josiane and Vanda with Helena's family, a baby who receives milk through the Project



Children and mothers being served by the Maná Project, with the distribution of the Multi-mixture. January 2024

The sisters of the Congregation of the Way, who lived in Mecúfi until 2022, carried out nutritional assistance with good results. In view of this, Bishop Antonio Juliase of the Diocese of Pemba suggested that the Sisters of St. Joseph could continue this nutritional program.

The Multi-mixture Distribution Action began in November 2023. This multi-mixture is made from local ingredients rich in iron, proteins, carbohydrates, and salts, which are essential for human health. This food supplement is distributed every two weeks and the results are monitored by checking the child's weight. With this regular distribution, a significant number of children have already been helped, and every day new

mothers are coming and asking to participate in the program.

The Sisters also help orphaned children who require immediate food support. In these cases, they are given enough milk to survive. In addition, another action that has had good results in the past and is now being implemented is residential treatment for children who are critically malnourished, the "Caring Hands" project. The children stay together with their mothers or caregivers and receive a varied diet rich in nutrients throughout the day.

This project began on January 30, 2024, when a mother arrived at the sisters' residence with twin one-year-old babies weighing around four kilos each. From that day until February

3, 2024, the children had already gained significant weight. However, this activity had to be temporarily interrupted because the insecurity had become too high in the Mecúfi District.

This insecurity is due to the presence of armed groups who enter the villages, loot the few possessions that families have, spread fear and terror, and even murder civilians and military personnel.

The dream of the mission is on hold, but it's not over.

The community of sisters is currently residing in safety at the bishop's house in Pemba, the seat of the diocese in Cabo Delgado province, awaiting God's plans for them to resume their mission.

A CALL TO FRATERNITY

Sr. Claire Combarel, Sr. Marie Thérèse Bonin CSJ

France/Belgium



“**T**o involve the Sisters, Associates and lay partners in the work of justice, advocating for the defense and protection of the environment and the impoverished (women, children, migrants . . .)” Final Document 2021

With just five days to go before the crucial decision of the constitutional Council regarding the immigration law passed on December 19, 2023, demonstrations

were organized over all of France to demand president Emmanuel Macron « not to promulgate this law. »

On January 21 there was a call to demonstrate against the law “immigration, integration, asylum”. This call was supported by numerous associations that we know and with which we participate : « Emmaus, SOS Racism, Human Rights League ». In line with the call of the congregation, together with

S. Marie-Therese Bonan we decided to take part in the demonstration planned for Chambéry in front of the Palais de Justice.

We arrived at 11 am. A large crowd had already gathered in Chambéry and some of our friends had arrived before us. Representatives from different associations took turns speaking, communicating their anger and their fears.





This law will make it harder for individuals to have French passports, to have residency permits and access to social benefits. Do migrants take jobs away from French citizens or do they respond to the many needs and lacks in different areas ?

This law is contrary not only to our values as citizens but above all to our Christian convictions : “What you do to the least of my brothers and sisters you do to me”. The demonstration was calm and friendly with everyone leaving ready to renew their

commitment.

One hundred sixty-one large demonstrations were organized across the whole of France to show solidarity with all the migrants. All the departments (administrative division of the government) are concerned with the defense of immigration law.

NEW SAINTS

Sr. Daniel Marie Mccabe	99	USA	08.01.2024
Sr. Noemia Magro	93	Brazil	09.01.2024
Sr. Regina Konig	87	Denamrk	09.01.2024
Sr. Mary Jude Urgo	80	USA	13.01.2024
Sr. Mary Fatima Kaniampuram	90	Nagpur	15.01.2024
Sr. Johanne Marie	88	USA	23.01.2024
Sr. Jeanne Bouchard	93	USA	07.02.2024

THE REVOLUTION OF TENDERNESS

Sr. Vera Lúcia dos Santos CSJ

Brazil



“**R**evolution of Tenderness” was the central theme for the VII Congress promoted by the Âncora Revitalization Center of Curitiba which took place in September 2023 in Pinhais-Paraná. Âncora is a

house of welcome for priests and religious who are facing deep anguish and show signs of depression, anxiety, stress, extreme tiredness, and/or burnout. It is located in Curitiba, southern Brazil. Sisters of St. Joseph were

among the religious and priests from Brazil and abroad who participated in the online Congress. The topics covered were the historical and Biblical perspective on tenderness, mental vulnerability, tenderness

as compassion, burnout syndrome, tenderness in the pedagogy of Francis of Assisi, the role of the Church as an agent of tenderness, and tenderness in the process of discernment and integration.

Rev. José Antônio Peruzzo, Archbishop of Curitiba, led the reflection on the historical-biblical perspective on tenderness, highlighting passages such as Genesis, chapters 8 and 21, Psalm 103:13, and Matthew 9:36. He highlighted the difference between Eastern and Western writing in the interpretation of Biblical texts.

Others approached the topic from a more scientific perspective; a psychiatrist emphasized the importance of emotional openness in developing tenderness. He discussed mirror neurons and

the need to take care to avoid burnout. Another practitioner in this field explored tenderness as compassion, highlighting the division of the brain into old and new parts, with the compassionate part to problem-solving. She presented exercises to develop compassion and cited “Compassionate Mind Training”.

Sidney Damásio Machado, OFM Cap, presented tenderness as a pedagogy according to St. Francis of Assisi, highlighting episodes from his life that exemplify tenderness. He emphasized that tenderness does not imply a lack of rigor. A priest psychologist dealt with burnout syndrome as the opposite side of tenderness, indicating the burnout cycle and providing steps for

prevention.

The third resource person, a priest, spoke on ‘the role of the Church as an agent of tenderness in the world and tenderness in the process of discernment and integration’. He highlighted the expression ‘Revolution of Tenderness’ as Pope Francis’ response to the Church’s hardening of the heart.

The Congress concluded by emphasizing the Revolution of Tenderness as a hopeful challenge to draw closer to the heart of God and radiate love to others. Tenderness is from God who created us in His image and likeness. The Revolution of Tenderness is defined as fighting evil with good, living the Gospel of Jesus Christ, an essential life project.

Reflections from some participants...

“It became clear to me that to live with tenderness, I need to be healed of my wounds and be attentive always not to lose my inner peace. I learned that vulnerability is a strength, not a weakness. . .”

- Sr. Alice Soares, CSJ

“The congress contributed significantly to my self-knowledge, highlighting the need to deal with different situations in life with serenity, wisdom, and responsibility. . .”

-Sr. Vilma de Oliveira, CSJ

THE DANISH REGION AND THE 2003 FINAL DOCUMENT

Sr. Marianne Bode CSJ



Denmark

Can you imagine that most of the readers are asking themselves, what is this article about? We don't live in the past, but in the present, preparing the future. We have a new Final Document from our 2021 General Chapter. So why do we go 20 years back in history?

While drawing up the guidelines for our Region of

Denmark, we recalled the Final Document of our 2003 General Chapter, which led us to include in our guidelines: "Consciously living our vocation among those to whom we are sent." For us in Denmark this phrase took on a new dimension when we left our Mother House in 2016 and moved out to live together with people we never had met

before, sharing in their joys and sorrows.

The journey we, the sisters in the Danish Region, took throughout the past 8 years, is a journey of letting go: letting go of the big number we Sisters of Saint Joseph represented in Danish Society (80 years ago we counted more than 500 sisters – now we are only 17 sisters);





letting go of the numerous institutions (hospitals and schools) we had in Denmark and Iceland; letting go of the reality of not receiving new vocations; letting go of caring for our elderly sisters in our own nursing home; and at the end letting go of being a prosperous Province, which has now turned into a life-giving Region.

But as we looked into a future, seeing that we were becoming fewer and fewer, we decided to take advantage of the public facilities offered by the Danish State, which all citizens of Denmark (including the sisters) pay for through taxes. And so now we live together with all kind of citizens.

This fact made me look back to our 2003 General Chapter Final Document, where it is said under Government in the Congregation: "Provinces, Regions and Missions are

encouraged to continue developing models for governance and community life ... This may include the formation of small groups, which are open to sharing life with Associates or other non-vowed members."

This paragraph describes the life we, Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Region of Denmark, are living since 2016, when our sisters first moved to a nursing home, which had the profile of favoring residents with other sexual orientations. The sisters lived side by side with these people helping them to accept their lives without pointing at them.

As always, we find persons who are Catholic or are longing to hear the word of God.

Those sisters who are still able, visit the persons who are alone and often lonely – a wonderful witness of living together.

In our former provincial house there are now 28 apartments, where 5 of our sisters are living, each in her apartment. A small number of Associates are also living there. The sisters meet the other residents and contribute to a better mutual understanding and community life lived large. This is another witness of how we can live together, side by side, and support each other in our joys and sorrows.

Our General Chapter Final Documents are never out of date. With each General Chapter, we reiterate our intention to live our Founder's desire to be where there is need. In this sense I experience that the sisters of the Danish Region are trying to live the impact of the 2003 General Chapter Final Document in new settings of community life, together with Associates and non-vowed members, and with persons of many religious denominations.

A NEW CALL TO SOLIDARITY

Sr. Christiane Roger CSJ

France/Belgium



“We are always on mission in all stages of our lives.” Const. : (Mission et Ministry).

It was thanks to the pastoral presence of our sisters in the Lycée Saint Ambroise that we were encouraged to bring our Christmas campaign to the school for the feast of St. Ambrose, the patron of the school. The Assumption Sisters are responsible for the school. With the agreement of

the province and the head of the school, for the first time Sr. Jayarani initiated this project at the school where she is engaged part-time in pastoral ministry. Students, teachers, parents, all participated in this project. They get involved in causes that touch them through civic engagement but also financial support by purchasing Italian panettones and African bags.

The Sisters played a simple role by encouraging both students and adults

to embrace their power to act and supporting their aspirations, their concerns, their dreams. Whatever the economic situation, be it crisis or prosperity, the youth remain generous. It was also a moment of awareness for the province : on the one hand to make our congregation known and on the other to show the importance of solidarity, of supporting a project as a source of life. “Every act of generosity, large or small, contributes to a more just





society,” said one student. Besides ordinary citizens, businesses also have a rôle to play in how they produce products, promoting research, culture and social ties.

On December 7 several sisters of the province participated in the Mass of thanksgiving for the patronal feast of Lycée Saint Ambroise and then took turns staying on to sell panettones and bags for the mission in Tanzania. This added one drop of water to the effort which offers the brightest students scholarships

at the Centre Saint-Joseph of Chambéry to continue their academic studies up to university. The bags are made by a group of Mkomani women who work together, a group which began with young women who became pregnant while still young and were unable to continue their studies due to Tanzanian law.

Each sister supported the Mission by dedicating two hours at the stand. It is thanks to the collective strength of our sisters in the province that we are able to

give real support to the project of CSJ Missioni. The province truly felt sent on mission through this act of solidarity in support of the mission together with our sisters in Italy and Tanzania.

We were warmly welcomed at this celebration of the Lycée, thanks to our sisters who in the past supported young women students at the hostel of Ste. Marie des Monts. Living the mission in a new way – age does not limit the mission to which God sends us.

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