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GENERAL COUNCIL

PROMOTING INTEGRAL ECOLOGY, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY BONDS

Sr. Maria Cristina Gavazzi, CSJ

General Council



The transition toward a more sustainable model of society is urgent. The climate crisis, the ecological and political-economic imbalances have repercussions on the social level. In fact, we can foresee an increase in socioeconomic inequality and poverty, including that on the level of energy. Action is urgently needed as Pope

Francis reminds us in *Laudate Deum*.

The challenge is to pursue the “mysticism of living together” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 87) to educate for a sincere and welcoming dialogue, and a bond between persons and with the environment, thus rediscovering the value of doing things together. Only when we begin to cultivate

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strong virtue is it possible to make a commitment to ecology.

One tool to promote a culture and practice coherent with integral ecology, strengthen community ties, build open and inclusive networks in different locations, and help combat energy poverty by reducing consumption and delivery fees is the creation and diffusion of Renewable Energy Communities (RECs). Citizens, businesses and local bodies in the same geographical area can share a facility powered by renewable sources (solar, wind, hydroelectric, biomass) and use it for their own consumption, receiving an incentive for their energy usage while the excess energy is sent back to the network and is remunerated at market value.

Europe is betting on

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the development of energy communities, convinced that the RECs will be a key element for the energy transition of the European Union. By 2050, half the citizens of Europe could be producing up to 50% of the renewable energy of the European Union.

Pope Francis, in *Laudato si'*, urges opening the way to different opportunities, channeling this energy in a new way, making reference to illustrative experiences from the grassroots, because what happens at the local level can make a difference. And it is there, in fact, that greater responsibility, a strong sense of community, a special ability of caring and a more generous creativity, a deep love of the earth, and a recognition of what we are leaving to future generations can be born. (*Laudato si'*, 179).

Renewable Energy

Communities become a space for education and the creation of an “ecological citizenship” able to develop a sense of belonging to the community and the area concerned which is translated by “caring for creation by little daily actions” which “directly and significantly affect the world around us,” and “bring about real changes in lifestyle” thanks to “generous and worthy creativity”. (*Laudato si'*, 211).

Sharing values and fostering habits under the banner of integral ecology is a challenge to education that requires a pedagogy focused on the ethics of responsibility and the principle of solidarity, to reweave the fabric of relationship that can bring to life a humanity that becomes close to others in solidarity.

FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS: RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND INDEPENDENCE!

Srs. Sujatha Palepu and Dominga Zolet, CSJ

France



Encouraged by the struggle of women and stimulated by the International Commission of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, we organized a gathering on the afternoon of March 8. There were 22 sisters from the communities of Jacob-Bellecombette and 25 lay people: women from our parish and others connected to the Congregation as well as a few men.

We welcomed them all with a light snack. Then we began the afternoon with a song: "Let us together build the world of tomorrow. Let us together build the world with our hands. . .". Some

interactive games followed, creating a warm, festive and relaxed atmosphere.

A reminder of the history of women's struggle and organization throughout

the world introduced an exercise in which each participant gave her ideas in response to 3 questions: 1) What are the qualities of a woman? 2) Do women have





dreams? 3) What feelings do women have in today's society?

It is true that in our

context, we can say that we women have already won many rights. But if we open our eyes and our hearts to

the entire world we will see how many women are still deprived of their rights, their dignity, their dreams. It is up to us to continue the “fight” of those who came before us!

We prayed with some women of the Bible: Sarah, Hagar, Rebecca, Dinah, Ruth, Anne, Judith, the Samaritan, Martha, Mary Magdalen and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Each of us became more aware of how lucky we are to have had our rights for so long. We can be proud to be women and much continue to support them.

The day was very enjoyable, reflected in the photos.

CULTIVATING LIFE AND LEARNING

Sr. Eliete Dal Molin, CSJ

Brazil



St. Joseph Elementary School, located in the city of Caxias do Sul, Brazil, has stood out for integrating innovative educational practices into the students' daily lives. Among these initiatives, growing vegetables

has proved to be an enriching experience, promoting not only environmental awareness but also the development of values such as responsibility, cooperation, and caring for creation.

The school garden

project was born out of a desire to provide more concrete and meaningful learning for the students. Through direct contact with the earth, the children learn about the life cycle of plants, the importance of healthy

eating, and sustainability. Growing vegetables such as lettuce, carrots, beets, cabbage, and various spices allows the students to understand, in practice, concepts taught in subjects such as Science, Mathematics, and Geography.

Additionally, the garden serves as a space for integration between different age groups and classes, fostering teamwork and knowledge sharing. Teachers, staff, and even the students' families take part in this process, strengthening community ties and promoting an integral education.

Inspired by the charisma of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the students are encouraged



to see the garden as a space of gratitude and care for creation. Spirituality manifests itself in respect for nature, in sharing the food harvested, and in recognizing that every little seed planted can bear good fruit. The relationship with the land teaches, in a concrete way, the importance

of patience, effort, and generosity, essential values for forming citizens committed to the common good.

The benefits of the school garden go beyond the school walls. The students take their learning home with them, encouraging their families to cultivate small home gardens and adopt healthier eating habits. In addition, the project has aroused interest in environmental issues, inspiring new sustainable initiatives inside and outside the school environment.

The experience of growing vegetables at the St. Joseph Elementary School reinforces the institution's commitment to an integral and transformative education. By caring for the land, students learn to care for others, the community, and the planet, reaffirming the call to be guardians of creation and promoters of a fairer and more fraternal world.



SEMINAR ON GOOD PRACTICES IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD

Sr. Shilpa Kochumannoor, CSJ

Tanmaya, India



A seminar on “The Good Economic Management of a Religious Institute Today” organized by the Union of Superiors General (USG) and the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), on 19th February 2025, furnished valuable insights into the financial management of Religious Congregations. The treasurer of one Italian congregation presented the findings of an extensive survey conducted among religious congregations which included responses from 203 religious institutions across 20 countries, representing

a balanced distribution between male and female congregations. While many of the institutions are focused on the fields of education and professional training, contemplative congregations were represented as well.

The persons who answered the questionnaire, for the most part aged between 50 and 70, reflected significant experience in economic management, with at least five years in the field. Interestingly, the respondents were both religious and lay, with some holding a degree in

economics.

The study emphasized that economic action is not merely administrative but also a space to witness Christian values and can be a place of creativity and cooperation with the creative action of God.

The survey highlighted a key development in that 34% of respondents acknowledged that there is differentiation in both accounting and management between community and apostolate. Many congregations, about 44%, manage their works through separate legal entities, ensuring



greater financial clarity and operational efficiency, with 85% recognizing the need for distinct management structures for communities and apostolic activities.

The findings also reaffirmed the prophetic role of religious congregations in economic management, with the vow of poverty and communion of goods fostering a more humane and ethical approach.

The study identified two priorities: the need to create a platform for continuous comparison between General treasurers

and the need to increase the involvement of trained lay people in economic management.

Several important proposals were put forward: strengthen the training of treasurers; foster inter-congregational financial initiatives; promote ethical and sustainable investments through joint inter-congregational actions.

Among the major challenges were concerns regarding the aging of members, the complexity of financial management, and how to ensure sustainability

while maintaining the mission of the congregation. Already one positive movement is the transition from individual bursars to organized finance teams.

The seminar reaffirmed that good management is not just about financial viability but about ensuring the sustainability of the mission. Through collaboration, training, and ethical financial practices, religious congregations can continue to be beacons of economic justice and prophetic leadership in today's world.

LIVING INTERCULTURALITY: GIFT AND CHALLENGE

Sr. Lorraine Marie Delaney, CSJ

Nagpur/India



As a young girl growing up in India, I was plunged into a kaleidoscope of cultures, customs, languages, and traditions. Growing up in Central India, I was

exposed, from a young age, to various cultures. My neighbors were Gujaratis, my best friend was a Muslim, and my School and Boarding friends hailed from different

cultures. Our household was a microcosm of India's diversity, with my parents, who were from different Indian States, celebrating festivals and traditions from their respective cultures.

One of my earliest memories of living interculturality is of celebrating Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, with my non-Christian neighbors. Neighbors would invite us over for dinner, and we would spend hours eating traditional Gujarati sweets, watching fireworks, and exchanging gifts. These celebrations gave me a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of Gujarat.

As I grew older, my understanding and appreciation of interculturality deepened. I began to notice



the subtle differences in customs, traditions, and values that existed between different cultures. I learned an important fact, that no one culture was superior to another but, rather each culture had its richness and was totally different.

Then my journey of living interculturality continued in a new context. For two decades, I had the privilege of living in Europe and the Americas, where I was immersed in a completely new cultural landscape. I celebrated Christmas with Italian friends, tried my hand at traditional French cuisine, and danced the salsa with Brazilian colleagues. I also had the opportunity to share my own Indian culture with my European friends, introducing them to the vibrant colors, sounds, and flavors of India.

However, as much as I enjoyed living interculturality

there were struggles. As a young adult in India, I faced challenges in navigating differences of cultures, languages, customs, especially when interacting with people from other regions or communities. I faced pressure to conform to traditional values and customs, while also being influenced by modern ideas and values.

This balancing act was very challenging, especially when it came to issues like relationships, career choices, and personal freedom. Living abroad presented its own set of challenges. Initially I faced a sharp cultural shock. Moving to a new country was a daunting experience. I certainly faced challenges in adapting to a new culture and adjusting to new customs, languages, and ways of life. Cultural differences include styles of communication and conflict resolution, work

ethics, professional etiquette and emotional expression.

Living abroad, I faced challenges in staying connected to my roots while also navigating a new cultural environment. And of course, there was the challenge of maintaining my own cultural identity while adapting to a new cultural environment.

All said and done, my experience of living interculturality has taught me valuable lessons of empathy, tolerance, and understanding. It has shown me that despite our differences, we are all connected by our shared humanity. In a world where cultural divisions and differences often dominate the headlines, my experience of living interculturality serves as a powerful reminder of the beauty and strength that can emerge from our diversity.

NEW SAINTS

Sr. Carmelinda Pinzetta
Sr. Suja Chackt Thrissokaran
Sr. Ana Apericida Kudo
Sr. Margaret Mary Chiramel
Sr. Davina Vanzin
Sr. Mary Cherian
Sr. Teresa Mary Henry

74	Brazil	12.03.2025
70	Nagpur	18.03.2025
94	Brazil	24.03.2025
84	Pachmarhi	28.03.2025
103	Brazil	02.04.2025
92	Nagpur	07.04.2025
79	USA	11.04.2025

TO HONOR AND COMMEMORATE

Sr. Gisela Heitz, CSJ

Denmark



The 21st of March 1945 was a normal school day for students and teachers at Institute Jeanne d'Arc, a school run by the sisters of Saint Joseph in Copenhagen, Denmark. Nobody would expect what was going to happen during this morning in the final weeks of the Second World War and the occupation of Denmark by Nazi Germany.

This very day several bombs accidentally crashed into the school. The planes came from England, and the real target of the bombs was the headquarters of the German occupying forces, located close to the school.

A series of unfortunate events led to one of Denmark's worst disasters.

It was a tragedy for so many families and the Sisters of St. Joseph who had been running this school for girls since 1924. About 500 people were in the building when the bombs fell. Many were rescued, but 86 children and 18 adults were killed. Ten of them were sisters.

This happened 80 years ago this year, 2025 – and both the Region of Denmark and the official authorities in Copenhagen wished to mark this day in a special way. Our Region was blessed with the presence of our general superior Sister Dolores Lahr, and Sisters Maria Cristina Gavazzi and Celine Kalathoor from the general team. Another joy was the presence of Sister Anette





Moltubakk, the provincial of our neighboring province of Norway.

On March 20 a group of sisters visited the burial place of the sisters who were killed, to remember and honor their lives and their death.

During the prayer, we thanked sisters Adeline, Ancilla, Beatrix, Celine, Elisabeth, Fulgentia, Mechtilde, Patricia, Renée and Ruth with these words:

"We thank God that each of you lived your vocation as a sister of St. Joseph in loving commitment to your brothers and sisters.

Your lives, along with those of many children and adults, were destroyed in a senseless battle. You did not seek death, yet it found you. But in the faith in Christ's resurrection, your death is fulfilled.

Dear sisters, your lives are a testimony to us that we are always in God's hand and have nothing to fear. Thank you for your courage, your commitment and your love. Thank you for having gone ahead of us."

As part of the prayer Sr. Dolores blessed the graves with holy water.

On March 21 hundreds

of people gathered at the monument which marks the place where the school had been located. There were survivors with their families and friends, officials of the city of Copenhagen and representatives of the Protestant and Catholic churches. Sisters Dolores Lahr and Susanne Hoyos (regional coordinator of Denmark) laid a wreath for the congregation in front of the memorial. A minute of silence at 11.16 a.m. – the moment when the first bomb fell – was a powerful experience of being united with all who died that day. From the memorial, participants moved to the nearby parish church, where an ecumenical service was to take place. Her Majesty, Queen Margarethe II, attended this beautifully arranged service. Afterward, the leadership teams were invited for a short encounter with the Queen, where Sr. Dolores offered words of gratitude to her Majesty.

In his homily the protestant Bishop Peter Skov-Jakobsen meditated on the meaning of suffering and pointed to our cross. *"We have just gathered at the memorial and looked at the cross hanging on the habit of the sisters of Saint Joseph. This strange sign which means death and life - grave and eternity - darkness and light".*

A CONCRETE COMMITMENT TO PEACE: ZERO TOLERANCE FOR INVESTMENTS IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Sr. Mariaelena Aceti, CSJ

Italy



In today's complex geopolitical scenario, marked by growing international tensions and a renewed nuclear arms race, the role of sustainable finance emerges as a basic driver to promote peace. Nuclear arms are an existential threat to humanity, and their impact on humanity and the environment has been recognized globally by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which entered into force in 2021 and has been ratified by 70 member states.

To translate this commitment into concrete action, ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons), which won the Nobel Peace prize in 2017, began the Nuclear Weapons Free Finance Initiative. This initiative works to make financial institutions aware of the importance of excluding from their investments

companies involved in the production of nuclear weapons.

Among the Italian groups which promote this initiative is the Interreligious Centre for Dialogue with Corporations, with the Italian province being a partner since 2023. This network which unites investors and financial consultants who share a common faith-based vision, has played a key role in spreading awareness of nuclear disarmament among its partners.

In order to concretize the commitment to finances based on gospel values, on February 20 the Centre, on behalf of its members which represent about 240 million dollars, supported the Campaign. Our Italian province was among this group.

For some time already the financial portfolio of

the province, certified by Nummus, has excluded investments in nuclear arms, accepting a small mismatch of only 0.28%. Nonetheless, with the new underwriting managers were explicitly instructed to exclude direct investments in businesses on the ICAN list beginning with January 2025. This led, for example, to the immediate sale of Airbus stocks. This step testifies to a strong consistency with the ethical values that guide the province. This is one example of how finances can be used as an instrument for positive change, actively contributing to nuclear disarmament.

Joining the Nuclear Weapons Free Financial Initiative is not only symbolic action, but a concrete commitment with significant financial and ethical implications. Excluding companies involved in the



production of nuclear arms from our investments means denying economic support to those companies that profit

of the Italian Interreligious Centre for Dialogue with Business and to the

from the arms race. It also means protecting human rights and protecting future generations because nuclear arms have disastrous and indiscriminate consequences on a large scale.

Thanks to the support

collaboration with ICAN, congregations have the opportunity to demonstrate their real commitment to a future free of nuclear arms. Following the example of the Italian province means joining a global movement for more just and responsible money management.

To join the Nuclear Weapons Free Finance Initiative or for further information, visit the website of ICAN: Nuclear Weapons Free Finance Initiative - Divestment.

A world free of nuclear weapons is possible, and sustainable financing is a central pillar to create it.

EUROPE-USA LIFEGIVING NETWORK

Sr. Sally Hodgdon, CSJ

USA



Since the 2021 General Chapter, the Sisters of Europe and the USA have been making new connections and building relationships with one another. This follows the initiative taken by the Core Group of the European Life-Giving Network who recommended to the 2021 General Chapter that the

Network expand to include the US province. Thus, the European Life-Giving Network became the Europe-USA Life-Giving Network or just Europe-USA.

After sending out a survey to the Provinces, Regions and Missions in 2022, the Core Group decided to form Zoom Groups so

sisters could get to know one another. Six different topics were chosen based on the Sisters' interests: Group 1: Get acquainted and share on topics and/or pray together; Group 2: Spiritual Directors' support group; Group 3: Organize and present sessions on particular topics of interest; Group 4: Organize opportunities for

vacations and pilgrimages;
Group 5: Share one's 'life'
vocation in the parishes;
Group 6: Engage in a common
project such as forming an
intercultural community.

The Groups met regularly every 6-8 weeks in 2022 and 2023. New relationships were born and sisters challenged and supported one another as they discussed these topics and engaged in other conversations. At different points, the sisters in Groups 2, 3 and 6 determined it was no longer necessary to continue to meet at this time and some of those sisters joined other Zoom Groups.

The current 3 Zoom Groups continue getting to know each other better and are strengthening our union as Europe/USA. Group 1 includes 30 sisters who meet regularly, breaking into smaller groups after the opening prayer with translators as needed. Group 4 is made up of 9 Sisters who are hosting an intergenerational pilgrimage to our origins in France in early July 2025. The 15 sisters in Group 5 share their experiences in serving in parishes, ideas for this ministry and discuss discerning vocations to all ways of life.

Sisters in Europe and the USA are welcome to join the Zoom groups at any time or to start a new Zoom group around a particular topic, concern, book or dream.

The Zoom groups can last 6



months or several years. All of us who are in the Zoom Groups look forward to our meetings and listening to the different perspectives, as well as to catching up on the life of the other sisters. We really feel more as ONE.

A few other exciting initiatives in building relationships and sharing resources have also come to life through this Network. There is now a Europe-USA Finance Committee made up of the Sister Treasurers or the Councilor who is responsible for the Finances from each Province or Region. The purpose of this new committee is to support each other and to share ideas and processes that may be beneficial to others, including investments, and operating with lay finance staff, etc. The first meeting

was held on February 13, 2025 via Zoom and they will meet twice a year.

It was also decided to invite all the members of Europe-USA to join together in prayer 3 times a year. This year we had a prayer for the feast of St Joseph on March 16, and are planning a prayer on June 8 before the final profession of Sisters Nirmal and Sapna in France and again on October 19 to celebrate Foundation Day.

Together we are supporting Italy's CSJ Missioni, which sells panettone for Christmas to raise money to support the Hostel for students we have in Songea, Tanzania. These Zoom groups and initiatives are bringing us closer together as a Life-Giving Network.

EMPOWERING SISTERS FOR LEADERSHIP AND MISSION

Sr. Laveena D'Souza, CSJ

Tanmaya/India



Flames of Tanmaya Speaks is an initiative launched in 2024 in Tanmaya Province in response to the calls of the Congregation. The programme brings together 51 sisters, aged 25 to 55, with the purpose of providing a Goal Orientation Programme. This initiative fosters leadership development, critical thinking, and effective mission

planning, while also serving as a platform for younger members to share their strengths, struggles, and ideas with the leadership team. The participants are encouraged to step out of their comfort zones, deepen their commitment to their mission, and serve with renewed vision and dedication. The active presence of the Province

Leadership Team further enriched the discussions, fostering greater participation and openness among the sisters.

To enhance the effectiveness of the programme, a structured questionnaire was circulated via Google Forms in early 2024, including the questions: (1) How can the Province



or Leadership Team help in increasing productivity in life and mission? (2) What vision do you have for the Province? (3) What values do you cherish in your Province? (4) How can you be a life-giving member in the community or Province? (5) What personal or external obstacles prevent you from progressing in your mission? (6) How do you experience challenges within the community, province or mission?

The responses were collected and analyzed by core group members, who then presented the findings to the Province Leadership Team for further reflection and recommendations. The document, *Flames of Tanmaya Speaks*, was shared with the larger congregation on March 14 via Zoom.

Following the presentation, the sisters were invited to express their

thoughts on the programme. Their reflections underscored the transformative impact of the initiative:

Sr. Karuna: *"This session challenged us to live our call faithfully. . . . Challenges push us beyond our comfort zones, shaping us into stronger individuals."*

Sr. Molly: *"[This] provides younger members the opportunity to appreciate, understand, and accept themselves while growing in maturity. The questionnaire review personally helped me realize my potentials and vulnerabilities."*

Sr. Nisha: *"This platform creates a sacred space for authentic connection. It encourages us to listen to one another's dreams, successes, and challenges, making us feel united."*

Sr. Archana : *"The session provided clarity on my aspirations and the steps needed*

to achieve them."

Sr. Monica : *"Listening to each sister's reflections, I envision us, Sisters of St. Joseph, as trendsetters—embracing the newness of life and creating something unique and beautiful. Together, 'WE CAN' be an inspiration to one another."*

Sr. Betsy said *"[This] has been a meaningful and enriching experience. It provided an opportunity for deep introspection, helping me recognize my abilities and use them effectively for the benefit of the congregation."*

The *Flames of Tanmaya Speaks* session concluded with an invitation for all sisters to reflect on their commitment to their mission. This initiative serves as a stepping stone toward a more dynamic, engaged, and transformative congregation, fostering a future of greater collaboration and renewed commitment.

EDITING

Sr. Barbara Bozak
Sr. Eliana Aparecida dos Santos
Sr. Leni Menegat

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Sr. Laveena D'Souza

TRANSLATIONS

Anette Jensen
Sr. Cristina Gavazzi
Sr. Margherita Corsino
Sr. Maria Elisabete Reis
Sr. Marie-Joséphé Chorot
Sr. Preeti Hulas
Sr. Ivani Maria Gandini

CIRCULATION

Monica Bianchini
www.csjchambery.org

E - MAIL

icc@csjchambery.org