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GENERAL COUNCIL

INTERFAITH RELATIONS IN PAKISTAN

Sr. Dolores Lahr, CSJ

Superior General



The full name of the country of Pakistan is 'The Islamic Republic of Pakistan.' But that name belies the existence of many diverse faith traditions that exist there. Islam is the predominant religion, with more than 95% of the

population as members, but there are also Christians of different denominations, a small percentage of Hindus, Jews, and other faith traditions, as well as non-believers.

On a recent visit with our Sisters in the Region of

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Sisters Cristina, Dolores and Shakila (in white) with women from the Bilal Centre.

Pakistan, Sister Cristina and I were given the opportunity to visit the Bilal Centre for Interfaith Relations, Markaz-e-Bilal, in Lahore, with Sisters Shakila and Saiqa. We were accompanied by Mr. Khurram Mushtaq, a Muslim friend of the Sisters.

This Centre was founded in 1991 by Allama Peer Shafaat Rasool, a renowned Islamic scholar in Pakistan. The compound is composed of a beautiful mosque, school, hostel, homes, extensive library, offices and places for meetings. Allama Peer Shafaat Rasool is known internationally for his work in interfaith dialogue and

has travelled extensively to spread the 'good news' of interfaith dialogue, interfaith relationships, and interfaith collaboration. A devout Muslim, he warmly welcomed us. We had a tour of the complex, met many staff members, including the Principal of the school, a Muslim woman, who introduced us to the faculty. The school welcomes children of different faith traditions, and the curriculum is designed to promote an understanding of diverse faith traditions and encourages positive relationships among faculty and students.

Recently, the Bilal Centre for Interfaith Relations collaborated with FACES Pakistan and launched the Social Awareness & Leadership Training Program at Markaz-e-Bilal. This program is for young leaders of diverse faith traditions, to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to drive positive change in their communities. (FACES Pakistan is an organization that promotes Formation, Awareness, Community, and Empowerment.)

It was a learning experience for us to come to know and understand that there are many groups across Pakistan working for interfaith collaboration, for an understanding of diverse faith traditions, and ultimately, for peace. It was truly inspiring to listen to the women and men of Markaz-e-Bilal, who are working with and collaborating with people across faith traditions to bring about peace. Their work with young people is also impressive. Grateful for this experience, Sister Cristina and I are moved to continue this dialogue and collaboration in the common quest for peace and communion in the country of Pakistan, and beyond.

ENDING PLASTIC POLLUTION

Sr. Deepika D'Souza, CSJ

Nirmala/India



World Environment Day is celebrated every year on June 5th, and the Theme for this Year, 2025, was “A Call to End Plastic Pollution” This day reminded us to

protect our planet by reducing pollution. Plastic harms marine life, soil, air, and even the health of human beings. Most plastics take hundreds of years to decompose. We need to do something to

avoid single-use plastics in any form, and recycle more.

The residents of our Home for the Aged in Goa, ventured to help in reducing plastic bags, by making cloth bags out of bits of materials



S. Deepika and some of the bags they made.

that go to waste from the tailoring unit. These bags were sent to the Provincial House to use as tiffin bags instead of using plastic bags. The Sisters were overwhelmed, and from then on these bags were made good use of during big gatherings.

In our neighbourhood school, the students came out in procession with placards, shouting slogans and giving short speeches to bring awareness among the people around the area.

Many families left their homes and came out to listen and become aware. From then on, a cleanliness drive was organized, and both the people and students participated with full vigour and collected all the plastic waste and sent it to the recycling unit. It was a successful event both for people and the students.

Some of the residents of the our Home used their time to sew bits of unused materials to make baby dresses for poor children,

and these were distributed to poor migrant children of the area.

Recycling plastics and unused material brought about awareness to our students, the people in our vicinity and the residents of our Home.

Let us plant trees, clean our surroundings and spread awareness. Together, we can make a difference, by taking active part in different programmes organized in the area, and beating Plastic Pollution.

CARING FOR “THE DEAR NEIGHBOR”

Sr. Elaine Betoncourt, CSJ

USA



In 2019, faith leaders in Connecticut, aware of the many who were living in poverty and suffering injustice in diverse ways, joined to establish the

Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA). This interfaith alliance now represents over 50 diverse faith communities and allied institutions – Christian,

Muslim, Jewish, Quaker and others – throughout the greater Hartford area who organize together for to address justice issues.

Our USA Province

participates in GHIAA through one of its member organizations, The Collaborative Center for Justice, which was founded in 1999 and continues to be funded by six congregations of Women Religious including the Chambéry CSJs.

Each year GHIAA holds small “house” meetings to determine what issues will be addressed and what legislative priorities the group will support during the year. Our sisters are among the leaders of these meetings which are intended to find what the grassroots consider to be the most important issues.

GHIAA both lobbies to get issues on the agenda of the state legislature and organizes its members to speak during public meetings on issues being considered by the legislators. During the 2025 Legislative Session, GHIAA focused on three main issues. It advocated for and supported immigrants at risk of deportation. It advocated to use available funds to address pressing needs for youth and families. It also sponsored events to promote racial justice and religious respect and understanding.

As part of GHIAA,

Sisters also worked for environmental justice regarding a trash collecting enterprise that has polluted land and air in Hartford for over seven decades. The plant is now closed and state leaders will provide for proper remediation of the property and determine future usages that will not involve trash collection. Specifically, because of GHIAA’s involvement in

this cause, leaders will also consider finding a way to compensate Hartford residents for the health issues people have suffered for these past decades. In fact, GHIAA envisions the MIRA Environmental Justice team fighting to dedicate the remaining \$50-\$60 million in MIRA reserves to an environmental justice fund to repair harms experienced by Hartford residents.



MY EXPERIENCE LIVING IN THE MISSION

Sr. Josiane Mota Coelho, CSJ

Tanzania



Living in the missions is a dynamic experience that is built on relating daily with the reality, where I decide freely and with commitment to share my life and receive the lives shared by those with whom I live. From a very early age, even as a junior professed, I learned that the verbs “learn,” “listen,” and “receive” are fundamental to a good missionary experience. Another verb that should even precede the ones mentioned above is the verb “respect.” Respect the sacred space where we are sent. Respect in order to understand or accept the realities with which we live, which we often cannot comprehend in their full depth

because we stand before lives intertwined with so many past and present situations. For me, this is the first challenge of the missionary experience. To become aware that where I go, there is much richness, much wisdom, a culture, a life that often, for various reasons, is not revealed to us in detail until people begin to trust us. Until we begin to be part of their lives. If we behave like guests, like outsiders who have come to spend some time there, but without any real involvement with reality. If I come with preconceived ideas and think I will find people willing to accept what I am going to teach, I will be just a guest, and that is not mission.

If we accept this important premise, we are blessed with a new learning opportunity, immersed in an immense wealth of lives that are concretized in the most diverse cultural expressions, such as ways of praying, of building relationships, of speaking, of eating, the intertwining of beliefs sometimes received as an ancestral inheritance, which we cannot judge because we do not have sufficient elements to do so, nor is that our role there. Another blessing is our personal growth. The expansion of our world, the experience of God that is expressed in the most varied cultural realities, beginning with the

simplicity of daily life, but which is the fruit of lives woven in concrete ways in the daily dynamic. Then, after this process of immersion in the missionary reality, we will have much to contribute, building with the people, because where I am inserted, I am respected and accepted as another member of the group. And there I will have the opportunity to listen and be listened to. To give and receive.

It is this intertwining with the reality where I live, and it is the discovery that I am part of the relational dynamism present there. It is the desire to walk alongside

people, reaping the fruits of mutual and communal growth where, from a path already traveled, from daily immersion in the life present there, which is no longer just that of a people to whom I was sent, but is also mine because I am part of it, I continue and each day strengthen my bonds of belonging and remain connected to the mission. This experience certainly gives meaning to my presence, knowing that God arrived first where I was sent. God loved first and expects me to be free to love, motivating me to give myself generously, which, even when I encounter challenges, does

not discourage me but rather drives and encourages me. Another aspect that I only mention here, but which gives a profound and significant dimension, is that I do not come in my own name, but in the name of the group that sent me. I have a charism that must also be embodied there through my witness and through my experience. My calling card and what authenticates each day, each relationship, each activity, is my charism, which is my "identity card." It is the mirror that reflects who I am and what I must continue to build.

NEW SAINTS

Sr. Maria Donatila Krzanovski	87	Brazil	25.06.2025
Sr. Christine Regina Lobo	65	Nagpur	02.07.2025
Sr. Maria de Lourdes Savio	103	Brazil	09.07.2025
Sr. Adelaide Ferrari	98	Brazil	09.07.2025
Sr. Catarina de São José Herts	83	Brazil	18.07.2025
Sr. Isolda Boeira Cardoso	94	Brazil	28.07.2025
Sr. Marie Kristin Riosianu	90	Norway	28.07.2025
Sr. Luisa Carolina Rocha de Silva	103	Brazil	11.08.2025
Sr. Mary Adrian Alvares	83	Nagpur	19.08.2025
Sr. Lorraine Marie Delaney	82	Nagpur	23.08.2025
Sr. Maria Eduarda Luvison	89	Brazil	26.08.2025

UNITY THAT GENERATES LIFE

Sr. Gertrudes Salette Beal, Joana Alexandre Arruda and Josiane Garcia Leopoldo

Mozambique

Mozambique has a population of 33.64 million inhabitants and, despite the wealth of its natural resources, is the fifth poorest country in the world. 80% of the population is under 35 years of age, and 50% is under 16 years old. According to UNICEF research, 44% of children suffer from chronic malnutrition, and a large number of children already have HIV, transmitted by their parents.

Mecufi is a district in the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique, with a population of approximately 63,000 inhabitants, 97% of whom are Muslim and 3% Christian and other faiths. Government officials are characterized by widespread corruption that plagues the

entire country. Economically, the people live in poverty.

The entire Cabo Delgado Province has been attacked by armed groups that destroy homes, steal food crops, murder people, and leave the population

insecure and terrified. In addition to the attacks, Mecufi suffered from tropical cyclones in 2024. Cyclone Chido completely devastated the district, aggravating the issue of food insecurity, destroying 100%



Tutoring students



Delivery of milk to mothers with malnourished babies.

of homes that were impacted, infrastructure, fruit trees, and forests.

In the face of so many difficulties, the people remain resilient and always start again with hope in rebuilding their homes and in the psychological dimension that has been shaken. Thanks to the sensitivity of many non-governmental organizations from various countries, the Catholic Church, and our congregation, support has been provided to alleviate suffering.

Our mission as Sisters of St. Joseph in Mecufi has sought to be a unifying presence in caring for life, with special attention to those in greatest need, namely, children and the sick. We seek to assist mothers with malnourished babies who

come from distant villages to receive milk and multimixture, a food supplement that has helped many children gain weight and survive, thanks to the help of the congregation. The country has a high illiteracy rate, and in Mecufi, children and adolescents reach the end of elementary school without being literate. To respond to this need, we have created literacy and school reinforcement projects.

The district lives almost entirely from agriculture and fishing. Responding to the appeal of a group of young people from the parish, a vegetable garden was organized on the grounds of the sisters' residence for learning and self-sustainability for those who participate in youth meetings in the

diocese.

Everything is evangelization, but directly through our participation in the diocese, we contribute to the groups and commissions that make up the diocesan organization, the Vicariate, and the Parish of Santa Marta.

One of the priorities of the diocese is interreligious and ecumenical dialogue. In this regard, work has been done to welcome all people and all mothers who have sought food support for malnourished children, since most of them are Muslim.

The presence of the Sisters of St. Joseph in this reality has made all the difference, opening up to a different culture, an extremely challenging reality, and an option for the poorest.

A CONCRETE COMMITMENT VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE IN SAN RAMÓN-BENI

Martha Alvarado León

Bolivia



My name is Martha Alvarado León. I am 25 years old, a socio-environmental engineer by profession, and a member of the youth ministry at the Parish of St. Francis of Assisi in the city of Camiri, Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

At the end of last year, I received an invitation from the Bolivian Episcopal Conference and the Brotherhood Commission to participate in the Internal Volunteer Program in the municipality of San Ramon, in the province of Mamoré, in the department of Beni. Leaving behind my family, friends, and, of course, my parish, I went to the mission site assigned to me, arriving on January 21. Ericka Rodriguez was waiting for me in Trinidad, when she was returning from the Latin American Congress in Cochabamba, and together we left for San Ramón, which,

over time, became my home until June 11. It was a trip, at least for me, with a lot of adrenaline, as the road was inundated by rain.

At the parish, I met the members of the St. Joseph family, the youth ministry, and other groups that are part of the parish. After I settled in, I began to help out in the parish office. A few days later, Sister Francisca Dias de Medeiros arrived from her home country of Brazil, and together we began to prepare the classrooms and tutoring sessions for the most vulnerable children. I shared many pleasant moments with these children, which remain in my memory. With them, I was able to put into practice the knowledge I acquired during my academic training, helping them understand that the earth and all its components need our help, and that recycling is a vital factor in reducing

environmental pollution in the community. The children won my heart, and sometimes they would come with a flower to give me.

During my volunteer work, I shared moments with the youth ministry, taught catechism, participated in vocational retreats, visited communities, gave educational lectures in some schools, created the parish's web pages, generating content to strengthen faith in online communities, and also presented a project that began to create a municipal law regarding the environmental management of solid waste.

I really enjoyed connecting with nature and helped create a small vegetable garden with tomato and lettuce plants so that when they bear fruit, they can be used in the elderly people's cafeteria. Sharing the responsibility with Sisters



Martha with the sisters and women of the parish.

Ericka, Francisca, and Father Andrej was something very beautiful for me. Thanks to them and their spirituality, I was able to learn to live in prayer. I learned that we must always thank God

for each new day we have. With them, I shared many moments of laughter and joy, moments that will always remain etched in my mind and heart. I will always remember them (the people

and the Sisters), because with them I felt that I had a family. I feel that a part of me stayed with them and a part of them stayed with me for life.

PILGRIMAGE OF THE EUROPE-USA NETWORK

Sr. Jayarani Michael, CSJ

France



As a way to reinforce the links between the sisters of Europe and the United States and to give them the means of getting

to know one another better, those responsible for the PRM (Provinces/Regions/Missions), created different groups. One of these groups. That of

pilgrimages, excursions and vacations, which met regularly thanks to Zoom, had the idea to offer a pilgrimage to the places of our origins in France.



Pilgrimage group in the first kitchen in Le Puy

This proposal was presented to the group of leaders of the PRM of Europe and the United States. They received it favorably and gave us the green light to continue with the planning. Every smallest detail (number of days, number of sisters participating, cost) was studied and discussed by the group that had presented it to those responsible for the PRM.

From June 30 to July 10, 2025, 14 sisters from 4 provinces: Italy, Norway, the USA and France participated in this pilgrimage. Our pilgrimage went from Chambéry to Le Puy-en-Velay, passing through St. Didier, Bas-en-Basset and Monistrol, then on to Lyon, Annecy, Aix-les-Bains, the city of Chambéry and La Bauche.

On the last day we had some time with the

sisters in the communities of Bellecombette and Bois Joli, a friendly gathering, sharing our pilgrimage experience with them and getting to know one another.

Each day, after our visits, we came together to share our experience and our reflections

on the day, which helped us feel closer to one another. And several questions were raised in our hearts: In the world as it is now, how can we respond to the needs of others? Do I have burning zeal for whatever kind of mission? How can I contribute to disseminating the charism of communion?

We were enriched by seeing different places of our origins. We were lucky enough to walk on the path of the sisters who went before us. Their life and their experience of mission inspired us and stimulated us to re-read our own engagement. They dared all kinds of mission, counting only on the Providence of God. Their initial mission was very difficult, without a house, without healthy food, lacking even the basic needs. Nonetheless, they were very satisfied and concentrated on their call, their mission to serve God through their sisters and



At the Place du Martouret in Le Puy where 2 sisters were put to death during the French Revolution.

brothers in need.

Their spirit was always alive, and gave us the strength to act beyond cultural and linguistic borders. It was an experience very relevant to the present time when we are celebrating 375 years since our Foundation.

Our early sisters never neglected an opportunity to show their love of Christ, even willing to go to the guillotine,

embracing martyrdom. Their prison cells were, for them, a place to encounter God.

The first 6 sisters in 1648 were very diverse; there were widows, unmarried women, and even the very young (15 years old). They were very courageous, less educated, but full of a sense of fidelity, charity and service. They cared for the poor, orphans, wounded soldiers, the sick and the elderly.

This pilgrimage reinforced the connections among us. We are grateful to all those responsible for the PRM and to the communities that supported us and made this program profitable and successful.

May the spirit of our founder and our first sisters continue to inspire us to carry the good news to the ends of the earth.

FROM CULTURAL SHOCK TO CULTURAL INSERTION

Sr. Leena Peter Ottupurakkal, CSJ

Sweden



I arrived in Sweden on 11th June 2025, from the Province of Nagpur, India, to begin my new life as a missionary in Sundsvall. It was my maiden trip to Europe and I didn't know exactly what to expect. One of the first things I noticed was how quiet and calm everything felt, especially compared to the crowds and noise of India. I was surprised by the long days and short nights. In June and early July, the sun doesn't really set, especially in the

north where we live; there are about 18 to 20 hours of daylight. We wear a sweater or jacket for evenings because it is cool even during summer. The most difficult part for me is the language. Although many people speak English, I often feel lost and alone without the language. I am now learning Swedish with the help of an app and some local people. Later I will attend the language school.

I am surprised to see how organized everything

is. About 25% to 30% of people in Sweden have a foreign background. You can encounter people from all continents here. Sweden welcomes and provides free Swedish language classes, job opportunities and education programmes. Special attention is given to the children of refugees and migrants in schools and they speak Swedish as their native language.

The Parish where Sr. Pratiksha works is about 4 km

from where we reside. We are part of all the activities of the parish. On Tuesdays there is the Rosary followed by Mass. On Fridays, there is Silent Adoration for an hour and then Mass. Every Sunday there are 2 Masses in the Parish.

On Saturdays and Sundays after the second Mass we go to one of the mission stations for another Mass, a two-hour drive from Sundsvall where we live. Sr. Pratibha takes catechism classes before the Mass and I assist her. After Mass we find time to meet the people. About 60% of the population are Christian which includes Protestants, Orthodox and Restorationist groups as well as Roman Catholics, who are only 1.2%. Although formal membership in the Church of Sweden is high, regular church attendance is very low. Many join for cultural reasons: Baptism, weddings, funerals. etc.

We work in cooperation with Caritas Sweden, a humanitarian organization which is concerned with emergency aid, integration, poverty relief, social justice and development. It gives practical help to the needy by providing clothing, food and housing. Once a week we collect bread from a Mall, free of charge, and distribute it to people after Sunday Mass.

I noticed that people here are very polite and friendly. They respect



Sisters Leena, Pratibha and immigrants

personal spaces and freedom and are very helpful if you ask them for assistance. Swedish people value honesty and clear communication. They tend to say what they mean, but in a respectful way. I have begun to understand and appreciate their reserved nature, kindness and respect for space.

I am grateful to Sr. Pratibha for being a constant source of encouragement and support in my mission and in community which helps me settle in without fear or hesitation. Her dedication and commitment to the mission is well appreciated by the people of the parish and

neighbourhood.

As I reread the past month I am grateful for the experiences that shaped me, the people who welcomed me, and the pastoral work that has deepened my sense of mission. I am learning the importance and the beauty of building relationships across cultures and faith. Overall, my time in Sweden has been a mixture of challenges and growth. I look forward to involving myself fully in the life and mission and to being a hope-giving presence among the people, always open to God's surprises to inspire and lead me in my onward journey.

“RAISE YOUR GAZE” - A MEETING OF CHURCHES IN DENMARK

Sr. Gisela Heitz, CSJ

Denmark



“**R**aise your gaze” was the motto for the churches’ gathering in Denmark from May 29 – to June, 2025. This meeting takes place every three years and its purpose is fourfold: “to bring Christians together and strengthen them in their faith; to encourage them to take responsibility as a church; to empower them to bear

witness and become involved in society; to contribute to communion with Christians from all over the world. g these days, people with widely different backgrounds, church traditions and confessions, theology, cultures and ethnicities, come together and share thoughts and opinions. Christians of all denominations celebrate worship together,

pray together, seek a deeper understanding of faith, become aware of their responsibility in and for society near and far, and commit themselves to the unity and ecumenical breadth of the church locally and globally.” (www.himmelskedage.dk)

As sisters of Saint Joseph we are committed to ecumenical dialogue.



Cardinal Grech with the community: Sisters Angela, Marianne, Suzanne and Jaya.

Therefore several of us from the Region of Denmark were present in the small town of Silkeborg in Jutland, about 4 hours west of Copenhagen, the capital. In spite of the fact that the catholic community is a minority in Denmark (0,93%), the local catholic parish is centrally located in Silkeborg. The parish had opened its doors wide for many activities. A famous guest seen here and in many of the services/ prayers and discussion forums was Cardinal Mario Grech from Rome, who had served as the secretary general of the Bishop´s synod and had just participated in the conclave. The Cardinal´s openness, his willingness to engage in dialogue (“find new roads!”) and his special way of being present, was a breath of fresh air in the ecumenical landscape in Denmark. It was an encouraging moment for us, when we, the sisters of Saint Joseph, met the cardinal

in the parish garden.

The community of the Danish Region´s retreat house was part of an ecumenical stand for retreat work at the Marketplace of Possibilities. Six different groups that offer retreat work in Denmark (our retreat center being one of them), were represented here. Those who stopped by could find informational material, books, and “shut-up candies”. But most importantly, they found people to talk to, ask questions, and explore new possibilities in spiritual life. We experienced this as a very concrete and meaningful form of ecumenical cooperation.

We enjoyed concerts and art exhibitions, learned new songs from Taizé and were proud of Daniel Nørgaard SJ, the only native Danish Jesuit, who had been invited to deliver the homily at the ecumenical closing service.

In his homily Daniel reminded us that “To be

Christians is not to let ourselves be pulled up to Heaven to live on a pink cloud, but to recognize that the earth, with all its selfishness and self-hatred, lies and wickedness, needs to be transformed and reconciled with God. “

And he asked those present: “Where, then, can we find hope in this world? Look around you. Today we are gathered here as Christians from numerous denominations. For centuries we have focused on our differences and mostly regarded each other as enemies. We have even waged war against each other. Today we stand here with a common desire to preach in Jesus’ name.

And it is truly the name of Jesus that is needed in this broken world. We each need that name, and the doubting, struggling, and despairing world needs that name”.

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