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GENERAL COUNCIL

SUMMARY

PEOPLE OF PEACE

Sr. Dolores Lahr, CSJ

Superior General



What does it mean to be 'people of peace?' What does it take to be peaceful? To live in peace? To foster peace?

In today's world, so fractured by the chaos and terror of wars, those in the news, and the countless conflicts that never seem to make the news, there is a profound need for women and men of peace.

Our Constitution states that our purpose is to bring about the total union of ourselves and others with God and with one another. (Constitution, p. 3) We are certainly called then to be people of peace, to foster peace, to pray for peace.

Jesus spoke many times of peace. In the Sermon on the Mount: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they

GENERAL COUNCIL

People of Peace

COVER

JPIC

Pakistan: Modern slavery in Pakistan

3

New Saints

4

ICC

Brazil: Communicating is a Mission: Learnings and Challenges for Religious Life in the Digital World

5

Tanmaya: Hey WhatsApp! we need to talk

6

INTERCULTURALITY

Italy: The challenges of Interculturality

8

PROVINCE/REGION/MISSION

Bolivia: Memory and Thanksgiving

10

Pachmarhi: Beyond the Classroom: A Day of Compassion and Awakening

11

Tanmaya: Be the Vessel and the Voice of Hope

13

Italy: A Retreat for Young People in Ravenna: Discovering the Father's Mercy

15



shall be called children of God.’ (Matthew 5:9) At the Last Supper: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.’ (John 14, 27.) And when Jesus came and stood among the disciples the first day of the week after his resurrection, his words carried a simple yet powerful message which he repeated twice: ‘Peace be with you.’ (John 11:19)

These words are so fitting for us today. The peace Jesus offered was the peace that must first be within a person and must be a part of the very essence of a person. Only then can this peace be passed on to others.

To be peaceful and to live in peace is a discipline. There are so many outside

distractions to move our focus away from peace; there are multiple and diverse forms of media, AI, the 24-hour never-ending cycle of news, our jobs, our families, our communities. We need to take time to focus inward, to become a person of peace.

To live in peace requires an attitude of patience and forgiveness as well as a profound awareness of others. We need to build relationships and work toward understanding and appreciating others, as well as cultivating empathy. Conflicts will surely arise, and open and honest communication, seeking compromise, taking time to come to some common agreement will facilitate peace.

Another quality of a person of peace is his/her advocacy for social justice, equality, and human rights. These are essential for creating a just and equitable society where all can have the opportunity to grow, to thrive, to become people of peace.

Lastly, while peace begins with the individual, to foster peace means to work towards the creation of a culture of peace. The United Nations defines a culture of peace as a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations. (United Nations, 1999) A culture of peace transcends particular cultures to embrace differences, to move towards harmony, with a clear understanding that peace is only possible if begins with the individual person of peace.

Are we not all called to be people of peace? To live in peace? To foster peace? Let us pray to become a persons of peace, receiving the gift of peace offered by Jesus, sisters working to fulfill the purpose of our Congregation, and our lay partners collaborating with us to fulfill the mission of Jesus.

MODERN SLAVERY IN PAKISTAN

Sr. Sumaira, CSJ

Pakistan



Modern slavery is a serious issue in Pakistan. It does not always mean chains or prisons, but it includes situations where people are forced to

work against their will for little or no pay. One of the main causes of modern slavery in Pakistan is poverty.

Many poor families struggle to afford food,

education, and basic needs. Because of this, parents are often forced to send their children to work instead of to school. These children work long hours for very



little money just to help their families survive. This is a form of economic exploitation and is considered modern slavery.

One of the most common examples is child labor in brick kilns. Children working in brick kilns face harsh conditions. They work in extreme heat, carry heavy loads, and are exposed to dust and smoke, which can cause serious health problems. Most of these children cannot attend school, which limits their future opportunities and keeps them in poverty. In many rural areas of Pakistan, families take loans from brick kiln owners. These loans are often very difficult to repay because of high interest rates.

As a result, the whole family, including young children, must work to pay off the debt. This system is called bonded labor. Unfortunately, the debt can continue for many years, sometimes passing from parents to children. This creates a cycle where generation after generation remains trapped in the same work.

Bonded labor also occurs in agriculture and carpet-weaving, both areas where child labor is common. Children are also found working in factories and workshops or sent to do domestic work, which means they are deprived of an education and a proper childhood. Commonly

enough, young girls and women work do domestic work with little or no pay while facing physical and/or emotional abuse at the hands of their employers.

Although Pakistan has laws against child labor and bonded labor, weak enforcement and poverty make it difficult to completely eliminate the problem. The government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are working to reduce child labor by providing free education, financial support to poor families, and awareness programs. Every victim deserves protection, justice, and dignity. Every child deserves safety, education, and freedom.

NEW SAINTS

Sr. Maria Laurentina	103	Brazil	04.03.2026
Sr. Rosalinda de Assis	85	Brazil	06.03.2026
Sr. Rosamaria	85	Italy	15.03.2026
Sr. Françoise Dominique	88	France/Belgium	29.03.2026
Sr. Adelia do Sagrado Coração	97	Brazil	31.03.2026
Sr. Inês de São José Ferraz Mesquita	103	Brazil	08.04.2026
Sr. Cecília Maria Muller	100	Brazil	17.04.2026
Sr. Agnel Kuzhinjalil	82	Pachmarhi	24.04.2026

COMMUNICATING IS A MISSION: LEARNINGS AND CHALLENGES FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Sr. Eliana Aparecida dos Santos, CSJ

Brazil



I would like to share with you some reflections on communication that I have gathered through various lectures, meetings, and seminars of the UISG and other forums in which I have had the opportunity to participate in recent times. These experiences were profoundly enriching, marked by attentive listening, dialogue, and discernment. They broadened my perspective and strengthened my conviction that communication is not secondary, but an essential part of our vocation and the mission of Religious Life today.

One of the key insights was the realization that there is no communion without communication. If we wish to foster communion, we

must make visible who we are and what we do. Many congregations do not decline because of a lack of mission, but because they fail to communicate the life they embody. Our mission is beautiful, deeply relevant, and necessary, yet we do not always share it with joy and clarity. The Good News must truly be good news: accessible, understandable, and attractive.

Another important point is the need to overcome fear of the media. The digital world is not merely a tool but a true “continent” of mission. We are called to be digital missionaries, present on social networks with authenticity—without losing our values, but updating our language. Communication should not be burdensome,

distant, or excessively formal. We must recover naturalness, speak with simplicity, share the daily life of our mission, and show what we see when we open the window each morning: the children we teach, the sick we accompany, the communities we serve.

Equally significant is the role of women in the Church. The culture of communication is still largely shaped by male voices. As religious women, we must claim our space with responsibility, competence, and courage, conscious that we are co-responsible for building the Church. To communicate is also to lead.

It was further emphasized that communication must be professional: with method, clear visual identity, planning,



constant updating of websites and channels, good relations with the press, and integration of internal and external communication. Communication is not simply “posting,” but supporting leadership in the communicative processes of the Congregation, listening to

contexts, suggesting pathways, and building bridges.

Formation is a priority. We must cultivate a digital culture, develop critical thinking, and learn discernment in the virtual environment. New technologies, including artificial intelligence, demand wisdom so that they may serve

the Gospel.

Among the principles that most impressed me was a true “Decalogue” for communication: accessibility, agility, transparency, clarity, adaptation to new times, empathy, lightness, imagination, naturalness, and above all, courage to overcome fear.

These formative encounters have convinced me that everything communicates. Religious Life, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry, our Provinces, Regions, and missions have much to offer a world thirsty for spirituality, meaning, and unity. It is up to us to open doors, to symbolically step beyond the “convent,” and to witness, with joy and responsibility, the beauty of our charism in today’s world.

HEY WHATSAPP! WE NEED TO TALK...

Sr. Laveena D’Souza, CSJ

Tanmaya/India

In today’s hyper-connected world, WhatsApp has become one of the most influential tools for

communication. With more than two billion users across countries, cultures, and communities, it has

transformed the way we share information, maintain relationships, and participate in global conversations.



Families rely on it to stay close; professionals use it to coordinate work, and communities depend on it for outreach and collaboration. In many ways, WhatsApp has become a digital lifeline that links us to the world.

Its features allow instant communication across borders. Messages, photos, videos, documents, and voice notes can be shared within seconds. Group chats help teams and communities stay organized, while broadcasting channels make it easy to spread information widely. During emergencies, natural disasters, or conflicts, WhatsApp often becomes a crucial tool for quick and reliable communication.

Yet, like any powerful tool, WhatsApp also has a darker side. It can be misused for hacking, impersonation, scams, fake calls, malicious links, and false profiles created to gather personal information. Such misuse can lead to financial loss, emotional distress, or harm to one's reputation or community. Our vulnerability often comes not from weak technology but from human trust. We respond quickly to familiar names, click links without checking, assume that urgent messages are genuine, and forward information without verifying it. Cyber safety, therefore, is not only a technical matter—it is a human responsibility.



To stay safe, it is important to adopt simple but essential cybersecurity habits. Enabling two-step verification adds an extra layer of protection. Verification codes or OTPs should never be shared, as no legitimate person or organization will ever ask for them. Unknown calls or video calls should be approached with caution, and any request for financial help must be verified. Unfamiliar links should be avoided because they may steal data or install harmful software. Strong, unique passwords should be used for email and other accounts connected to WhatsApp, avoiding personal details such as names or birthdays. Privacy settings should be adjusted to limit who can see profile photos, status updates, and personal information, and suspicious

profiles should not be engaged with. Keeping devices updated also helps protect against new threats.

WhatsApp connects us to the world, but it also opens a door for the world to reach us. In this era of digital interdependence, cyber safety is essential. By staying informed, practicing caution, and helping others understand these risks, we can ensure that WhatsApp remains a tool for connection rather than a doorway to harm. The digital world is powerful, and with awareness and vigilance, we can navigate it safely—protecting ourselves, our families, and our global communities.

(Adapted from the article - Important Cyber Safety Advisory)

THE CHALLENGES OF INTERCULTURALITY

Sr. Gemma Valero, CSJ

Italy



Living in community with sisters from different countries is a real challenge, especially if there was not adequate preparation in intercultural living. The challenge grows if one finds herself in a “foreign land” and the local language has not yet been completely learned and contextualized. This was my experience as an Italian sister living in community in the northeast of Brazil, even briefly, with a young woman from Argentina and a sister from Paraguay. Three different cultures living in a fourth culture.

Every culture carries in it aspects that are easily shared and others that one struggles to embrace, especially when they threaten

our own convictions and security. Even the values that guide our actions and motivate them can be classified in a different way according to the place of origin. Thus tensions and disagreements arise from minor differences and opinions. Unexpected

conflicts can arise simply from different interpretations of certain expressions. Pope Francis, speaking of cultural differences, stressed passionate discussions. Yes, we can discuss and become irritated without immediately understanding one another.





During my life as a teacher I frequently repeated this saying to my young students: “You learn by making mistakes”. Obviously this saying, linked to relationships, will be associated with the serene humility of those who recognize their errors and difficulties in living together, without losing faith in the efforts to journey toward unity in diversity, essential to our charism of communion.

Here is a small example that illustrates the value of hospitality. I recall the differences in our way of welcoming others into our house or the way we visit them in their homes. Each of us had a different style that perhaps was different from the customs of the place.

Perhaps without wanting to do so we caused others some discomfort or a reaction of surprise. One significant experience that has stayed with me is the welcome given by the very poor who, in their simplicity, offered us a stool that was wobbly or turned over a fruit crate for us to sit on. For them it was an honor to receive a sister! And if they were preparing a meal, smiling, they watched us eat. (Perhaps they would have eaten what was left over.) How many moving experiences could I recount concerning the hospitality and the welcome received in this land. The culture of others can truly enrich us and make us feel at home.

In community the ideal

is to strive for unity that does not eliminate difference, while ensuring that differences are not detrimental to unity – a real challenge! In our life as consecrated religious two “workshops of communion” support us: placing the triune God always at the center and working toward mutual respect for each sister. We all know that this is not easy! Paying attention to the words we use, deciding together what to cook or how to organize things or clean the house, observing actions and habits not to judge them but to get to know and understand tastes, preferences and abilities, trying to question our own opinions and welcome other ideas, navigating moments of tension without making a big deal of them, apologizing and starting over, letting things go, fostering moments of exchange and dialogue, finding new ways to pray together peacefully, and many other things that can be good strategies for a productive process toward mutual respect which is an indispensable goal for a sustainable and constructive life together. Obviously in daily life there are experiences and choices which are not easy or a given. They require much, much patience as we continually ask God for the gifts of gentleness and interior and exterior serenity, as Father Médaille teaches us.

MEMORY AND THANKSGIVING

**Sr. Gabriela Cuéllar Duran &
Sr. Santina Smiderle, CSJ**

Bolivia



The community of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry in Magdalena, Beni, Bolivia—the place where the Mission was founded—celebrated with gratitude the 45th anniversary of its founding, recalling all that has been experienced and

accomplished during these years of the Lord's grace. This remembrance was celebrated on February 28, 2026, with a Eucharist of Thanksgiving for the four first missionary Sisters who set foot in the Province of Itonama—Sacred Land: Sisters

Maria Francisca Moroni, Maria Cândida Rodrigues, Cilene Bigolin Forlin, and Jacinta Maria Iob. With simplicity and selfless dedication, they sought to leave a legacy of faith, service, fraternity, solidarity, heartfelt charity, and communion.

The Mission expanded. Each stage was a sign of God's providential love, which inspired Bolivian vocations—the very ones that have continued to guide the Mission's journey as new communities were established. They also attracted and gathered many lay collaborators in this task of evangelization.

With joys, challenges, and transformations, the history we remember with gratitude and longing was built, a history that projects



hope for the future. Yes, with hope, for the Mission was watered with the blood of three Sisters who gave their lives: Sisters Cilene Bigolin Forlin and Maria Gargioni—both Brazilian—and Sister Edith Duran Mayser—Bolivian. We also highlight the service and missionary passion of Sister Jacinta María Iob, who, at 96 years of age and 70 years of consecration, continues to inspire and strengthen the Mission with her presence, prayer, and support in the Region. It is important to note that Sister Jacinta María survived a boat

accident in San Ramón, where she lived with Sister Darcy Flores and Sister Edith, who lost her life in that tragedy.

The unfolding of this year, 2026, grants us the privilege of giving thanks for the past, renewing our commitment, looking to the present, and entrusting the future of the mission to the Lord. Sisters, laypeople, and the faith community reaffirm our desire to continue the synodal journey, joyfully proclaiming the Gospel and bearing witness to Unity. We trust that Divine Providence will keep alive the spirit of

service and fraternity that inspires and strengthens the mission of the family of Saint Joseph, together with representatives of the parish's institutions and the faithful who, over the years, have shared life and mission with the Sisters who passed through here.

We present to God the Father these 45 years of welcome and silent dedication, and we ask Him to lovingly care for this blessed people and help them continue the mission begun by His beloved daughters.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: A DAY OF COMPASSION AND AWAKENING

Sr. Teresa Vattakunnel, CSJ

Pachmarhi/India

“Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.” These timeless words of Mother Teresa echo the spirit

of a meaningful outreach undertaken by forty-five students of Classes XI and XII on 15th February 2026 from St. Joseph's Convent Higher Secondary School,

Sambalpur, Odisha, India. What began as a simple visit soon blossomed into a deeply enriching experience—one that revealed the quiet power of kindness, empathy, and human





connection.

Travelling together by bus, the students set out with eager hearts and a shared purpose. Their journey led them first to Baal Niketan, a girls' orphanage managed by the Government of Odisha, where young lives are nurtured with care and protection. From there, they visited Asha Niwas, a home where elderly, sick, and mentally challenged women are tenderly sheltered and cared for by the Missionary Sisters of Charity.

The students brought with them not only essential supplies but also the radiant gift of their youthful energy. The quiet corridors soon came alive with songs, dances, small skits, and lively interactions. Their voices rang with warmth and sincerity, and before long, the atmosphere transformed into one of

shared celebration. In touching moments of spontaneous joy, the students and residents sang together, weaving bonds that transcended differences of age, circumstance, and life's hardships.

Alongside these heartfelt interactions, the students also offered food packets, fresh fruits, and essential groceries collected through their own contributions. They presented sacks of rice and pulses, potatoes, and onions, simple yet meaningful tokens of care. Each offering carried with it a silent message: you are remembered, you are valued, and you are not alone.

Yet the greatest transformation was not merely in the smiles they created—it was in the hearts of the students themselves. As they encountered the realities of lives marked by abandonment

and struggle, many felt their hearts quietly expand with compassion. They realised how easily society overlooks those who live on its margins, and how powerful even the smallest gestures of kindness can be.

The experience also revealed remarkable leadership qualities among the students. They organised their contributions, planned their performances, and ensured that every resident was approached with warmth and dignity. Through these acts, they discovered that leadership is not merely about guiding others—it is about serving with humility, empathy, and responsibility.

By the end of the visit, the students had learned lessons far greater than any textbook could offer. They discovered the profound joy of giving, the beauty of human connection, and the quiet strength that compassion can awaken within us.

Indeed, this outreach became more than a visit—it became a living classroom of humanity. And as the bus carried them back, the students returned not only with memories of smiles and songs, but with a deeper understanding that true fulfilment lies in touching lives with love and kindness.

BE THE VESSEL AND THE VOICE OF HOPE

**Sr. Sagaya Rani &
Sr. Laveena D'Souza, CSJ**

Tanmaya/India



The Education Ministry of the Tanmaya Province in India embraced the theme “Be the Vessel and the Voice of Hope” for the 2025–2026 academic year. Although a new value-based theme is introduced each year, this one resonated so profoundly with students and

educators that the teaching community hopes to continue it for another year. Inspired by the Gospel message “Let your light shine before others...” (Matthew 5:16), schools encouraged learners to cultivate inner goodness and share it generously through their actions.

One memorable illustration involved two vessels: one filled with dirt, unable to hold anything pure, and another clean, capable of receiving and sharing goodness. The lesson resonated deeply: a heart purified by forgiveness, gratitude, and love becomes



St. Joseph's Kerala students dive into discovery at the Regional Analytical Lab

a source of light for others and not a heart filled with negativity which cannot nurture hope.

Throughout the year, the theme inspired students to learn far beyond the walls of their classrooms. At St. Joseph's School in Kerala, Southern India, learners engaged in a series of meaningful, real-world experiences designed to deepen empathy, awareness, and social responsibility. One group visited a local old age home, offering companionship and warmth to the elderly. Another group spent time at the district court, gaining firsthand insight into justice, truth, and civic processes. Students with a scientific inclination explored the Aromatic and Medicinal Plants Research Station, where they discovered

the role of research and innovation in improving human well-being. Meanwhile, others visited a special school, fostering a spirit of inclusion and understanding toward children with diverse abilities.

At St. Joseph's School in Ratlam, Central India, the academic year was enriched with a vibrant series of activities held in anticipation of the institution's upcoming 70-year celebration, with parents and students actively involved throughout. Creative Trio contests—including ramp walks, umbrella painting, best-out-of-waste projects, and poetry writing, sports for parents—engaged learners across age groups, while service-oriented initiatives such as blood donation drives, plantation activities, distribution of dustbins, the “Each One Feed One”

campaign, and the collection of clothing and essential materials for the needy helped strengthen students' sense of social responsibility. The year also featured a diverse range of cultural and academic exhibitions, from ethnic hands-on art displays and live music and dance performances to innovative science and mathematics models and pioneering student explorations in AI, reflecting the school's commitment to holistic, future-ready education as it prepares to enter its milestone 70th year.

At St. Joseph's School in Sagar, Central India, students brought the year's theme to life through a series of captivating performances centered on hope and determination. Through expressive dance, thoughtful drama, and uplifting songs, the young learners inspired the entire school community. Their presentations served as a powerful reminder that the future is shaped by hearts filled with optimism, creativity, and the courage to believe in a brighter tomorrow.

Together, these initiatives reflect a shared commitment across Tanmaya Province to nurture students who not only excel academically but also become compassionate, responsible, and hopeful global citizens.



St. Joseph's Ratlam parents energize the campus through active participation

A RETREAT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN RAVENNA: DISCOVERING THE FATHER'S MERCY

Sr. Mariaelena Aceti, CSJ

Italy



A weekend of prayer, friendship, and reflection brought new light to the lives of twenty five high school students from the Parish of San Rocco in Ravenna. On 7–8 March 2026, the group took part in a spiritual retreat dedicated to the Gospel parable of the Merciful Father. The retreat took place in a Carmelite monastery set among the hills near Rimini, about an hour from Ravenna, and was guided by parish youth leaders together with Sr. Mariaelena Aceti. This experience forms part of a year long journey in which the young people meet every Saturday for moments of encounter, reflection, and human and spiritual growth.

The first day of the retreat was devoted to meditating on the parable of the Merciful Father. Through an exercise inspired by Ignatian

spirituality, the participants were invited to step into the shoes of the characters in the Gospel story, imagining their gestures, emotions, and inner experiences. This contemplative approach helped them discover how God's mercy can transform even the most

difficult moments of life into paths toward beauty and reconciliation.

Two of the young people shared their impressions of the retreat. "It was a wonderful experience. The night passed almost without sleep between adoration and conversations





with friends, but those moments made us feel even more united. I'm grateful to everyone for making me feel so welcomed," said Benedetta, 18. Pietro, 15, added: "Reflecting on the parable of the Merciful Father helped me understand that something beautiful can grow even from our mistakes. I imagined the son leaving home after a painful argument with his father—he needed distance to rediscover the father's love. Sharing these reflections

together was simple, but incredibly profound."

The night was marked by silence and prayer, as the young people took turns in Eucharistic adoration, keeping vigil with Jesus and entrusting their lives and future to Him. On Sunday morning, the Carmelite sisters of the monastery offered their testimony, sharing the beauty of their contemplative vocation. They spoke especially about their work as iconographers, explaining how

the writing of icons becomes for them a form of prayer and a way of contemplating the beauty of God.

Throughout the year, Sr. Rosalba Scaturro and Sr. Mariaelena Aceti accompany two parish youth groups, each with around twenty participants. For the older group, this retreat was a precious opportunity to pause, listen to the Word, and strengthen the bonds of friendship that sustain their journey of faith.

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