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CSJOURNAL

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry

November - January • Year 2022 - n. 1



GENERAL COUNCIL

A Word of Gratitude

I thank my God every time I think of you. In my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of our partnership in living the gospel from the first day until now. (Phil.1:3-5 adapted)

**Srs. Sally M. Hodgdon, Philo Pazhuruparambil,
Ieda Maria Tomazini & Mariaelena Aceti**

General Council



S. Philo, Sally, Ieda and Mariaelena in the chapter hall

As I write this, it is hard to believe that, not only is it January 2022, but that the 2021 General Chapter Sessions

are finished! At times, as we planned and moved toward the General Chapter during this pandemic, it felt like trying to see

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a ship on a storm-tossed sea in the distant horizon. We kept moving ahead wondering If and when the Chapter would actually happen, with whom we would gather and whether it would be via computer screens or in person. But our ever-faithful God was walking in front of us, and with the graced support of your prayers, the 2021 General Chapter is now part of our sacred and blessed history as a Congregation!

As each Chapter zoom session from August through October was completed, and the in-person weeks in Nemi unfolded, I found myself expressing deep gratitude to God for journeying with us. There were not words enough to express my thanksgiving! Not only did the Zoom sessions go very well, with lots of participation and time to get to know one another while discerning the calls for these next eight years, but none of the 60 of us from our 15 countries got Covid during our “in person” stay in Italy! Truly, we were blessed!

The 2021 General Chapter was a beautiful experience of co-responsibility, honest sharing, openness to each other’s viewpoint and a desire to immerse ourselves more deeply in the Spirit in order to hear God’s calls for us now and into the future. There was a sense of hope, animation and peace, with the absence of tension. In that same spirit of hope and enthusiasm, we

move forward with our Chapters of Implementation committing ourselves to be generous and flexible, as we courageously, and with creativity, live the spirit and calls of the Chapter through new connections with our world.

Walking with you as one of your leaders these past 12 years has been a journey of deep faith, love, gratitude, humility and amazement at seeing how God works in and through all of us. I am grateful to you for welcoming me into your lives and sharing your passion for God and for the needs of our dear neighbors with me. You will always be a part of my life and I will continue to think of you and pray for you with joy!

Sally

Gratitude just comes from my heart... for all that you are and all I have experienced with you in the last 6 years! Thank you for inspiring me with your care for the people and with your commitment to move forward and make a difference for the kingdom of God. Serving in the General Council is a gift from the Holy Spirit, if, at times, a challenging gift. I am grateful for all your encouragement and support and I look forward to continuing to serve you and learn from you in my new ministry. With heartfelt and joyful gratitude, **Mariaelena**

It is great hope and life that I feel in my heart as I write these few lines of gratitude. I recall my connectedness with each of you during these past 12 years. Thank you for welcoming me as I am into your realities. How you put forth your creative

energy to be present and to continue the mission according to the needs of the time has truly surprised me. No matter where we are present, together we are moving as ONE, having a tremendous experience of God guiding our Congregation each day and in each reality. I thank God and each of you for this, my experience with you. This memory will continue to strengthen me as I begin another journey in my life and move into my future ministries. Thank You.

Philomena

For me, the twelve years of serving on the General Council of the congregation was a time of mutual listening and learning that helped me develop an attitude of reverence and deep admiration for the countless initiatives that generate and bring life and communion in the different realities where our sisters live the mission. I am very grateful for the sharing, trust, care and gentleness of each Sister and Associate and of the many collaborators in mission who, through their witness of life, give visibility to the charism of unity and reconciliation in our schools, hospitals, dispensaries, social and pastoral areas. I will take with me the conviction that together we are always stronger in the mission and that inclusion, respect and welcoming of different ways of being, thinking and acting make us more human, supportive and consistent with our choice of life. To all of you, my gratitude and appreciation.

Ieda

Women's Education - Need of the Hour in India

S. Susanna Tudu

Province of Pachmarhi - India

India has surely walked for miles since she got independence in the year 1947. During those years, India has made many remarkable and commendable inventions and discoveries in almost every walk of life. As a result, without any doubt, India claims to be one of the super powers among the many countries in the world today.

However this doesn't mean that our beloved motherland, India, the largest democratic country in the world, is not facing any problems. She certainly has many before her. One of those is illiteracy of Indian women in the country, which has slowed down the rate of the country's development. Up till now, equal opportunity in the field of education has not been given to women. This is, thus, the need of the hour: that just and equal emphasis should be given to women's education by both the government and civil society. Women play a significant role in society - as wife, mother, sister, caretaker, nurse, etc. They have a better understanding of the social



structure when educated and are more compassionate towards the need of others. Women play a vital role in a nation's development. It is a necessary step for all the countries, including the underdeveloped and developing countries, to improve the conditions for female education. This would mean the involvement of women in all sectors.

Education, thus, is a fundamental right, which requires both educational facilities and an end to discrimination based on sex or gender. Unfortunately, discrimination based on gender still prevails in many parts of our country. It is necessary to make people understand that female education is a fundamental right, just as it is for men in our society. Women's education in India

has been a need of the hour, as education is a foundation stone for improving their status within the family, and it develops the ability for participation.

Education is a milestone for women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life.

To sum up, it can be said that the education of women is the most powerful tool to change the plight and position of women in the society. It is very appropriate to quote the words of the First Prime Minister of Free India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual; and if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered."

A child – not a bride

S. Anette Moltubakk

Norway



Each autumn there is a major fundraising event, the TV campaign, which, since 1974, has provided vital help to millions of people. This year it is supporting Norway's work against child marriage which slows development and perpetuates poverty. The campaign itself is the world's largest fundraising campaign in terms of the number of volunteers and the amount of funds raised per capita. Every year 7,000 volunteers from across the country work in their own municipality with the TV campaign organization. The goal is for 100,000 men and women to visit every household in Norway during a two-hour period on one Sunday in October.

We, Sisters of St. Joseph, are part of this national campaign every year, supporting it financially and also working as volunteers, going from house to house to collect money. We are happy to be a part of this important campaign, which does more than fundraising. It is also a comprehensive information campaign that involves

broad media coverage and a separate teaching program. In addition, there is a live broadcast on the day of the action itself, giving several hundred thousand viewers a good insight into how the organization works and what the funds will be used for.

This year the TV campaign funds will be used to reach three million people to end child marriage in the countries where the problem is greatest: Bangladesh, Nepal, Malawi, Mali and Niger. We will work for girls to stay in school; for children, young people and the elderly to receive training in girls' rights and equality; and for legislation to protect children from marriage. Children should be allowed to be children, not brides.

The consequences of child marriage are great - not only for the girls who get married, but for their children and the society they live in. The girls are prevented from achieving their dreams and

goals, and are deprived of the opportunity to create a good future. Where girls are married off as children and lose the opportunity to go to school, they face an increased risk of being exposed to violence and abuse. Therefore, this year's TV campaign will work to end child marriage. Giving girls the opportunity to go to school, decide over their own bodies and be listened to in society will lead to less poverty, less violence and more justice.

Through the TV campaign, we work locally, nationally and globally to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The actual organization of the TV campaign meets SDG 17: Cooperation to achieve the goals. Cooperation is a key word in achieving the world's most important goals. We must cooperate across national borders and across sectors. Each and every one of us can and should contribute.

Irish Bishops Invite the Faithful to the Synodal Journey

S. Joan Margaret Kelly

Ireland

On the 17th October 2021 the Synodal process was launched in every diocese worldwide including 26 Catholic Dioceses in Ireland. Over the past months the Irish Bishops have been assisted and encouraged by Cardinal Mario Grech and Sister Natalie Becquart of the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops in Rome. Every diocese in the world has been asked by Pope Francis to consult widely with lay people through a structured listening process. There are many challenges facing the Church in Ireland today. These include: 1) the rapid secularisation of Irish society, which has brought major decline in practise of the faith and in the number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life; 2) the clerical and institutional abuse scandal that has rocked the Catholic Church in Ireland in the past years; and 3) the role of women in the church and the call for transparency, greater participation and accountability.

People's views on reform and renewal in the Catholic Church



will be sent to their bishops who will draw up a synthesis for consideration by the synod in Rome in 2023.

In the Pro-Cathedral in Dublin, Bishop Dermot Farrell launched the synod with a Logo in the shape of a boat. The lighthouse symbolises the guiding light of the Holy Spirit. The boat represents the church the people of God joining together. The water represents the waters of Baptism and the equality of all the baptised.

For the opening ceremony there was a representative invited from each of the 169 parishes in the diocese as well as a representative from each clerical, religious and lay organisation. There was also an ex-prisoner, a

homeless person and a member from the travelling community.

During the ceremony Bishop Farrell was seated with the participants as they gathered in their seats symbolising a boat. At the end of the ceremony the sail was unfurled by a number of young girls.

In his address, Archbishop Farrell said "The Spirit is the driving force of the life of the Church and of every Christian who seeks to discern what God is saying to the Church. It is not just reading the signs of the times on the surface of life, but in life's depth. "Put out into the deep! Let us be attentive to the voice of Christ. May His Spirit guide us as we seek His way: a way with each other, the Lord and the world".

Intercultural Experience in Bolivia

S. Maria Lidia Pereira

Region of Bolivia

Between February and April 2021, 4 Sisters arrived to join and enrich the missionary presence in Bolivia, with its different contexts and

of St. Joseph of Pinerolo, came from Maceió, Brazil; S. Ana Maria de Jesus from the single province of Brazil; S. Marta Villafañe and S. Maria Lidia Pereira, from the Congregation of St. Joseph of Buenos Aires in Argentina,. The four sisters are in communities located in the Amazon region of Bolivia.

The journeying together

journey together. On the part of our Congregations, we feel privileged to be part of the Region, because the Brazilian and Bolivian sisters who have been in the country since February 1981 have been engaged in this process. Of course, the process is not easy, but is being done with time. Interculturality demands mutual knowledge, listening, sharing,



culture. S. Joilma Maurina de Jesus Matos, previously of the Congregation of the Sisters

is a call and an experience of intercongregationality and interculturality is a

learning from one another, enrichment, and openness of those arriving and those

receiving the new members. Interculturality expands our hearts to welcome the other culture and place as a whole. It is about personal and community growth.

In this experience what strengthens each one of us is to find and build communities that are attentive, available and committed to Life, especially with the most fragile and vulnerable, and to feel that we need one another. The beautiful thing is that we have felt welcomed and awaited in the Region and in the communities where each one is in mission.

Undoubtedly, each one, from her own reality, experiences different

challenges that become a process lived in day-to-day life: the way of praying, food, language, the way of thinking, expressing and naming things. This includes personal and congregational patterns. But it is from there, between light and shadow, that we make our way together, because we are certain that He walks with us and we trust in the arms of the loving Father who guides us. And together we are building the charism of communion which keeps us united, and impels us to live the Gospel values. Likewise, we are certain that challenges become opportunities for growth, with the grace of God and the support of the

community.

Little by little with the passing of time, each of us, in her context and in the town where she lives, is getting to know the community and the town, through visits to families, pastoral work and other social projects. By integrating ourselves in the various pastoral activities, we came to know the situation of poverty, unemployment, abuse, violence, hunger and drug trafficking: a challenging reality. In this context we feel God's call. And from our weakness and fragility we feel called to be a presence of hope and life.

NEW SAINTS

S. Marita Soucy	90	USA	11.11.2021
S. Maria Otávia Guedes	102	Brazil	14.11.2021
S. Marie-Eugène Vereecken	100	France	17.11.2021
S. Thérèse Varraz	92	France	29.11.2021
S. Stephanie Elenjikal	93	Pachmarhi	09.12.2021
S. Maria Nely Giraladini	86	Brazil	20.12.2021
S. Zelia Magoga	88	Brazil	22.12.2021

Living in an Urban Gated Community

S. Lorraine Marie Delaney

Province of Nagpur - India

After having lived Community Life, with no fewer than five members, for 53 years since my First Profession, the Lord now challenges me to restructure my Tent to embrace just one member who companions me in my mission in Hyderabad. Sr. Rashmi Thomas and I live in an apartment five minutes away from my office, which is truly a blessing.

We found a nice place with a very reasonable rent in a complex called Serene County, an apt name as the area has buildings which breathe serenity and peace.

The primary advantage of living inside a gated community is that one has an elevated feeling of security, which is important. We are very safe, with a Central Security system at the main entrance which includes double checking of every visitor. Security calls the apartment, checks first, and only then allows the visitor to enter. No matter how often you may go out or come in, a thorough check is always done. Security guards are on duty not only at the Main Gate but also at the entrance of each building. You can leave your doors wide open

and yet sleep in peace!!

Within this 35-acre complex, there are several facilities which allow you to satisfy all your needs, within a walking distance of five minutes. One can do shopping at the supermarket, relax at the Clubhouse, enjoy a breakfast, buy medication at the pharmacy at any time. There is also an Ambulance always at hand and a Clinic open seven days a week . . . and so on. And the entire complex is peaceful and safe for walking.

Since we took up our lodging here on September 1st, we have been meeting many of the same people in the elevator, in the

complex or along the corridors. Hence, it is nigh impossible not to develop a level of communication with them. All the residents of our Tower are on a WhatsApp group. It's very interesting to see how everyone helps everyone else, with suggestions for a good dentist, a walk-in vaccine centre, the nearest plant nursery, or where to buy fresh fish, meat and eggs! Whatever your need, you simply post a message and at once you receive a helpful hint.

Of all the Towers, it is clear that ours is the most active and vibrant. I have made several contacts among senior ladies,



S. Lorraine on her way to work

visit them, chat with them, share Gospel values with them and lend a listening ear. I have adjusted my time, online classes and work schedule to be available on two evenings a week for the 'Serene Seniors' gathering of these gracious citizens!! I enjoy this family apostolate and ensure I am present!!

Attending and participating in organized events increases the

opportunity to interact with and form bonds with other people in the neighbourhood. It's our charism of communion and right relationships in action! When these connections happen, they are not just to increase the number of social media friends, but to take comfort in the fact that you have each other's support in case of an emergency.

What sustains and nourishes our spiritual and religious life is our daily wholehearted participation at the 6.30am Eucharist at St. Alphonsus Church, a 20-minute drive away. And yes, our living and prayer, together with the study of the Synod and other important papers. This Mission/Ministry experience is a huge challenge, one which needs your support of love and prayer.

New Missionaries in Tanzania

S. Edilse Bernandete Klein and Maria dos Santos Durães

Brazil - Tanzania

In May 2020, the General Council sent an appeal to the sisters of the Congregation, a call that came from the Sisters who are in the mission in Tanzania. It was a call for missionaries for the mission. Several sisters began a discernment process and in September 2021 we, S. Maria dos Santos Durães and Edilse Bernandete Klein received confirmation from the General Council to prepare ourselves for this mission.

Gradually we left our activities, dedicating ourselves



Sending of Missionaries from the Province

to learning English and attending a missionary course on "Ad Gentes" and beginning

to deal with the documentation and all that was needed to leave our native land and move



Arrival and reception in Dublin – Ireland

to another country, another continent.

We were able to spend a good deal of time with our families who gave us their blessing for our mission. We also received support and encouragement for a fruitful mission from those with whom we lived and worked.

One of the memorable

moments was the celebration, organized by the Sisters of the Province of Brazil, in which we were sent as missionaries. During the celebration, we were anointed and sent on behalf of the Provincial Council and all the Sisters of the Province.

We came to Ireland on 29th December for an immersion in the English

language. The sisters in Dublin welcomed us with enthusiasm and joy. Every sister in the community is a our teacher, helping us to communicate in English every day.

We are happy to say “yes” to the mission in Tanzania, to be guests in this foreign land to strengthen our wonderful mission.

NEW SAINTS

S. Rose Marie Combet	96	France	29.12.2021
S. Itamira Thereza Slomp	93	Brazil	10.01.2022
S. Olga Maria Muller	101	Brazil	11.01.2022
Sr. Gerlin Ann Fernades	88	Pachmarhi	15.01.2022

A New Experience

S. Gemma Valero

Italy

Enthusiasm and curiosity, apprehension and fear were my first emotions, when I received the invitation to participate in the 30th General Chapter of the Sisters of Chambéry. The first phase of the Chapter was from June to October via Zoom and second phase was in-person from November 24 to December 11, 2021, in Nemi, Italy. I participated in these meetings together with Sr. Vanda, who is the coordinator of our small delegation in Brazil which now belongs to the Italian Province.

Despite having participated in several General Chapters, of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Pinerolo, to find myself in a large and diverse Chapter assembly, with many sisters coming from four continents was a new experience that aroused gratitude and amazement. It was a gift that opened my eyes more to the world and the presence of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry in so many places with the poor and vulnerable. It was a time of grace that helped me grow in the awareness of being “one” Congregation, diverse, multicultural and multi-linguistic, but united



S. Gemma and Clementina during a chapter prayer

in that marvelous charism of communion that adapts to every situation, a charism that we want to share more with the associates and laity of the Little Design.

Although I was not a “delegate”, but only an “auditor”, I felt fully a part of the chapter, involved in a process of seeking, discernment and participation, be it in the general assembly or in small groups, where the different languages required patience with translation or in my similar language prayer group with Brazilian sisters. With them I relived the beauty of the sharing I had experienced in the Northeast of Brazil where I lived for some years. Informal moments and meals were also opportunities to get to know one other even though it was obviously difficult

to understand the language of the other. But our hands, eyes, gestures, smiles, symbols and signs opened up unexpected paths of communication.

I deeply appreciated the opportunity to delve deeper into the topic of interculturality to which we aspire through personal and communal transformation. I was happy to have contact with different contexts of fraternal life and mission. I thanked God for being with consecrated women, disciples of Jesus, who, despite limitations and weaknesses, seek to listen to the Holy Spirit who “is in their midst” to “evaluate what is essential”. These consecrated women dare to dream with hope and commitment to life. They reveal courage in their dreams of hope and advocacy, value



S. Gemma (l.) in discussion with S. Clementina, Jona and Marie-Joseph

communication and relationships and promote respect for creation and each person. They bend down “to touch the wounds of others” sharing their vulnerability with the most vulnerable of the world to make their lives better and show the respect and love which is theirs as being part of the image and creation of God, as S. Sally said in her opening

address.

This and much more highlights and concretises the theme of this General Chapter: “Community immersed in the Spirit, connected with the world,” an equilibrium to cultivate in order to sustain us and move us to new “areas of urgency” that cry out in this world in crisis also because of a pandemic that

seems to have no end.

“Community immersed in the Spirit, connected with the world” is a dream that nourishes our vision of the future, coloring it with hope, in spite of our numerical diminishment (especially in Europe and America), a dream that can restore energy to our weakness and promote life and harmony in our “Common Home”.

EDITING

S. Barbara Bozak
S. Eliana Aparecida dos Santos

GRAPHIC DESIGN

S. Navya Neelamvilail

TRANSLATIONS

Anette Jensen
S. Cristina Gavazzi
S. Joyce Baker
S. Margherita Corsino
S. Maria Elisabete Reis
S. Marie-Pierre Ruche
S. Preeti Hulas
S. Ivani Maria Gandini

CIRCULATION

Monica Bianchini
www.csjchambery.org

E - MAIL

icc@csjchambery.org