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# CS JOURNAL

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry

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## GENERAL COUNCIL

## SUMMARY

### THE TWO EASTERES

**Sr. Dolores Lahr CSJ**

*Superior General*



The season of Easter lasts for fifty days, from Easter Sunday through the Feast of the Ascension, and culminates on Pentecost Sunday wherein the coming of the Holy Spirit is celebrated. In some parts of our world, Easter coincides with the season of spring, and churches are bedecked with the flowers of that season.

It is seen as a time of newness, hope, expectation, and promise. In other parts of our world, Easter arrives with the coming of autumn, and churches display harvest wreaths and autumn bouquets. It is seen as a time of renewal and reflection, as the leaves turn golden and the weather cools down.

We can ask ourselves, 'Are there two Easteres?'

### GENERAL COUNCIL

The Two Easteres **COVER**

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*A path both light and dark*

One for newness, hope, expectation, and promise? And another Easter, one for renewal and reflection? In reality, we live both Easters,

participating in the Paschal Mystery: the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This mystery is the essential belief of all

Christians.

Easter is a particular time when Christians pay attention to what Jesus has done for us, but these are not the only times we experience the Paschal Mystery. This mystery is part of our everyday life; it is the experience of dying and rising, death and new life. On our life's journey, we may experience the death of a loved one, and the birth of a new child. We are dismissed from a job we love, only to find a new ministry, new companions, in a new place that is more life-giving than the one we 'lost.' The two Easters.

In his *Urbi et Orbi* message on Easter Sunday, March 31, Pope Francis spoke of many situations in the world wherein there is much conflict and much suffering. Yet he also spoke of the hope that is evidenced in the Resurrection of Jesus, and the hope that we must not lose. The Resurrection tells us that death no longer has 'the last word,' and there is power in the hope that new life will come from death. We learn from Jesus that new life can come from death, that there is meaning in difficult times, and that God is with us. Always.

# OPENING HORIZONS OF HOPE IN THE SEMI-ARID REGION OF BAHIA

**Sr. Jacqueline Conceção dos Santos CSJ**



*Brazil*

**C**elebrating Earth Day has never been as important as it is today, due to the lack of care and respect for our Common Home. In communion with all those fighting against our destructive way of relating to nature, our concrete action is

rural education, in the form of the Agricultural Family School (AFS), in the region of Cicero Dantas, Bahia, Brazil.

Our community in Cicero Dantas is part of the complex reality of the backwaters of Bahia, where serious social, economic,

and political problems are exacerbated by environmental degradation and prolonged droughts. These problems have forced hundreds of rural workers to emigrate to the big cities.

In this challenging context, the Agricultural Family



*Practical class*



*Participation in a conference*

and so scarce in this region.

This formative and socio-productive process opens up opportunities for young people to take a new path, exploring human and productive potential, respectfully caring for life and nature, our common home.

The study of this semi-arid region allows students to understand water as a precious and limited commodity, to identify the plants that require the least amount of water to bear fruit, and to learn how to optimize family production, sustainable management of the Caatinga (dry forest region of northeastern Brazil) so that

School was born as a response. It represents a solution to improve a situation that condemns young people with high intellectual potential to seek out other regions of Brazil, further impoverishing our territory of the most active and best-prepared young minds.

At the Agricultural Family School, we set out to create the conditions for adolescents and young people to attend an eight-year course, during which they can prepare themselves to establish a harmonious relationship with the land and agricultural activity, learning innovative techniques for sustainable and agro-ecological land management, and the use of rainwater, which is so precious



*Prayer session*

life becomes possible in the remote “backwater”, reducing the flow of migrants from the countryside to the city.

In addition, the Agricultural Family School’s mission is the integral formation of students and their families, helping them to develop intellectually and socio-economically through a pedagogical model using a “learning by doing” method, offering them the chance to take their lives into their own hands and create a different story, on both a personal and

community level.

The Agricultural Family School adopts the pedagogy of alternating fifteen days at school and fifteen days at home, thus preventing the adolescent/young person from distancing themselves from their family and their social environment.

The AFS is also a space that provides human and spiritual formation; it is a place of respectful coexistence, helping to raise awareness that we are all connected.

At AFS, coexistence

is an educational and transformative force, but it is also a challenge, a provocation, and an opportunity. Even when they are only teenagers, students are already experimenting and learning how to be autonomous, responsible, self-confident, and self-aware, how to relate and collaborate with others. They are learning to be tolerant, respectful, and forgiving, and to believe in the beauty of friendship, in a word, learning to be true human beings.

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## SHELTERS ARE NO LONGER AN ADEQUATE RESPONSE

**Sr. Rosalba Scaturro CSJ**

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*Italy*



**C**afarnaum was, in the time of Jesus, a crossroads of culture. After thirty years in Nazareth, his baptism in the Jordan and forty days in the desert, the Son of God chose “Galilee of the gentiles” to begin his public mission. Just as it was for Jesus,

the charism of communion is needed everywhere, even though it was and is necessary to make a choice. It was this imagery that I more or less had in mind when I found myself, during the summer months last year, preparing to leave for a new and, at least for me, unknown

mission, that in Ravenna alongside immigrants.

Our community is made up of two sisters, myself – the coordinator of the parish shelter “Good Shepherd” and sister Mariaelena Aceti who, besides her duties as general treasurer, together with an older and energetic



# THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Sr. Barbara Mullen CSJ**

USA



**M**ost organizations frequently revise Policies and Procedures (P&P) to maintain their mission, vision, current realities, and internal controls. Policies and Procedures provide ways to measure compliance and prevent errors. They measure the organization's commitment to its values and goals and also protect against lawsuits and employee liabilities.

Religious congregations are civic organizations as well as canonical ones. Congregations embrace their mission, create a vision to provide for members and good works, and recognize that changing environments call for periodic reviews. Just as a civic corporation needs

policies and procedures to be effective and comply with laws and regulations, religious congregations need them to provide continuity and security, especially when new leadership councils and finance personnel begin terms. Periodic review offers the means to evaluate finances and investment personnel, year-to-year, and council-to-council.

When the current International Finance Commission met in 2003, it reviewed the policies and procedures of our investments and managers. Over the years and sometimes in challenging times, General Treasurers and Commissions created policies and procedures that kept

the Congregation solvent, provided for members' welfare, and channeled resources to support the CSJ mission. It was time to review and update, and we were blessed to have starting documents from which to work. We were most grateful to those who preceded us with keen financial oversight and championed excellent works from 1812 until now. Indeed, God is good!

The Finance Commission worked on Policies & Procedures called Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry Congregation Investment Policy Statement. It establishes a common understanding between the Congregational-level investment objectives and



### *Policies and Procedures*

the investment advisors who monitor our resources. This document does not change current Province, Region, or Mission policies. However, it could be information for when each province, region and mission reviews its own policies. The General Council is the Board of Directors for the Congregational level investments. The Board has the fiduciary responsibility to oversee the Corporation's financial assets. The Congregational Treasurer and the IFC are advisory to the General Council. Each has a distinct role with accompanying responsibilities. IFC roles include, among others, developing policies

and procedures for good accounting practices, monitoring accounts, interfacing with managers, making recommendations to the General Council concerning present and long-range financial goals, and reviewing Global Mission Fund projects.

The work on our Congregation Investment Policy Statement offered the IFC an in-depth look at how definitions, accounting practices, management initiatives, delegated responsibilities, and Policies and Procedures come together to protect the patrimony of the Congregation. A future review

of this Policy Statement will ensure that all live up to its tenets. We are reminded of Maxim 85, "Advance good works until they are almost finished; and then, whenever possible, let them be completed by someone else who will receive the honor!" When the time comes, a new International Finance Commission, whatever its future name, will take up the work of this one, just as we accepted it from the last group and all the finance groups before them. Receiving from others and passing on good works contributes to the life of the Congregation and her Mission in the world.

## A PILLAR OF THE CONGREGATION

**Sr. Jona Chinnappan CSJ**

*France/Belgium*



Sister Marie Pierre Ruche consecrated her life to gospel justice in the Congregation, always caring for the weakest. Her life was nurtured and nourished by a deep concern for all. It was not only the province but the entire Congregation that was present on that sad day to witness their gratitude and appreciation of our dear Sister Marie Pierre Ruche. She will never leave us.

At her funeral we honored her with 3 symbols that retrace the life of Sister Marie Pierre Ruche.

The **TREE** represents the growth of the Congregation thanks to the seeds she sowed as superior general. We believe that this tree continues to grow wherever God leads us.

Her **DICTIONARY** which she always had with her. With great precision she made documents coming from



*Sr. Marie Pierre Ruche*

different continents remarkably clear. And what dedication she showed in helping sisters arriving from other countries to become inculturated, first and foremost through the language

of the country.

**CONSTITUTIONS** : The book of our constitutions that we brought in at the beginning of the Mass is a beacon and foundation for our religious

life. Twice S. Marie Pierre was part of an international team that revised the constitutions of our congregation. She brought her wisdom to the revision of this rule of life. She remains an example of faithfulness and precision for

us, and we can entrust to her of interceding that young women commit themselves in religious life, following Christ in our congregation.

The sisters of France/Belgium experienced a deep communion that united us

through virtual presence and the messages we received. S. Marie Pierre was a faithful servant who responded with generosity to the calls of the congregation and her God whom she served during her entire life.

## JUSTICE AND PEACE HAVE EMBRACED

### Sr. Flora Gnanapragasam CSJ

*Tanmaya*



The Indian LAC (Lyon, Annecy, Chambéry) JPIC members gathered for their Annual General Body meeting on 10th and 11th February, 2024 at Tanmaya Provincial house, Bhopal, India. Forty-three sisters from all over the country attended this outstanding meeting. The umbrella of JPIC included members from all the ministries.

Sr. Nirmala Arul IBVM, a vibrant, charismatic and passionate JPIC leader, facilitated the two days of our meeting, both the input session and the workshop. She told us that JPIC is



*Sr. Harshita presenting group views*

transforming lives in the light of the Gospel and that justice begins at home.

Emphasizing a Synodal approach in our communal

discernment, she introduced a few growth models like the U-turn model, Loop theory model and Iceberg model. She also led all of us



*Sr. Neha, Sr. Shilpa, Sr. Philo, Sr. Arpita, Sr. Gloria, Sr. Flora, Sr. Harshita (JPIC Core Group-Tanmaya Province)*

through the steps of the synodal process: Encounter, Listening, Discerning and Action. Creatively she guided us through the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals which have 2030 as the hoped-for year of completion, and connected them with Laudato Si. The sessions were interactive

and thought-provoking. All the participants received some solid elements to take forward in their daily practice on the journey of JPIC.

At the end, those present evaluated their work using a framework for analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in light of

strategic planning. They also were encouraged to establish goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound. With a renewed spirit in their heart the participants made concrete action plans for the year with innovate ideas for the mission and for our own lifestyle.

# NEW SAINTS

Sr. Johanne Marie	88	Denmark	23.01.2024
Sr. Rinanagela Pairoto	83	Italy	27.02.2024
Sr. Diomira Lovino	102	Italy	08.03.2024
Sr. Patricia Dora	84	USA	16.03.2024
Sr. Therezinha Bernardi	84	Brazil	29.03.2024
Sr. Odila Aparecida de Queiroz	80	Brazil	29.03.2024
Sr. Marie Pierre Ruche	97	France	05.04.2024
Sr. Rohini Koovackal	54	Pachmarhi	20.04.2024

# MY INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCE IN KERALA

**Sr. Sushma Dung dung CSJ**

*Pachmarhi*



I spent one year in Parakkapara at Kannur District in Kerala, (a state in South India, almost 35 hours train journey from our Pachmarhi Provincialate), a wonderful opportunity my Provincial and Team gave me to live and experience a culture which is entirely new to me.

I was very happy and filled with enthusiasm as I accepted my first transfer, after my first Profession, where I lived in a totally new environment. I took this as a challenge to live and practice interculturality which we very much talk about today in our Congregation.

Like any other young sister, when I came to know about my transfer to Kerala, I was scared. At the same time there was some excitement within me to see Kerala which is known as “God’s own country”.

It was indeed a challenge of let go of my

fears of encountering a new culture, new customs, a new language, and I had to make a lot of adjustments in my mindset. Ready to do God’s will, I set out my journey to this beautiful land of Kerala on 12th July 2023 and reached Kannur on the 14th. The place

was exceptionally beautiful with much greenery, hills, mountains and small streams with clear running water as it was rainy season. Everywhere I looked I saw tall and majestic coconut trees loaded with coconuts, areca nut trees, mango trees, rubber trees,



*Sr. Sushma visiting a sick person*

Jackfruit trees, black pepper plants with peppercorns, all surrounded with greenery. It was astounding! All my inhibitions vanished and my heart was filled with fresh joy.

I was warmly welcomed to the community by my loving Sisters Marina and Theresa. On Sunday I was introduced to the parishioners who welcomed me with bouquet of flowers and beautiful smiles. Already I started feeling at home. Slowly, living with my sisters and meeting with the people, I learned their ways and understand their expressions of love and acceptance. I believe that where there is love there is no problem of language. The sisters and the

people took good care of me and taught me many things. Their love and support helped me to go forward.

Soon I became part of every activity and the mission of the community and parish. I was assigned to pastoral work, visiting the sick, attending Small Christian Community prayer meetings, family visits and other activities of the parish. We actively participated in the discussions and sharing after the prayer meetings. Although I didn't know the language that the local people speak (Malayalam) I managed to communicate and relate to them. I really enjoyed meeting people and

conversing with them with my few words of Malayalam. Often I am inspired by their way of life, their simplicity, generosity in reaching out to the needy, hard work, helping nature and prayerfulness.

In the community too I was able to involve myself in all the activities: home making, gardening, taking care of Chapel, working in the field and planting vegetables, taking my turn for cooking.

I am forever grateful to the enriching experience of being in Parakkapara. I have taken away many beautiful memories which enliven my spirit and make every moment worth remembering and reliving.

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## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Sr. Sujatha Palepu CSJ**

*France/Belgium*



**W**e cannot close our eyes or our hearts to the hungry and frightened children. As Sisters of St Joseph we cannot be indifferent knowing that thousands of women in our society suffer from hunger, injustice

and malnutrition in their important and delicate role of bearing life.

For International Women's Day, in the community at Jacob-Bellecombette, we considered what action we could undertake in our immediate

vicinity to be united with the efforts made across the globe to realize women's rights. Among our employees who work here every day we have seven women. In light of this, we planned March 8 highlighting three moments, together with a few women



of the parish.

We began the day with a Mass of thanksgiving, keeping in mind the theme and the principal questions raised throughout the world on that day. The questions were written on a small panel and placed in front of the altar where they were left all day.

Why not invite our employees to join us for a meal? It would be a good occasion to recognize the quality of their work for the common good of the province and to better share some happy memories with one another. The good meal and delicious treats that day helped us to spontaneously express the essence of a woman, her most recognized qualities. Going around the table we articulated some of these qualities: patient-courageous-creative-attentive-intuitive-intelligent-active. Smiling-sensible-beautiful-perservant-available-tolerant-

discreet. Effective-silent-maternal-compassionate.

After this we heard personal wishes from each of the seven guests: to be respected – proud to be a woman - to love oneself – to not let men manipulate us – to recognize and use our talents and qualities. Stay as long as possible with the Sisters of St Joseph. This time together, filled with discoveries, invited us to find other occasions for simple sharing with those close to us . . . To be repeated.

At the end, with about 40 sisters and laity, we meditated on the four Stations of the Cross where women participated in the suffering of the Christ: Jesus meets Mary, his mother; Jesus lets Veronica wipe his face covered with blood; Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem; Jesus is taken down from the cross and laid in the arms of Mary, his

mother. We took the time to meditate on the scenes which honor women, who need an action in common to avoid being left aside.

On March 8, together with the association France-Palestine Solidarity and the Collective for Solidarity with Palestine of Chambéry we signed a letter to the president of the republic asking to suspend all military cooperation with Israel and to engage in diplomatic and economic sanctions against the state of Israel until it complies with the International Court of Justice.

We pray that the light of truth which conquers hypocrisy will penetrate consciences. We defend all women who suffer the evils of war. Let us be the voice of those who have no voice in order to demand truth, justice and peace.

# ICC CONTACT PERSONS MEET

## Sr. Sumera (Pakistan) & Sr. Jayarani (France)

ICC



On Saturday, 24th February, 2024, the International Communication Commission held its first virtual meeting with Contact Persons of the Provinces, Regions, and Missions. It included sisters from the United States, Bolivia, Argentina, India, Brazil and Pakistan as well as two lay people responsible for communication.

The aim of this

meeting was to share some guidelines for effective communication and to reflect on the fundamental role that contact people have in the congregation, as it is through them that we reach the diverse realities of local communities.

Sr. Celine, who is the link between the commission and the general council, welcomed all the participants. In her opening remarks she reminded

the group that their mission as a communicator is to be the voice of the congregation, to assist in making connections and building relationships, to foster unity and make our charism alive today.

Sr. Dolores greeted the group with words which recalled the Final Document of our 2021 General Chapter which calls us to be and to act more as one, to be

unifiers, which is the role of communicators, and so contact persons. She also pointed out the importance of using technology guided by wisdom.

As coordinator of the International Communication Commission, S. Eliana of Brazil enthusiastically motivated the participants in this first virtual meeting. She highlighted the importance of the contact persons who



Members of the ICC



**Sr. Celine addressing the group**

are our immediate link to the provinces, regions and missions. In their role they live our charism and are a sign of communion. Communication is an essential element of society, be it that of Jean-Pierre Medaille and our pioneering sisters or our world of technology which demands our continual updating.

On a more practical note, S. Barbara (USA) and Navya

(Pachmarhi, India) described the work of the International Commission and offered some guidelines for writing articles for the CSJournal and the website. They emphasized the importance of being attentive to fake news and providing true and accurate information. Too often misinformation is circulated as true, even by sisters. And this is more rampant with the growing use

of Artificial Intelligence. Thus the need for the Commission to educate the sisters on such issues.

They also stressed the importance of giving complete information in each article and making it interesting so the reader will be engaged. One important thing to remember when writing for an international audience is that the reader is not familiar with the place, the people, the organizations that are well-known locally. Thus the writer needs to explain some things that could be left unstated for a local audience. It is also useful to include photos or graphics that are connected to the article.

Whether it is for CSJournal, website, Facebook, YouTube or ZOOM meetings, each member of the Commission has an important role to play for the congregation.

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