Let There be Peace on Earth
And Let it Begin with Me
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Please send your articles on or before 5th of January, March, May, July, September and November.

JANUARY - FEBRUARY
Central South US
Peru
Eastern Central Africa
(Kenya, Congo, South Sudan, Uganda)
Italy-Malta
North Mexico
Indonesia

MARCH- APRIL
West Africa (Senegal, Burkina Faso)
New York-Toronto
Europe-BFMN
(Belgium, France, Hungary, Netherlands)
Southeast Latin America (Brazil, Paraguay)
Great Britain
Egypt-Sudan
Ecuador
Colombia-Venezuela and Cuba

MAY- JUNE
Montreal, Canada
Philippines-Japan
Angola-Mozambique
Central America
(Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala,
Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico)
Argentina-Uruguay
South Africa

JULY- AUGUST
Mid-North America
Lebanon-Syria
West Mexico
Australia/Aotearoa-NZ
Eudist Family
East Asia
(Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam)

SEPTEMBER- OCTOBER
Bolivia-Chile
Northeast Asia
(China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, South Korea)
Germany-Albania
The Isles (Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion)
Portugal
Austria-Switzerland-Czech Republic
Singapore-Malaysia
Spain

NOVEMBER- DECEMBER
South West India
Central East India-Nepal
Ireland
Sri Lanka-Pakistan
Revelation of the Triune God as a Vulnerable God

Brother Simón Pedro Arnold, OSB. LCWR Assembly

The Kenosis of God: Icon of the Consecrated Life

… The In hearing, seeing and accompanying Jesus, every disciple arrives at the conclusion, even, that this God is “ONLY LOVE.” There is nothing more or nothing less, in the God of the Gospels, than LOVE. This means that, when God “gives”, God can only “give” God’s very self (since this is all God has as gift). And, if this is so, we have to conclude, in the end, that when God gives, God can only give God’s self totally. Such is the tremendous depth of the sacramental mystery in the Church. God cannot give only a part of God’s self, or else God would not be Love. Nor can God give us “things,” since we have already been given everything in creation and in Jesus, the very Son of God.

This is how I receive the mystery of the Incarnation as the necessary, ultimate and definitive revelation of the Trinity: God self-gives, and self-gives totally, from all eternity and for all eternity. Is this not the full meaning of “grace upon grace” that ends the prologue of the fourth Gospel? The Incarnation becomes, then, the eternal “kenosis of the Triune God” in Jesus of Nazareth and in all creation, forever. This kenotic process does not have an end, given that, in Christ, God chose to pitch God’s tent in our midst, not for a specific time but for eternally. …

… This sublime trinitarian fresco also flows into the being of every believer, of every human being, worthily represented by the Samaritan woman. The fountain of this constant kenosis, from which the living water of the Spirit overflows eternally, is each person him- and her-self.

The Incarnation: historical event or permanent theophany?

No one doubts the historical advent, life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, whom we call the Christ, For us Christians, it is the most important event in all human history, which we confirm by our faith in the Resurrection. Could it also be that this event contains in and of itself the totality of the mystery of the Incarnation? If so, should we not broaden our view? This is precisely what our paschal faith demands of us.

In the spirit of evolutionary theology, we can consider the Incarnation as a continuous and progressive process, a “theophany” or “Christophany,” as Raimon Panikkar would call it13. This almost photographic movement of progressive revelation of divinity runs through all of created reality since its origin, and never arrives at its historical end.

Even if historical revelation ends with the last book of the New Testament, the Incarnation, as an all-encompassing mystery, is still in process in the heart of history and in creation’s birth pains. Paul suggests this.14 In this birth, all of us participate, at the same time as and in communion with the entire cosmos. Personally, I read the letters of the captivity (Colossians and Ephesians) as an immense Christophany that little by little invades the whole universe. This vision aligns with the brilliant insights of Teilhard de Chardin. …

To continue the reading Click here
Stolen People … Stolen Dreams…

By Sr. Shantha Selva Raj, Novice Formator

Shocking realities Despite all efforts – National and International level, the situations of children in India is really shocking. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, there were 14,183 children who were the victims of human trafficking in the year 2016. 27% increase as compared to the previous year. The Total crime against children in the year : In 2014 – 89,423. 2015 – 94,172. and In 2016 – 1,06,958.

Cases of kidnapping and abduction in 2015 – 54,723. It is shocking to know the number of missing children is increasing each year.

Based on the shocking realities reported in the newspapers and TV news channels and in keeping with our Mission Statement, our novices from the Province of South-West India presented a short dance drama on the theme of ‘Human Trafficking’.

The song enacted was in ‘Hindi’ the national language of India and the meaning of the song goes this way.

I too have a right to live;
I too am a human being just like you.
Why didn’t your heart cry?
When you made me homeless and separated me from my own people,
When you sold my body in the market and I was pushed into poverty,
When my innocence was
burnt by you,
When I was separated from my mother and lost my childhood.
I too have a right to live.
I too am a human being like you.
Why didn’t your heart cry?

Pope Francis never ceases from expressing pain, while saying that Human Trafficking is the modern day slavery, and we need to address and prevent it at all cost. Human Trafficking is the third largest international crime industry in the world. And 90% of the sexually trafficked people are women and children. Estimated 30,000 victims of sex trafficking die every year from abuse, disease, torture and neglect. There are more slaves in the world today than ever before in history. So the Novices dedicated this dance to all the victims of Human Trafficking throughout the world. The Novices requested all the audience to be united with them while they enacted for about six minutes in solidarity with our sisters and brothers who are the victims of human trafficking.

It was a heart touching experience for all the ten novices who really brought out the struggles and the pain of women and children who are trafficked.
A journey towards a new awakening

By Sr. Beena Chitalapalli

The Good Shepherd Convent Composite Pre University College (11th & 12th Grade) Interact Club, Mysore, India is a service-oriented club for the students who desire to volunteer their time to aid the school and community at large. Rotary International is its mother club. This club gives young students an opportunity to participate in meaningful community service projects. Along the way, Interactors develop their leadership skills and initiative while meeting new friends. It is a self-supporting and self-governing club.

Mahatma Gandhi said, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Our 2018 – 2019 Interact club organized service projects in four avenues. First Avenue was Club service projects: This included Installation, Activity Calendar, meetings, director’s training seminar-insight 2018 and Interact Day Celebration.

Second Avenue was Institutional projects: It included Fun Fair, Dance on save environment, save girl child – dance drama, cleaning the premises, Remedial Classes for weak students and Exhibition on various topics.

Our third avenue was Community Service projects: They visited 10 houses of the marginalized group, houses of school drop outs, Nava Jeevan Nikhetan – Home for the mentally challenged men, Nirmala Hridayalaya Home for the mentally challenged women and Home for the aged. They also visited a Govt. Hospital and distributed apples to the patients. They also visited the blind children at Ranganath Memorial School for disabled and offered them fruits. An almairah was presented to a poor worker, and a few chairs to another needy person.

A rally on Swacha Bharath, (Clean India Mission) was organized to promote cleanliness. The students also participated in another awareness rally and street play on Human Trafficking in collaboration with Don Bosco Home.

These students donated cash and kind towards the flood victims of Medikeri, Karnataka. In the District Interact Conference held on 5th and 6th January 2019, the Good Shepherd Interact Club was honoured with two awards i.e First Place in Community Service and Second Place in Vocational Service.

The community projects have awakened in students a sense of social responsibility. They have become contributors to the growth of Society. It is only by involving oneself into the struggles of others that we learn to uphold and appreciate our life and help those who are marginalized and less fortunate.

Our Interact Club is an inspirational team. Engaging in Community Service provides students with the opportunity to become active members of their community and has a lasting, positive impact on Society.
In October 2019 Sister Gerard Fernandez, 81, became the first Singaporean to make the BBC’s annual list of 100 influential women from around the world. Until 2017 when she retired from this ministry, Sr Gerard worked in prisons for over 40 years as a death row counsellor. In that time, she accompanied and supported 18 women and men on death row, up to when they were executed.

Sister Gerard reflects upon her life and ministry

My Mum and Dad were so delighted with the birth of “Bonny Marguerite” on the day I was born in February 1938. On my Baptism day, my mother refused to stay at home. She was way ahead of her time. Today in the ceremony of the new Rite of Baptism, mothers carry their babies. She knew my Godmother would not be able to carry such a heavy baby and she was right. She had to take me from Godmother who could not hold on to me. She caught me before I dropped. Today I experience a deep loving friendship with my God. I believe what His plans were for me in the call of Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. I especially feel my mother’s desires for me to serve the Lord were formed when she was carrying me in her womb.

I come from a happy family of ten. Mum and Dad bequeathed our Faith to us and called forth the wonderful talents that we all had for music. We sang, played different instruments and our Sunday gatherings were fun-filled evenings. Three of us are religious lovingly sent forth by our parents to serve in the Franciscan and Good Shepherd families.

In Good Shepherd

I hold prisoners in my heart. The compassion of Jesus Good Shepherd enfolded my ministry with them. During more than 40 years I spent visiting prison the most special time was journeying with Death Row inmates there in our Changi Prison in Singapore. God’s love for us is beyond comprehension. In Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

The Challenges

This is how I see it. Van and Robin, Catherine and Geraldine, Kumar and Henry and all my Death Row friends thwarted God’s plans for good for them and made a disaster of their young lives. Because of
Jesus, God changed his plan for them at this last stage of their lives and they experienced the miracle of conversion and transformation. The Good Shepherd found them. In addition, I felt privileged to be with them in their last moments.

While I abhor the Death penalty, the taking of a life, I realized that God’s call to me to walk with these vulnerable people was for me to remember, “He loved us first,” and allow them to experience healing and forgiveness through my love for them. They were precious moments when a man who had committed murder said to me the day before he was hanged, “Don’t worry Sister. I know God loves me! Tomorrow morning I will see him face to face.” They were so convinced of Jesus’ promise: Luke 23:43 “This day you will be with in paradise.”

**The Inspiration**

The highlight of my Ministry to people on Death Row was the courageous stand that we Good Shepherd Sisters made through our dear Sister Susan Chia (RIP).

That early dawn of the 2nd December 2005 was closely watched by the whole world. Drug trafficker Van Tuong Nguyen Caleb walked to the gallows to the strains of the hymn, ‘Amazing Grace’. One precious moment stands out. The Superintendent comes forward embraces Van and then leads him to his execution. He does his duty as a uniformed officer but with such care for this young man, whom he looked upon as a human person.

In my silent prayer, I asked the Lord, Why? In this place we kill a person and yet there is so much peace, even joy. A priest friend gave me this answer: Why? ‘Because good has triumphed over evil.’
Sister Columba : A Life’s Journey Between Repression And Faith

In the Fall of 1944, during the Second World War, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary. Sister Columba was only 22 years old. Under the communist regime, it was illegal to practice religion. The Catholic Church was suppressed, its properties nationalized. However, the Hungarians continued to practice their faith, risking their lives.

Sister Columba recalls for us her life’s journey between repression and faith.
Sister Columba, community of Budapest

I was born in 1922 in Lajosmizse, Hungary, into a family of six children, one of whom died young. My parents adopted two little orphans; Ilona, a girl, and Gorgy, a boy. It was my first encounter with a selfless act. When she grew up, Ilona entered a convent. As she was leaving home she told me, “I wish you could become a thistle, so that you could get stuck on my dress and I could take you with me.” I was seven years old, and from that moment on, when I prayed I asked Jesus, “Send me, I will do everything for you, with you, for the salvation of souls!”

When I was seventeen, sitting at my father’s bedside, he asked me, “My dear, do you want to enter a convent?” I took the decision to enter the congregation, but the Lord wanted me to wait. My father died a little while later. My sister was married, gone to live in the city. Illness had left my brother unable to work the land. So it fell to me to sow the seeds, harvest the crops, raise the animals; doing the work of the men, waiting for the time when I could enter a convent.

It was already the middle of the war when the Russians arrived. My brother warned that they would dissolve the religious congregations, but I paid no heed. In May 1946, I entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity and the Good Shepherd in Kecskemét.

It was with joy that I discovered community life. We played, sang, prayed, studied and worked a lot together. During the two years of my novitiate I also looked after the very young orphans, who were greatly in need of being loved.

Before taking the habit, I received the religious name ‘Columba’. Increasingly, I felt the hand of Providence.

Then, in June 1950, my brother’s prediction came true. Religious congregations were dissolved and the men and women religious, except those who worked in education, were cast out of their monasteries and convents. I returned to my family to work the land.

Four years later, Sister Rita from our congregation found me a post in a Franciscan-run middle-school, working in their kitchen. It was a boarding school, so I had to make food for three hundred children. I accepted the job in order to help the country’s young Catholics. I saw that it was the will of God, and so remained there for thirty-eight years. During that time, I kept in contact with the other sisters. Once a year, before the Feast of the Good Shepherd, our Mother Superior gathered us all together in secret. She also regularly gave us news of the wider congregation around the world. When I learned that religious life would once again be permitted in Hungary, I immediately presented myself at the convent’s door.

Thus, in 1992, Providence once again allowed me to re-enter community life. I have been living again in the community of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd for twenty-seven years. It has always been a source of good for me. I give thanks to God because I was blessed with the gift of gratitude when I was a child. The work is arduous, but even at ninety-seven years old I try to be useful to my community for Jesus, with Jesus and for the salvation of souls.
The Leaf, the Community and the Gratitude

By Melinda Stricklen, Mission Partner

Do you know that not one single leaf in all creation is the same? NOT ONE! Of course, you do. But why would I be asking about one little leaf when the world, my world is in such a chaotic mess. One little leaf?

Well, recently, while on retreat with Srs. Angela Fahy and Brigid Lawlor, Love at the Heart of the Universe, I was taken with this “one little leaf” thought. Retreatants were asked to be aware of the outdoor surroundings which were in beautiful Carrollton, Ohio. As instructed, I did just that. And BAM! There it was! The thought that moved into awareness: Not one leaf on the tree I was observing was alike.

And then my awareness shifted from a leaf to people…to the world’s population (7.3 billion in 2017). Beyond no two leaves being alike, not one person (identical twins included) ever born is or will be alike. I have said for years at the opening of our Mission Effectiveness sessions, “there has never been a person like you in Good Shepherd and there never will be”. Yes, I have been teased about it and yet it is so true. No one brings the same lived experience, gifts and talents to offer to the communities of Good Shepherd or to the mission.

Fast forward to Rome, Italy where I am currently (September 21 - October 16) tutoring a group of young pre-novices from five different countries in English. I was leading morning prayer and the focus of the reflection was on community. After a few moments, one of the women said, “It’s like we are a bouquet of flowers, all different, all beautiful.” How right she is. The rose doesn’t say to the sunflower, “I’m better than you because I’m a rose.” They just continuing being the flowers they were created to be.

If I can be aware of one little leaf, might I be aware of the people around me? Those most like me. Those most different. Those in my immediate circle of influence in my GS community/communities. Yes, it takes time, intention and effort but isn’t it important to be in relationship with others around our mission of Mercy and Reconciliation? To encourage, support and challenge each other to be who we were created to be and bring our gifts to “the table”?

My hope, as we move into the season of Thanksgiving, is that we see each other and cease trying to be a rose when we were created to be a sunflower. Like I say, “there will never be another person like you” in all of cosmic time. What might our world and circle of influence become if we all seek to be who we know we are? Is it in our unity that we find strength?

Reflection:

• As I reflect, what word or phrase speaks to me?
• What one thing might I do to encourage others around me in the mission?
• Why does my community need me?
“Oh! How consoling it is to find ourselves reunited today! How happy I am to have you, my dear daughters and sons, around me to witness the affectionate charity, the peace, the spirit of union reigning among you. None of you are strangers to each other – all have but one heart and one mind. You reanimate my courage.”

With these words from St. Mary Euphrasia, the 2019 North America Good Shepherd Gathering opened. Sponsored by the province leaders of North America, the Gathering was held October 15-18 at St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center in Detroit, Michigan.

The Gathering was a wonderful opportunity for Good Shepherd Mission Partners from the provinces of Central South, Mid North America, and New York/Toronto to come together for a time of support and inspiration around our mission, spirituality, vision and values. The theme this year was “Shared Roots.” The inspiration came from a reading called The Aspen Trees that is a part of a book called More Together Than Alone by Mark Neepo. The sessions focused on several levels of connection: connections to our Good Shepherd history and founders, our personal connections to one another, the connections of the ministries/programs to one another, the connection to the international community of Good Shepherd, and the connections that need to be sustained in the future.

The Gathering was planned and hosted by the North America Mission and Values Team (NAMVT), which consists of representatives from Mid North America and New York/Toronto. The NAMVT is: Lizzie Cody from Edwardsville, Illinois; Sr. Tram Nguyen from St. Louis, Missouri; Nadia Dias from Winnipeg, Manitoba; Celia Ceballos from New York City, New York; and Nancy Fritsche-Eagan from New York City, New York.

The 68 participants in the Gathering came from 22 different locations. Some were board members, some child care workers, some Executive Directors, some therapists, some Sisters, as well as other roles in their programs. In addition to the North America provinces, there was also a participant from Good Shepherd Microfinance in Australia.

The Gathering began with registration and dinner, followed by the Opening Ritual. The Opening included a letter of welcome from Sr. Ellen Kelly, and a word of welcome from the three present North America Province Leaders, Sr. Madeleine Munday, Sr. Maureen McGowan, and Sr. Francisca Aguillon. The participants engaged in the tradition of the Roll Call and placed a sticker on a Good Shepherd history timeline, thereby claiming their place in the Good Shepherd history and story. A reading was done of The
Aspen Trees, which was re-read several times throughout the week. The evening ended with a networking reception where participants were given the opportunity to get to know one another.

The second day of the Gathering focused on personal connections and agency connections. While in small groups, participants shared stories of connecting to Good Shepherd work and memorable days. Heartfelt stories were shared from each table. The group also took time to honor ancestors that brought them to where they are now. In the afternoon, the group spoke of what their shared work is, and were given the opportunity to meet in affinity groups for conversation, connection, and education. That evening the group was taken to Vista Maria, the Good Shepherd program in Detroit. A presentation was given by a group of residents of Vista Maria that showed what they have learned about trauma informed care and their personal stories. The girls performed skits, songs, and original poetry. The girls showed incredible courage, and it was so moving to see them and hear their stories. Vista Maria then hosted dinner for the group and a tour of their campus. In feedback following the Gathering, the trip to Vista Maria was mentioned by almost half of respondents as a major high point.

The third day of the Gathering focused on the connection to the international mission of Good Shepherd. We heard from Good Shepherd Microfinance in Australia, had group conversation about the Position Papers, and participated in a “Shared Roots Café” where groups were given the opportunity to cross pollinate discussion about what was most meaningful to them. After dinner, there was a special showing of Euphrasia: The Musical.

The final morning of the Gathering was spent wrapping up and giving participants opportunities to stay connected to one another. After some activities, a slide show of the week, and a blessing, the participants left to return to their work and lives.

Perhaps the most important aspect of an immersive event like the Gathering is the message that participants take home to their teams and their lives. There must be a long term difference after having been a part of the Gathering. Some of the messages that participants say they are taking home with them are:

• “Everyone's role in our agency helps keep the Good Shepherd mission alive! I shared my experience from the Gathering as well as some new ideas our organization can implement (which stemmed from conversations during the event) at our staff meeting.”

• “There are a lot of great messages in there I want to build on, but I’d definitely like to bring in the sustainability goals focused on by the Sisters to determine how we can run our practice in accordance with those goals.”

• “That our mission and core values are truly what drives us, and we have the power and duty to keep it going.”

• “We are not alone. As a small agency not near other GS agencies, sometimes we can feel isolated. I want to make sure that everyone in our agency knows they have a bond with other agencies. We are not alone, and need to foster these connection. Lean on other when in need, be there for others when they need.”

For me personally, it is an honor to be a part of such an incredible group of Shepherds. I am proud of everything the NAMVT did to create and hold the space for this Gathering, and am astounded by the ability of participants to enter into meaningful conversations with one another for inspiration, education, problem solving, and connection.

The next North America Good Shepherd Gathering is scheduled for May 18-21, 2020.
A land filled with beautiful landscapes, enriching variety of cultures with numerable ethnic groups, a land of Lord Buddha, a land of Mount Everest and of Himalayas; a land where all those visit fall in love with. This is the beauty of Nepal. However, every coin has other side of story too. Nepal’s other realties are poverty, lack of employment, various natural calamities, literacy (report, 2015 male literacy 77% and female 44.5%) increase of migration for employment. During the 2014 fiscal year, more than 520,000 labour permits were issued to Nepalese planning to work abroad. However, other data that captures those working in India (where labour permits are not required) or those leaving to work abroad through informal channels indicate that female migration might be as high as 12 per cent of the total workforce abroad.

Annually, approximately 600,000-800,000 people are trafficked across national borders around the world, 80 % of whom are women and girls. Around 1.2 million victims of trafficking are minors: around 43% are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation while 32% are for involuntary servitude, and 25% for a mixture of both. Nepali victims are trafficked within Nepal, the Middle East, and even to Europe plus other areas such as Malaysia. There they are forced to become prostitutes, domestic servants, beggars, factory workers, mine workers, circus performers, child soldiers, and to do other odd jobs. In this reality the Good Shepherds Sisters are challenged to make a difference.

Indeed, I feel proud of the Good Shepherds for taking a stand both at the province and congregational level to make a difference in our approach: for moving out, going beyond and taking risk to withstand the challenges and hurdles faced through the emerging mechanism of the State. This divergence has established Good Shepherd visibility, to expand and sustain the mission in today’s context.

The Sisters in Nepal began to work in close collaboration with Good Shepherd International Foundation, especially after the earth quake. It brought a tremendous change in the mission. In response to the struggles faced by the mission in Nepal a due diligence team landed in 2017; an in-depth study and a discernment process took place to identify a better administration functioning since Nepal has ample scope for a Shepherding mission. CLT along with GSIF, CEIN Province and with the Mission Partners decided to take risk in establishing an INGO, a GSIF branch office in Nepal. The mission partners in Nepal began the preparative task of the registration. As we all know, the processes and progress of work
on the government desk move at a snail’s pace. It took about a year to complete the first step of the process. A general agreement was signed on 2nd May 2018 for 5 years and to approve the project agreement with the government took another year and finally on 7th of July a project agreement for three years was signed. This alternative and innovative way of functioning has led to establish a Good Shepherd International Foundation country office in Nepal which has brought more credibility and expansion to the Mission.

We work in Kaski (Pokhara) and Kathmandu, ‘Promoting Youth Power Against Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation’. Targeting the youth in the entertainment sector (dance bars, cabin restaurants, massage parlours, traditional pubs with Nepali music). Overall objective of the project is to capacitate the youth at risk and those vulnerable to trafficking, sexual abuse/exploitation. Moreover, it is to promote their meaningful engagement to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation through a range of innovative approaches. The involvement with youths has enabled us to see the need of a transit home or a temporary shelter for girls who are internally trafficked or abused. Hence, we have two short stay shelters for youths in the entertainment sector in above mentioned places. Every year a minimum of fifty youths are trained and equipped in various vocational skills and trade according to their capacity and aptitude. These enable them to begin a new life, earn their own livelihood independently through small business setup of their own. This brings new life and dignity to their existence.
Breaking Bread in the streets with the vulnerable children

By Sr Jennifer Kay Thi Kyaw

Our residential care for the street children has been run by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Mandalay, Myanmar since 2010. We first came in contact with a group of street children at a Buddhist Monastery in a slum area. These children came from different parts of the country and gathered together in small groups there. They can be found in the railway station at times and other time at the monastery, under the bridge and in the slum area near the river side. Most of them are glue sniffers and beggars aged between 3 -20 years old. They roam around the city streets all day without having any proper basic needs and care. Very often, they are in danger of abuse and exploitation.

Upon seeing unsafe situation of these children, we started to reach out to them by visiting them in a regular basis at the monastery, in the railway station, under the bridge and slum areas. We discovered that they are on the streets due to the poverty, family breakdown and being the victims of domestic violence and abuse. In the very beginning, it was not easy for them to trust us and they would not collaborate with us. But we kept visiting them just to have a friendly chat with them and to listen to their feelings, problems and challenges. After spending several times with them, we gained their trust which helped us to build relationship with them.

We gradually include in our chatting some value education and moral lessons informally. In order to help them effectively, we initially collaborated with World Vision and Salaesian of Don Bosco street boys’ center who were already in contact with some of the street children. After having had friendship with the children, we showed the possibilities of leading more stable life where they can find life that is meaningful and worth living. For those who wish, we welcomed them to our temporary shelter where they can have access to the basic need such as food, clothing, and a safe place to sleep, learn and play. As they realized their life in unstable and dangerous situations, some girls voluntarily decided to stay in our shelter giving up their unstable life on the streets and the glue sniffing.

Our temporary shelter facilities program gradually introduced counselling session, psycho-social support, life skills trainings, formal education and vocational trainings. Some of them successfully finished formal education or vocational trainings after which they are to start new life by finding a decent job and reintegrating back to their own family and society. However, there are still some of them, after being some time in our shelter, chose to go back to the streets and continued to struggle with their problems and the addiction. We continue to journey with them wherever they are and offer assistance whenever they need by collaborating with the teachers, parents, social workers and community authorities.

Moreover, as some of them being on the streets, oftentimes come in contact with the justice system. Many of them did not commit any crimes but the official from the City Development Office sweep them from the street and detained them in Juvenile Justice Center. There is a steady increase in the number of street girls who were being arrested. In order to provide them assistance, we collaborate with the staff from Government’s Department of Social Welfare. Having obtained the permission to enter the Center, we offer the children non-formal education and life skills in small groups. Despite all these good works, our collaboration with government is still limited to secure release and resettlement of the young girls from the juvenile center. We hope to increase more effective collaboration with the staff of Social Welfare Department in assisting the girls in the detention center. Embracing all the hardships and challenges, we continue to strive for a greater efficiency and work for the rights of the young street girls here in Mandalay City.
The Sisters of the Good Shepherd stepped into Ceylon in 1869 at the invitation of the then Archbishop of Colombo, Bishop Hilarion Sillani OSB to provide education to girls, mindful of the motto their foundress St. Mary Euphrasia modelled for her Sisters “One person is worth more than the whole world”.

It was on the 25th of April 1869, that the Convent at Kotahena was solemnly opened by His Lordship Mgr. Sillani with the arrival of The Historic Band of Pioneers – Sisters Marie of St. Euphrasia Goughs, Mary of the Sacred Heart Masi, Mary of the Annunciation Marandi, Mary of St. Suzanne Cardiff, and the School was opened on 1st May in the same year.

It is with enthusiasm that the sisters in Sri Lanka started preparing for this august event spiritually over a year. Unfortunately the turn of events in our country shed a cloud of sorrow as many people suffered loss of life and limb due to the Easter Sunday bomb attack on Churches and hotels. As a result the Province decided to curtail the common celebrations that were being planned out and have it on a community level on a low key with the participation of both sisters and lay mission partners.

The Province took the decision to spend the funds allocated for this celebration to help those individuals and families affected by this disaster.

In addition we were able to build a house for a needy family and award scholarships to 15 students. The sisters and lay partners also gathered together to visit and comfort those victims through their counselling and material help.
On the 29th September 2019, the Good Shepherd Community in Derry, Northern Ireland joyfully celebrated the centenary of their presence in the City. As they revisited their history, they recognised the challenges of their early years. It was just after the First World War, two years before Northern Ireland was partitioned from what would become the Irish Republic. There was widespread poverty and social problems.

The Sisters responded to the needs by providing residential care for vulnerable young women and girls. Residential care continued for many years and though adapted to the changing needs of society. For example, in the mid seventies, against the backdrop of the ‘troubles’ as the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland was known, the Sisters provided hostel accommodation for women and girls coming in from the countryside to work in the factories.

Following Vatican II, the Congregation urged the Sisters to care for people within the context in which they lived. This led to the move away from residential care and more involvement in social services which were developing across the city. For example, reaching out to women in prostitution and meeting them in the places where they ‘worked’. In time this lead to the setting up of a ‘Family Centre’ which provided a range of services for the local community. Over the years this centre developed and is currently celebrating its 40th anniversary. While at present there are no Sisters actively involved, the management recently paid tribute to the pioneering work of the Sisters and the solid base the provided which enabled the service to develop. A new community centre is currently being built which will enable this service to meet the changing needs.

Two sisters continue to live and be a presence in the community where the family centre is based. Other sisters are involved in hospital ministry, family visitation, prayer ministry, a women’s night shelter, ministering to past residents etc. As the Sisters age they are aware of the need to collaborate with others who are drawn to our charism of reconciliation and compassion particularly towards women and children. They are mindful of being in a multi-faith context and welcome the opportunities for interfaith dialogue.

The challenges associated with diminishment, the fast pace of technological progress, Brexit, climate change etc. also are opportunities to collaborate with others and respond in creative new ways. Such opportunities inspire hope for the future and renew their zeal and enthusiasm.

The Community in Derry at the celebration
L-R Srs Myriam McLoughlin, Breda O' Connell, Carmel Guinan, Anna Byrne, Evelyn Fergus, Johanna Horgan and Catherine Gallagher.
The experience in the Mother House: 
"Open ourselves to the transforming power of Incarnate Love"

The second spirituality session at the Mother House in Angers, France was attended by Sisters and laity from provinces of: India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Argentina Uruguay, Bolivia Chile, Central America, Colombo Venezolana and from South East Latin America. The developed theme was "Open ourselves to the Transforming Force of Incarnate Love", during the session we made a pilgrimage to the most significant places for the Congregation such as Noirmoutier, Caen, Ri, Tours ... and we were joined by Sisters Odile Laugier and Irma del Valle Gallo and the Eudist Father Juan Camus. We share with you the reflections of each one of those who participated in the province of Colombo Venezolana:

“I praise God for His great kindness in allowing me this experience in Angers; hearing the constant invitation to ‘Open ourselves to the transforming power of Incarnate Love’ allowed me to re-discover the history of our Congregation, the sweet and deep taste of the spiritual wealth bequeathed. A renewed spirituality, which is enlivened by contemplating how our founders SJE and SME were faithful to the overflowing Grace of God’s love and who allowed Jesus to become embodied in them. The joy of sharing some moments with other sisters from different cultures, also became a wealth. There were each of you sisters, your families, the works, the partners, the benefactors, employees and all those who in one way or another contribute to the extension of the charism in the mission. There remain challenges to face, actions to put into practice so that this fire that burns in our hearts reaches many places, but especially touches many hearts for God. Let Him and His Divine Presence make it possible! Thanks with all my heart!”

Nidia Stella Quimbayo.

"The title of the spirituality session alone in the Mother house 'Open ourselves to the transforming power of Incarnate Love' excited me and gave me expectations. Arriving at the Mother House was a dream come true for me; I was deeply moved and it touched my heart to see each the places and recognize the presence of God and the spirit of Saint Euphrasia. From the first moment I was feeling, listening and receiving the signs that God gives me to contemplate the Incarnate Love close to my heart and the heart of all people. Going through the tunnel made me reflect on how the love of God transforms my life and gives me the courage and creativity to respond to the needs in the reality in which I live, and to continue moving forward even when everything seems dark and at a dead end. Each pilgrimage was a step through the history of our founders and through them on their own, each place reestablished and confirmed the great things that love does. This beautiful and great experience is another example as Saint Euphrasia says, I found myself loved by God and that love is an incomprehensible love. Thanks to the Province for enabling this moment of grace and blessing in my life. May God bless you.”

Daisy Alvarez
heal wounds and restore the dignity of the women of his time and today that zeal summons our commitment to justice by achieving the transformation of our community life and of the unfair structures of society." Hennis Marlley Precious.

"I feel grateful to God, along with the Mother of Heaven, the congregation, my dear province and the support of my provincial and each of the Sisters, for the opportunity to live the Spirituality session in the Mother House. I felt and I feel called to deepen, to value and to have a stronger sense of belonging. In the whole experience I felt the presence of Saint Mary Euphrasia and Saint John Eudes, as if they were there alive to receive me, I felt a lot of joy, I contemplated everything, it was very exciting. I never really forgot while walking and living in this world, how it was to renew my baptism and consecration. Participating in the internationality was another great experience, I did not understand the other languages, but it was beautiful to share the Eucharistic and liturgical celebrations in a language different from my own, for me it meant having only one heart as members of the congregation. Never in my life did it go through my mind that I would have this great grace, I don’t think I deserve it, because it could have been another sister participating, I have no way to thank God and my superiors for this great grace. From my Heart only a million thanks blossom for each moment and every instance, it is as if I had went to the Holy Land. I can only offer my prayer and place everything at the feet of our Lord Jesus with a grateful heart for God’s love for and thanks for my congregation and my province." María Rosana González Garzón.

"I can only say with a heart full of gratitude, God be praised for this beautiful opportunity to have been able to experience the session of spirituality 'Open ourselves to the transforming power of Incarnate Love'. They were days of pilgrimage and deepening in the spirituality of Saint John Eudes and Saint Mary Euphrasia. I can say that I have renewed zeal and with the commitment to make Christ live and reign. I discover that to open myself to the transforming power of Incarnate Love is to feel loved by God and this enables me for mission and to love every person, just as Jesus did; that, following the example of Saint Mary Euphrasia, I can say: What do we do in this world and why are we here, if not to contribute to the salvation of our brothers and sisters? Having been blessed with this experience in the Mother House helps me become more committed to live more faithfully to the charism, the legacy of Saint John Eudes and Saint Mary Euphrasia to continue responding to so many challenges that the world presents us today”.
Yolanda Sánchez Contreras.
My Missionary Experience

By Sr Jaqueline Mendes, Contemplative Sister Missionary in Portugal

It is my pleasure to share with you all my missionary experience in Vila Meã, Porto, Portugal. I have been here for five months and I can firmly say that this is a welcoming town with people who have a great love for Our Lady of Fatima.

We are an international community, composed of three Sisters from Peru, Ecuador and Brazil. We are all driven by missionary zeal that goes beyond borders, to live and pray with and for people.

One challenge we face is awakening vocations to Consecrated Life, even though it is a country with a majority Catholic population. What I have witnessed here is that young people have their own style of being Church: they like to help, especially in the reality of migrations. They commit themselves as volunteers and friends. Thanks to these friendships, we are well supported; they are always ready to work together. We are considering ways in which we can help strengthen these friendships in our Community further and inviting them to be Friends of the Good Shepherd.

Every day we celebrate the Eucharist in the Parish and twice a week in our Community. In the parish, we are present in the important events of the Church, for example: Lent and the Month of Mary when we are invited to lead moments of adoration with the people, I pray the Holy Rosary. In this way, we become known as the Sisters who pray for all. Moved by LOVE, present in this great heart of the universe, we are making our way towards transformation, as persons and as Community, thus contributing to the missionary journey of the Congregation.

My experience has been to listen to people, from within and on the outside, with my heart, welcoming their joys, pains and hopes because we are part of a society in crisis. I am looking to insert myself into this culture and assume it as if it were my own, showing interest in the life led by farmers, wine-growers in large vineyards etc. I am learning new things, such as caring for the soil, vegetables, onions, tomatoes and other plants; growing orchids and fruits such as strawberries, which are part of everyday reality, with the variety that each season of the year offers us. Our work is focused on the 4 Rs: Reduce, Re-use, Recycle and Renew, a project launched by the Congregation in recent years, especially at the last Congregational Assembly of Contemplative Sisters (CACS).

We take advantage of living in this large green area by extracting essences from plants and fruits to make relaxing soaps. This is a work in progress, so we still do not have authorization for it to be sold, but it is already well known in our town and province. This work also counts on the collaboration of the neighborhood, which brings to the Community materials such as: rose petals, medicinal herbs, glass and plastic jars, etc. This type of participation helps people to become aware of the importance of caring for mother earth.

For me, this has been an interesting experience, encouraging new discoveries and learning within the mission of Contemplative Life, which seeks a balance between prayer, work, study, silence and rest. With regard to the Province of Portugal, I feel that it is very well connected with our Community. It closely accompanies us, offering human and spiritual support to each of us. We participate in the life of the Province, according to our way of life, especially in the important events and celebrations of Congregational feasts. We are 35 km from Ermesinde, a small town where there is an Apostolic Community, that among other services to the people of God, welcomes a large number of devotees of the Blessed Mary of the Divine Heart, in the Chapel that keeps their relics.

I want to conclude by expressing that participating in a new mission is always a grace that leads us to risk with a heart full of hope for a future of seeing the emergence of new vocations committed to the mission. I can say that in Europe there is much life and love of the sacred, with its own form of expression. I am grateful to God and to the Congregation for sending me to serve in this little part of the world! Pray for me and for the new missionary communities throughout the world.
Ossau House

Ossau House is the latest residential center managed by the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity and the Good Shepherd.

The center is located in Pau, a city in the département of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France. Housed in large premises, surrounded by greenery, in a quiet neighborhood five minutes from the city center; the center benefits from a surrounding environment that is well-suited to its work. The use and ease of access to local educational, leisure, retail and transport services facilitates the organization’s integration with the wider city.

The mission of Ossau House is “to do everything possible to offer high-quality educational support, where the young residents will find a place for personal and professional development.” Our mission conforms to child protection policies, founding itself also on the humanist values of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity and the Good Shepherd;

- “The unconditional acceptance of the individual.”
- “The importance of personal connection and individual growth.”
- “The role of teamwork.”
- “Research as an ever-present necessity when listening to others.”

Our work is built on four key cornerstones; personalized care for each young person, tailored educational or professional support, artistic activities (dance and drama, for example) and parental support. The center is authorized to house up to 29 young women between the ages of 11 to 21, sent to us either by the Pyrénées-Atlantiques’ child welfare service, or the local judicial authority. Time spent living as a group allows the young people to learn how to live in wider society.

Ossau House is a place for cognitive restructuring, where young girls in difficulty are enabled, with the help of professionals, to establish a sense of identity in a structured, secure environment, with clear boundaries where the code of conduct is known by everyone and implemented by every adult. The Education Team provide the necessary support so that the young women can gain more independence, increase their quality of life, and improve their social behavior, with the aim of successfully completing their personal development plan and encouraging their social participation both in the center and out in wider society.

The majority of the young people’s education takes place in the region’s various schools. However, when school finishes, they benefit from extra educational support in the center (sometimes undertaken with a school teacher). Our instructors offer the girls the opportunity to take part in group activities that support and contribute to their personal development and their ability to open up and interact with others. We organize numerous psycho-educational activities, such as; art therapy workshops, drama workshops, weekly trips to the swimming pool, one-off socio-aesthetic and sporting activities, etc...

Every summer, a group of around ten young people participate in educational camps where they can try activities that enable them to push themselves, discover new skills, be proud of themselves and increase their self-confidence.

New, emerging young people’s issues have prompted us to review the care and support we provide and led us to set up a new service entitled Domicile/errance (‘Residence/roaming’).
At the heart of a prostitution street in Brussels

Raphaël Buyse, priest of the diocese of Lille, tells us about his visit to Rue d'Aerschot in the center of Brussels, near the Gare du Nord. A prostitution hot spot. He comes here to talk about Madeleine Delbrel to our religious community who have lived in this neighborhood for a few years.

They are in their window, surrounded by a red halo. Almost naked. They are constantly moving. They get up and sit down again. They take three steps. They pace but they seem to be bored.

With a lot of suggestive gestures, they tempt those who seem to slow down in front of their display. I can't help but see them, but I hardly dare look at them. I would not like a misunderstanding to arise between them and I.

I am in the Rue d'Aerschot in the center of Brussels, near the Gare du Nord. A place which is considered a prostitution hotspot. I come here to talk about Madeleine Delbrel to a religious community who has chosen live in this neighborhood for a few years.

On the sidewalk opposite, men are posted. Like frozen vigils, they watch the merry-go-round of potential customers coming and going. Would they be pimps? It is always good, for those in the trade, to watch their goods. The cars pass on the street, then they pass a few minutes later without the need for any signs to slow them down. The door of a house opens. A gentleman comes out, his face low. He rushes into the station. Almost running.

A man in his thirties wearing a tracksuit and sneakers, bike in hand, goes from window to window, stops, backs up and seems to negotiate a price. The exchange is not very expensive, one of the sisters will teach me. It is also possible to negotiate according to whims.

Another door opens! A man in need of love crosses the door. The lady who welcomes him is all smiles: this must be included in the price. I cannot help but think that behind this casualness, there are doubtless tears.

Where do these women come from? Eastern countries, Africa, France and Belgium.

On the windows, it says "looking for waitresses, immediate start."

In this surreal street where solitude and sexual misery are displayed and where the madness of money and power is hidden under the easy slogan of "my body is mine, I do what I want with it", I come and meet some "good sisters" who have chosen to be there, with a few lay people. I write "good" sisters with infinite respect: they will understand it well. That is what this is about.

Their large house is set between a church and a brothel: it is a "third place", as we say today. The oratory in the basement adjoins the cellar of a brothel. Who could know that there, in a humble prayer, they lead to the source of the cries, the tears, the laughs, the secret hopes, the distresses, the violence, the secret solidarities of the men and women who are all around them.

These sisters and their friends are there to be there. Without pastoral project, without action plan, without judgment and even less pretension. You shouldn't question them too much about what motivates them: you can't explain people's love.

Randomly in life, these sisters and their friends come together and meet the "chaperones", those brothel keepers who manage the flow of customers and knock on the doors of the alcoves when the antics seem too long: "It must finish, sir. There are customers waiting ". In this sordid street of Brussels, the song "Next one"by the great Jacques Brel still echoes.

The sisters and their friend meet a few of the "girls". They have too much work: clients are needed to pay what they have to pay each day to the owner of the place as rent for a stool in the shop window. Not to mention what they owe to those who "protect" them. One should say those who exploit them. And
business is difficult. Demand is falling: the cause being the internet and naughty applications that hide price-based meetings.

Not to mention that the "girls" do not dare to reveal too much to these sisters who could very well open the doors for them to freedom. We are watching them. We must be careful.

With their friends, they have to offer to these women who are considered as objects of pleasure, only smiles, a neutral word which will not put them in discomfort, and a kindness which is read on their face and in their discretion. Their sober and silent presence, however identified, carries the message, “you are kind, we love you. We also know that you are capable of love ”. Their presence is Word even when they have to wipe away the waves of insults and threats.

Tonight I tell them about Madeleine. I’m moved.

They are of the same temper. They come from the same Lord.

They are there. Powerless before the violence that oozes in their street, attentive to little things.

Poor. They are there. Faithful.

Peering into each other's slightest desire to live and be free.

"You led us, Lord, to this street of Aerschot, because You wanted to be there, You, in us ..." In them, mysteriously, the sacrament of His love takes place, Madeleine would say.

**The testimony of Marie Hélène after the article:**

Yes, I sometimes come too, to Rue d'Aerschot… and share as much as possible of this “being with” which is our part of Incarnation: they are our sisters in humanity, someone must have their say, walk their sidewalk without greed and haggling, and choose to live with them in this street that nobody wants to live in.

But when I leave the Rue d'Aerschot, it is better to try to fight alongside others against these inhuman conditions in which they are uprooted from their "real life", hidden yet in a window, a display of this commodification of the human person that invades our world.

When Sr. Eugenia Bonetti, after 25 years of mission in Nigeria, returned to Italy, she kept inviting all religious congregations to mobilize against the Trafficking in Human Beings: traffickers are everywhere? the nuns too. Are they network experts? Nuns have been in all parts of the world for centuries and the presence of vulnerable women and young people is most of the time at the heart of their charisma.

So, networks of nuns have sprung up all over the world to fight against the exploitation of their fellow people! Our congregation responded immediately to this call. By 1994, we were a European group of sisters in apostolic situations and after seeing for the first time an article entitled: “500,000 women in the East fall victim to trafficking”, we identified a reality that touched our hearts! We started to explore together the so-called “original” European countries, to understand the phenomenon and to warn others.

At that time, I also took over from Sr. Magdalena at the “Collective Together against Trafficking in Human Beings” piloted by Caritas (France and Europe) and coordinated by Geneviève Colas. With others (associations and lawyers) we work with the government to change and apply European and national standards to combat trafficking.

Since its foundation, I have also been part of the RENATE Network (Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation) which currently operates in 31 European countries. We share our practices, skills and experiences, at the service of people caught in the nets of trafficking. We take our pilgrim's staff to denounce what Pope Francis calls "a crime against humanity" and to talk about it in schools, religious gatherings and anywhere that we can say that it is inhuman to exploit one's similar, in whatever form!

Because the Trafficking is not only for the purpose of sexual exploitation, it also includes forced labor,
domestic slavery, forced begging, obligation to commit crimes and organ harvesting... it is each time that a profit is the objective; I am struggling to write it, but the human person is the cheapest "raw material" to acquire, and we can resell it several times... My heart heaves to write such realities, but that's why I fight, alongside others, so that by all possible means, people can regain their dignity, and so that the number of victims does not continue to increase... I also try to bring the voice of all to the Council of Europe, where RENATE is accredited, to the Conference of INGOs.

Talitha Kum - the network that brings together all the continental networks of nuns who fight against trafficking - is 10 years old this year. I went to Rome for the General Assembly, delegated by RENATE, admiring all the efforts made by the congregations that were present!

Do you remember what Sainte Marie Euphrasie said in the 1850s?

"A child of God, sold on the market like a goat, I will never accept that!" »
Good Shepherd Newsletter

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